



Those in Universities must engage in reasoned discussion and debate rather than propagate a culture of unrest, says President

Posted On: 02 MAR 2017 7:44PM by PIB Delhi

The President of India, Shri Pranab Mukherjee said our premier institutions of higher education are the vehicles on which India has to propel itself into a knowledge society. These temples of learning must resound with creativity and free thinking. Those in Universities must engage in reasoned discussion and debate rather than propagate a culture of unrest. It is tragic to see them caught in the vortex of violence and disquiet.

The President was delivering the 6th K.S. Rajamony Memorial Lecture on the topic 'India@70' today (March 2, 2017) in Kochi, Kerala.

The President said there should be no room in India for the intolerant Indian. India has been since ancient times a bastion of free thought, speech and expression. Our society has always been characterized by the open contestation of diverse schools of thought and debate as well as discussion. Freedom of speech and expression is one of the most important fundamental rights guaranteed by our Constitution. There must be space for legitimate criticism and dissent.

The President said our leaders and political activists must listen to the people, engage with them, learn from them and respond to their needs and concerns. Our law makers must never take the people for granted. They must focus on the fundamental task of law making and raising of issues of concern to the people as well as finding solutions to their problems. No one who holds any elected office has been invited by the voters to occupy that office. Each one has gone to the voters and pleaded for their votes and support. The trust placed by the people in the political system and those elected should not be betrayed.

The President said he does not consider a society or State to be civilised if its citizens' behaviour towards women is uncivilised. When we brutalize a woman, we wound the soul of our civilisation. Not only does our Constitution guarantee equal rights to women but our culture and tradition also celebrate the feminine as divine. Protection and safety of our women and children must be a nationwide priority. The acid test of any society is its attitude towards women and children. India should not fail this test.

The President said the time has come for collective efforts to re-discover the sense of national purpose and patriotism that alone can lift our nation on to the road of sustained progress and prosperity. The nation and the people must always come first.

The President concluded with saying that he sees a very bright future for India. He said our Constitutional values, young population and entrepreneurial abilities as well as capacity for hard work provide us the fundamentals required for rapid progress as well as the building of a caring and compassionate society. India has changed dramatically in the last 70 years. He is confident that in the next ten years, we will see even greater progress as we steer our nation, focused on further strengthening our open, democratic and inclusive society.

Among the dignitaries present on the occasion were Shri Justice P. Sathasivam, Governor of Kerala; Shri PinarayiVijayan, Chief Minister of Kerala; Justice Shri Thottathil B. Radhakrishnan, Acting Chief Justice, Kerala High Court; Prof. P.J. Kurien, Deputy Chairman of Rajya Sabha; Shri Ramesh Chennithala, Leader of Opposition, Kerala Legislative Assembly; Shri OommenChandy, former Chief Minister of Kerala and Prof. K.V. Thomas, Member of Parliament.

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