



Speech of the President of India at the launch of Swayam and other digital initiatives for higher education

Posted On: 09 JUL 2017 3:34PM by PIB Chennai

1. On the very happy occasion of Guru Purnima, it is my privilege today to launch major developments in higher education systems i.e. SWAYAM and other key digital initiatives for higher education. Let me congratulate the dynamic Minister of Human Resource Development for these initiatives.
2. I am also happy that the HRD Ministry has convened this national convention for discussing emerging digital interventions with heads of higher learning institutions. On the day of Guru Purnima, the *Adiguru* had initiated the 7 great saints into the mechanics of life and spirituality. When we celebrate this day, we also celebrate the thirst for knowledge, the process of learning and the dawn of ultimate truth. This is, therefore, a very special gathering on a very special occasion. The future of higher education in the country is dependent on the esteemed participants of this convention.

Ladies and gentlemen:

3. Our country has seen rapid progress since independence. We are well positioned to become the powerhouse of global growth. The crucial input in this drive is to get highly qualified and trained youth, to be shaped and delivered by the higher educational institutions in the country.
4. During the last five years, I have been emphasizing on improving the quality of education whenever I have met Vice Chancellors of central universities, Directors of IITs, NITs and IISc/ IISERs. The conferences at Rashtrapati Bhavan have also acted as platforms for nurturing ideas. Many initiatives and ideas like the GIAN, IMPRINT and GRIN have taken root here. While I thank all of you who participated in these deliberations, I call upon each of you to ensure that these initiatives are taken to their logical conclusion for the benefit of the nation.
5. I have always emphasized on the need to improve the quality of the teaching learning process in the higher educational institutions. The higher education system has to build in each personality a spirit of inquiry and quest for creation of new knowledge. This can be done by a high quality teaching-learning process and research that creates new knowledge.

Ladies and gentlemen:

6. I am happy to note that there has been a big leap in high quality publications in the country. We have seen initiatives like IMPRINT and *Uchhatar Avishkar Yojana* which has increased the funding for high quality research. We must ensure that this trend is continued and further invigorated in the years to come. I must emphasize that the fruits of research have to be ploughed back into the teaching process, so that students are benefited by this new knowledge. I urge all of you to work more systematically in this regard.
7. The quality of teaching learning process is the heart of higher education. We have seen huge difference in the quality of attainment levels in higher education between the urban and rural areas, between the states and between institutions within a state. There are large numbers of students who study in vernacular languages whereas most of the knowledge is still in English. I call upon you all - being the leaders of the higher education system - to make concerted efforts to bridge this gap.

Ladies and gentlemen:

8. The spread of technology, telecom penetration and internet has offered an opportunity to quell the divide in terms of access and quality. And, we should seize this opportunity with both our hands. Digital technology enables good teachers to directly teach large number of students who are not physically present in classes. ICT solutions offer an interactive learning experience through which students in remote parts of the country can benefit from lectures of the top teachers. The digital modes are cheaper, more easily accessible, interactive, and offer flexibility for people to learn at their own pace. We need to work together to ensure that they are widely adopted for teaching.
9. I am happy that the SWAYAM portal has become fully functional which enables one to take courses offered by the best teachers, remaining where they are. SWAYAM should be a call to the pioneers amongst teachers to put new courses in the upcoming areas on this platform in the MOOCs format. It is also a call to the other teachers to use this material and improve their own teaching capacity. Ultimately, it should lead to better attainment levels in the students.

Ladies and gentlemen:

10. The use of satellite technology to reach the unreached is time-tested. I am happy to note that the scale and reach of this technology has been raised manifold through the 32 SWAYAM Prabha DTH channels. These channels will help students in the rural areas and in the remote areas where IT infrastructure have not penetrated so well. It is essential that all of you first start using these channels in your own institutions extensively, and later urge others to use it in their own homes.
11. Several other digital initiatives have been launched and dedicated to the nation today. The National Academic Depository would help in easy authentication of the credentials issued by the institutions. This would also help in increasing transparency and ease of operation. The several other digital initiatives taken up under the National Mission on Education through ICT (NMEICT) being showcased today should help all of you in going the digital way in order to improve the quality of teaching.
12. I congratulate all those who worked for bringing about these digital initiatives, and call upon all the institutions to work out an action plan for adopting these so that every student is benefited. We also need to bring in suitable regulations that would encourage these efforts and would allow greater freedom to the institutions to introduce innovative curriculum and pedagogy in their teaching process. We need to bring participation of the larger teaching community in implementing these initiatives. We need to bring more innovations in pedagogy which can help students understand concepts much better. We need to adapt to the changing requirements of the market. All this calls for developing a long-term vision for 15 years; a strategic plan for 7 years and an action plan for 3 years. We need systematic and motivated work in order to succeed. In short, we should be constantly on our toes to keep higher education productive and relevant.
13. I wish all of you the very best. The three day convention would provide an excellent opportunity for free exchange of views and ideas. I wish the convention all success. Thank you.

Jai Hind.

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