

**Address by Shri Ch Vidyasagar Rao, Governor of Maharashtra and Chancellor of Universities in the State at the Round Table Conference on 'Globalization of Higher Education in the State of Maharashtra: Way Forward' at the Convocation Hall, Fort Campus, Mumbai at 9.30 AM on Friday 28<sup>th</sup> August 2015**

**Shri Vinod Tawde Ji**, Hon'ble Minister of Higher & Technical and Medical Education, **Shri Ravindra Waikar Ji**, Minister of State, **Dr Raghunath Mashelkar Ji**, well known Science leader of India, **Dr Sanjay Chahande**, Principal Secretary, Higher Education, **Dr Sanjay Deshmukh**, Vice Chancellor, University of Mumbai, Vice Chancellors of other Universities, academicians, members of boards of various authorities, senior government officers and friends,

At the outset I congratulate the organizers for organizing this Round Table on the theme '**Globalization of Higher Education in the State of Maharashtra: The Way Forward**'. As Chancellor of universities in Maharashtra, the subject is very dear to my heart. I have great expectations from this Round Table as I believe that the deliberations will throw up innovative ideas for achieving the much desired goal of attaining global standards of higher education in Maharashtra.

The policies of globalization and liberalization initiated in the year 1991 transformed Indian economy and put India on the path of growth trajectory.

But, speaking for higher education, India had already achieved global standards thousands of years ago. Our universities like Nalanda and Takshashila were centres of global learning.

Albert Einstein had paid rich tributes to the contribution of Indians when he said, "**We owe a lot to the Indians, who taught us how to count, without which no worthwhile scientific discovery could have been made.**"

Science and technology in ancient and medieval India covered all the major branches of human knowledge and activities, including mathematics, astronomy, physics, chemistry, medical science and surgery, fine arts, civil engineering and architecture, etc. At the same time, Indians were leaders in philosophy, theosophy, art, culture, music, sculpture and other fine arts.

Such was the power and sweep of India's cultural heritage that **Hu Shih**, who was China's Ambassador to the United States during 1938-1942 had said, and I quote: "**India Conquered and dominated China culturally for 20 centuries without ever having to send a single soldier across her border.**" (Unquote)

That was globalization in the true sense. And therefore so far as globalization of higher education is concerned, all that we have to do is to reclaim our leadership and past glory.

But times have changed and contexts have changed. It is a fact that none of our universities features among the top 200 universities in the world. There are of course some islands of excellence; but these are few and far between.

Our universities and colleges are expected to meet the hopes and aspirations of students. On one hand, we expect them to offer international learning experience to students, on the other hand we expect them to equip our students with skills that would enable them to get decent jobs.

Many poor parents send their children for higher education with the single hope that a degree from the University will guarantee their son a decent job and give him a better quality of life.

My question is : Are we not accountable to the students, to their parents and to the nation?

There are four major goals in higher education, namely Excellence, Expansion, Equity and Employability. In many ways these are interlinked.

We have done fairly well in achieving expansion. But this has adversely affected the quality of higher education.

Only last month, I attended a meeting of intellectuals and business leaders on improving the standards of engineering education in Maharashtra at Raj Bhavan.

**I was shocked to hear that a Survey conducted by an IT firm found that the average mathematical and problem solving ability of a 21 year old engineering graduate from India was lower than the average 15 - year old in OECD countries.**

It was broadly agreed at the meeting to identify 50 engineering colleges in Maharashtra and bring them on par with the College of Engineering, Pune which has been transformed into an IIT-like institution with the help of mentoring arrangement with IIT Bombay.

**Since the Hon'ble Minister is present amidst us today, I would like to request him to constitute a Committee of experts to prepare a roadmap for transformation of 50 engineering colleges in Maharashtra into Centres of Excellence in five years.**

What is true of engineering is also true of other disciplines. It would be ideal that we set for ourselves the following five specific goals:

- 1. Nurture at least two universities in Maharashtra which will find a place among the top 100 universities in the world.**
- 2. Develop at least ten universities and 50 Colleges into Centres of National Excellence.**
- 3. Develop at least one college in every Taluka or Town into a Centre of State Excellence.**

4. **Promote research and problem solving culture in every university and college in the State by taking up socially useful research projects**
5. **Provide every student higher education equipped with skills that would make him or her employable.**

Now, I will briefly touch upon the pre-requisites that must be attended to on priority:

**The first and foremost pre-requisite is shortage of good teachers. Faculty shortage has become a severe constraint in the pursuit of excellence in education. It is clear that we are not getting enough teachers through qualifying examinations like NET and SET. We need to consider seriously whether lowering the bar would help us get a large pool of good teachers. We also need to see how we can encourage more post graduates to go for Ph D and research.**

**Till such time, Maharashtra should think of inviting competent retired teachers as well as professionals from industry to take up teaching assignments.**

**In this context, I will ask the Vice Chancellors to prepare a White Paper on infrastructure and availability of teachers, and student-teacher ratio in every university department and affiliated colleges, and see whether there is any mismatch between the approved strength and actual strength of teachers.**

The second pre-requisite is autonomy. Our universities and Centres of Excellence must be encouraged to opt for full academic, administrative and financial autonomy. Thought should also be given to appointing Board of Governors having eminent people from all walks of life to guide the institutions and design new need-based programmes. We must use the potential and expertise of respected people like Dr Mashelkar, Dr Kakodkar and others. I believe, this will infuse new ideas in the realm of higher education planning and delivery.

The third pre-requisite is funding. Time has come for a policy that encourages and enables universities and affiliated colleges to raise additional non-governmental resources through innovative means with proper accountability norms. **One such innovative approach could be to raise at least Rs.1000 crore in the next five years by way of donations from alumni and other philanthropists and corporate donors.**

The fourth pre-requisite is to introduce examination reforms. Our universities have largely become examination-conducting bodies with little scope for quality improvement. Irregularities in conducting examinations have become frequent. It has therefore become absolutely necessary to bring reforms in university administration. Our universities must adopt best practices from the best national and foreign universities in terms of good governance and efficient administration.

Today Vice Chancellors and Deans of various foreign universities come to India, organize education fairs and attract our students to their universities. I do feel that our universities must market themselves aggressively and attract foreign students.

**Ladies and gentlemen,**

For too long we have produced armies of job seekers who added the ranks of employment exchanges. I want our universities to produce leaders in every discipline. I want our universities to nurture youths to become entrepreneurs, innovators and job-creators. The Hon'ble Prime Minister has given the call 'Start up India, Stand up India'. I want universities in Maharashtra to become breeding grounds of innovation and enterprise.

I have great hopes from the Universities in Maharashtra. Maharashtra must provide leadership to the nation in achieving global excellence in higher education and enable our students to unfurl the flag of Maharashtra in the comity of nations.

**Thank you.**