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"Strong Research Foundation Critical for Establishing World Class Universities" - President Mukherjee

- Knowledge mobilization through quality higher education is pivotal to the socio-economic development of the nation; Shri Pranab Mukherjee, President of India
- Aspire India Scholars Programme (Summer School) and Jindal School of Journalism and Communication launched
- We must prevent our demographic dividend from becoming a demographic disaster – JGU Chancellor, Mr. Naveen Jindal
- India does not have a single university in the top 25 Asian universities while China has 5 universities – JGU, Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Raj Kumar



Shri Pranab Mukherjee, President of India called on universities and institutions of the country for creating a higher education roadmap that focusses on critical elements of research, knowledge creation, institutional excellence and global benchmarking. He said these were fundamental ingredients for setting up world-class universities in the country.

President Mukherjee was speaking at the recently concluded international conference on 'Universities of the Future: Knowledge, Innovation and Responsibility', a 3-day forum that sought to examine the future of Indian universities in the 21st century. Organised by International Institute for Higher Education Research and Capacity Building (IIHED) of O. P. Jindal Global University (JGU), the international forum was held from 18-20th of March, 2017 at the JGU campus in Sonapat, Haryana.

Speaking on the occasion, President Mukherjee emphasised that the education system should take on the challenge of tapping the 'demographic dividend' while also pitching for a stronger industry-academia partnership. "Knowledge mobilization through quality higher education is pivotal to the socio-economic development of a nation. Innovation and futuristic universities are the driving force behind this," he said.

President Mukherjee also observed that future universities must establish strong linkages with various stakeholders in the society. "Unless we have strong foundations of basic research, our futuristic university plans will be seriously jeopardised," he added.

The President further noted that the Indian higher education system had lost its global competitiveness with the passage of time and lamented that no Indian university currently figured amongst the top 200 universities of the world. "Though there are 757 universities, 36000 colleges, 30 NIT's and 116 IIT's in the country their engagement in international research is negligible. There is an urgent need to improve education systems in terms of the quality of instruction, faculty, research and capacity building," Mukherjee said.

Shree Rambilas Sharma, Education Minister, Haryana said, "Knowledge, innovation and responsibility have been Indian patents since ancient times. Knowledge is not only our past, but is our future."

Mr. Naveen Jindal, Founding Chancellor, JGU, said, "The universities of the future must become central pillars of growth and development of a nation that churn out not only intelligent minds but also develop a strong intellect. Our universities must be transformed into sites of active learning and research which can act as launch pads for innovation and path-breaking ideas." Chancellor Jindal also highlighted the pivotal role of the education sector, and said, "If India is to achieve a higher growth rate and improve its position in the human development index, the education sector of the country must be nurtured very carefully."

"We must prevent our demographic dividend from becoming a demographic disaster, our universities must aim at knowledge creation and capacity building than just granting degrees," noted Mr. Jindal.

Chancellor Jindal also announced the launch of the Jindal School of Journalism and

Communication (JSJC) and Aspire India Scholars Programme (AISP). JSJC is the 6th interdisciplinary school of JGU and will offer opportunities for education, research and capacity building in media and communication studies.

AISP is a unique summer school for high school students which aims to provide students with global perspectives, holistic learning and ethical engagement for students through theme-based experiential learning modules in 6 interdisciplinary areas of Law, Justice and Democracy (LJD); Business Management, Leadership and Entrepreneurship (BLE); Diplomacy International Relations & Peace (DIP); Economy, Public policy and Development (EPD); Liberal arts, Culture and Humanities (LCH); Media Communication & Public Affairs (MCPA).

Welcoming the first citizen of India to the JGU campus, Prof. C Raj Kumar, Vice Chancellor, JGU, observed, "As a visitor to over 116 institutions, President Mukherjee has galvanised social and intellectual consciousness towards advancing the cause of higher education. His presidency has been defined through the contribution that he has singularly made towards advancing the cause of higher education in the country. We are proud and honoured to have him amidst us today."

Introducing the theme of the conference, Vice-Chancellor Kumar said, "The Indian higher education system is facing many challenges, as issues related to quality, quantity, accessibility and equity are simultaneously being addressed. While there has been an effort to address the challenge of expansion and provide opportunities to access higher education, a lot more needs to be done."

Prof. Kumar further observed, "India does not have a single university in the top 25 Asian universities while China has 5 universities in those rankings, besides Hong Kong, Singapore, Taiwan and many other countries. We need to introspect and think about the future of universities which will enable and empower us to contribute towards institution building for nation building."

"I have always maintained that while Make in India is important for developing business and advancing economic opportunities, the future of India will depend upon the making of India through academic institutions and universities," he said.

The Conference was a culmination of a range of ideas and perspectives that aimed to shape India's aspirations of building world-class universities through comparative and international dimensions.

The aim of the forum was to create higher education opportunities that will enable the future generations of students to pursue world-class education in world-class universities in India.