

**Press Information Bureau  
Government of India**

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**Ministry of Human Resource Development**

**AN EDUCATED SKILLED, HEALTHY EMPOWERED PEOPLE ARE  
AN ASSET -ARJUN SINGH**

**TWO-DAY CONFERENCE OF STATE EDUCATION MINISTERS  
INAUGURATED**

**12:10 IST**

Shri Arjun Singh, Human Resource Development Minister has said that an educated skilled, healthy empowered people are an asset and the challenge before us is to ensure that each and every citizen of India is an asset. Shri Singh was inaugurating the Conference of State Education Minister here today. Ministry of HRD has convened a two-day conference of State Education Ministers (April 10-11) in New Delhi. The conference will deliberate on issues concerning the entire gamut of education such as elementary, secondary, higher and technical education so that maximum possible progress can be achieved during the XIth Plan in the education sector in terms of access, equity, quality and efficiency.

The recent initiatives of the Central Government for the XI Plan such as the extension of Mid-Day Meal Scheme to the upper primary stage and increasing the Central Plan outlay for Secondary Education, bulk of which will go as assistance to State Governments are some of the areas where Centre would look forward to the feedback from the States.

Following is the full text of the speech:

"I am delighted to welcome you all to this Conference. We had organised a Conference of State Ministers of Higher Education in Bangalore in January 2005 and had also met at meetings of the CABE, in the same year. Today we are meeting at the commencement of the XIth Plan, and the main objective is to jointly take stock and to plan ahead so that we achieve maximum possible progress during the XIth Plan in the education sector in terms of access, equity, quality and efficiency.

2. Our Prime Minister has recently stated, "For too long we have viewed the size of our population as an economic and social liability. However, an educated skilled, healthy empowered people are an asset. The challenge before us is to ensure that each and every citizen of India is an asset."

3. We live in the era of Globalization. Liberalization and privatization are held out as the keys to economic progress. However, we are clear in our mind that when more than 40% of our population is in the age group of 6-24 and when education has been identified as the most crucial element in the national developmental effort, the role of the government in providing education has necessarily to increase and not diminish.

**4. Some Major Achievements**

I would like to say a few words on what we have been able to achieve in the Xth Plan, especially since the assumption of office by the UPA Government.

- The Plan Budget of the HRD Ministry has been substantially raised from about Rs.7025 crores in the year 2003-04 to Rs.20745.5 crores in 2006-07 and now for the year 2007-08, in the budget, a Plan outlay of Rs.28674 crores which is an increase of 38.2% over previous year, has been proposed.
- **Central assistance** to States for elementary education, notably for the **flagship programmes** of SSA and MDM which was around Rs.4647 crores in 2003-04 has been **increased massively** to about Rs. 16893 crores in 2006-07.
- With the help of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan and Mid-Day Meals Scheme, as also their own schemes, States have managed to substantially reduce the number of out-of-school children at the elementary stage. **Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER)** at the **elementary level** in 2004-05 stands at **93.5%**. Infrastructure and teacher pupil ratio at the elementary level are also improving where SSA has contributed by opening 2.40 lakh schools, constructing over 98,000 classrooms and appointing 7.38 lakh teachers, all of which should hopefully have a salutary effect on quality.
- 2180 **Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalayas** have been sanctioned upto March 2007, which includes 1000 new KGBVs in 2006-07. 88 % of KGBVs have been operationalised. A major national evaluation conducted this year has shown that the scheme has received 'high priority and political attention in all States and has been launched in record time with a clear commitment to reach out to out-of-school girls. The programme has been very **well received by the community** and has responded to diverse poverty situations including remote inaccessible locations.'
- The nutritional norm for the mid day meal programme was revised from 300 calories to 450 calories, 12 grams of protein and micro-nutrient supplementation. The cooking cost norm was revised to Rs 2 per child per school day with central assistance of Rs 1.80 for the states in the NE Region and Rs 1.50 for other states and UTs. In addition, keeping in view safety and hygiene norms, central assistance was provided for construction of cooking sheds and purchase/ replenishment of kitchen devices. I am happy that in the year 2006-07 we were able to provide assistance for construction of kitchen sheds in 1.94 lakh schools across the country.
- We had circulated a Model Bill on Right to Education for comments from the States. 18 States and UTs have forwarded their comments. We would be happy to receive the views of the remaining States and UTs on the model bill.
- **17 Regional Engineering Colleges and 3 other State Colleges** have been converted into National Institutes of Technology, **fully funded by the Centre**. A Bill to grant statutory status to NITs is now before Parliament.
- To give a boost to education and research in science, **three Indian Institutes of Science Education & Research**, at Pune, Kolkata and Mohali, have been sanctioned, of which the first two

have already started functioning. The third one at Mohali is expected to start functioning from this academic year 2007. The UGC is also taking action to implement the recommendations of the 'Prof. M.M.Sharma Task Force on Strengthening Basic Science Research in Universities'.

**Article 15 of the Constitution was amended** by near unanimity by the Parliament in January 2006 to enable reservation for SCs, STs and other Socially and Economically Backward Classes in admission to educational institutions. To follow up on this, I had requested all Chief Ministers in January 2006 to enact State-specific legislations. According to information available with us, 6 States (Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand) have so far done so while Rajasthan has issued an executive order. We would look forward to getting feedback from Hon'ble Ministers of other States in this behalf.

As regards Central institutions, the **Central Educational Institutions (Reservation in Admission) Act has been enacted** and notified in January 2007. The Hon'ble Supreme Court has in its interim order stated that it would be desirable to keep in hold the operation of this Act so far as it relates to Section 6 thereof for the OBCs. The Government is examining all legal options to resolve this issue at the earliest.

**Plan assistance to State Universities** has been made into a separate budget item under UGC assistance since 2006-07. The allocation under this head in 2006-07 was Rs. 755 crores which has been **raised to Rs. 1193 crores** in 2007-08, which is a major jump. I would urge State Governments to work intensively with UGC to fully avail of this enhanced allocation for the development of their respective Universities and other educational institutions.

Through Central Acts passed in 2006, the Rajiv Gandhi National University, Arunachal Pradesh, and Tripura University have been converted from State to Central Universities, while a new University of Sikkim is being established. With this, **all States in the North East** would now have a **Central University each**.

With a view to increasing support to women's education, the UGC has raised the amounts available for the construction of women's hostels from Rs. 25 lakhs to Rs. 2 crores in metro cities and Rs. 1 crore elsewhere and I am happy to state that in the last year about Rs.130 crores was spent by UGC for Women's hostels and in the current year, further impetus would be given to this item of work.

With a view to attract talent and encourage research, UGC has announced a substantial increase in the fellowship amounts for the NET qualified PhD students from the existing Rs. 8000 per month to Rs. 12000 per month along with the existing percentage of HRA and contingencies. Further, corresponding enhancements have also been announced for the subsequent years as well as for Research Associates. Even for the Non-NET qualified candidates, the existing amounts of PhD fellowships which were introduced at the rate of Rs. 5000 per month in the year 2006 in the Central Universities, are proposed to be enhanced by almost 50%, besides increasing the coverage by including all State Universities with Potential for Excellence, all University Departments with Centres for Advanced Studies

(CAS) and Special Assistance Programmes (SAP), all Departments assisted by the Fund for Infrastructure for Science & Technology (FIST) and all autonomous colleges and institutions having NAAC or NBA accreditations and having been running PhD programmes for at least the previous five years. This will be applicable from 1.4.07.

- The HRD Ministry has launched a very comprehensive learning portal called “**Sakshat**” in October 2006. Some details regarding this portal would be presented in the course of this Conference. “**Sakshat**” is a major step towards our commitment to bring education within reach of every Indian, regardless of his or her age, using the best of modern technology.
- A statutory **National Commission on Minority Educational Institutions** has been established, which is also empowered to adjudicate on complaints relating to denial of minority status to educational institutions.
- A Committee headed by my colleague, Sri M.A.A.Fatmi has given its recommendations for giving a boost to Minority Education in the light of the Sachar Committee Report. These recommendations are under consideration.

#### **5. Major Initiatives for 2007-08 and the XI th Plan**

As you are aware the National Development Council has considered the Approach Paper to the XI Five Year Plan and the consequential exercise to formulate the XI Plan is currently in progress. Your inputs at this juncture will be extremely timely and useful as it will be our endeavour to factor in your valuable inputs in our XI Plan proposals. The Central Government has already taken certain initiatives and identified certain thrust areas for the XI Plan, some of which are:

- The Centrally sponsored **Mid-Day Meal** Scheme, which was so far limited to children of the Primary stage, is being **extended** to the Upper Primary Stage in educationally backward blocks, with suitably modified nutritional and funding norms.
- For the first time in decades we have received significant funding for Teacher Education. The Teacher Education outlays have been enhanced from Rs 180 crores in 2006-07 to Rs 500 crores for 2007-08. We hope that we will be able to provide support to the states for opening DIETs or DRCs in districts that do not have them. We also hope to be able to inspire you to initiate systematic and relevant training programmes to address the problem of untrained and para teachers in the country. The XIth Plan will, indeed, be a *Quality* Plan. Content specific training for teachers, especially at the secondary stage and training for educational administrators to address systemic problems will consequently be the thrust area for the XIth Plan period.
- Central Plan outlay for **Secondary Education** has been increased in a big way from Rs. 1,087 crores in 2006-07 to **Rs. 3,164 crores** in 2007-08. The bulk of this will go as assistance to State Governments to universalize access to, and improve quality of secondary education. I had requested Chief Ministers to take preparatory steps in this regard, and would look forward to your feedback on consequential action being taken.
- In view of the fact that existing intake capacity in polytechnics is only about 3 lakhs which is about half of that in engineering colleges, a scheme is proposed, though polytechnic education is

primarily a State subject, for **establishing polytechnics** in districts which have no polytechnic at present as well as to strengthen the infrastructure of polytechnics in special identified districts. The Community Polytechnic scheme is proposed to be revamped during the XI Plan and your valuable inputs in this regard, would go a long way in coming out with a very meaningful scheme.

It is proposed to establish **two** more Indian Institutes of Science Education & Research (at Thiruvananthapuram and Bhopal) and **3 new IITs** (in Andhra Pradesh, Bihar and Rajasthan). A **seventh IIM** is being established at Shillong. **2 new Schools** of Planning and Architecture are also proposed to be started at Vijayawada and Bhopal. A **new IIIT** (Design and Manufacturing) will be established at Kanchipuram in Tamil Nadu. Establishment of **another 20 IIITs** is also under consideration so as to cover all major States, with preference being given to States not having an IIIT at present. Planning Commission has suggested that this may be done in the Public-Private Participation mode. While stating the above, I am painfully aware of the fact that all States wish to have an IIT/IIM/IIIT/IISER etc., but it may be appreciated that it can be got done in a phased manner only depending on the availability of resources. We have to also ensure that the Quality and Brand of our institutions of excellence do not get compromised in our anxiety to increase the number of such institutions.

We have also decided, in principle, to provide assistance towards upgradation of 5 Engineering Colleges to the level of an IIT, and name them as Indian Institutes of Science and Engineering Technology, subject to the concurrence of the concerned State Governments to hand them over to Central Government for declaring them as Institutes of National Importance.

We have concentrated on expansion in Technical education given its scope and relevance for our youth. I am glad to announce that AICTE has decided to permit 10% increase in the existing intake on a voluntary basis subject to the condition that the increased number of seats would be awarded in the ratio of 2:3:1 to meritorious women, economically weaker sections and differently abled students without charging any tuition fees.

The quality of higher and technical education would be considerably enhanced if all our institutions of higher learning get **networked**. The Ministry would consider providing some assistance to State Governments towards **non-recurring costs** of networking their institutions provided States prepare good, viable plans in this behalf, and agree to bear all other costs. I would also like all the States to direct the institutions under their control to provide high speed internet facilities to all their faculty members which will go a long way in updating the knowledge of their faculty leading to enhanced quality of teaching.

Pursuant to the consensus evolved in the Conference of State Ministers of Higher Education at Bangalore in January 2005, our draft Bill to regulate foreign education providers is ready. We hope to introduce the Bill in Parliament very soon. We also hope to finalize and introduce the Distance Education Council Bill soon.

## **6. Some Major Issues for discussion**

There are, of course, several major issues which need to be continuously discussed between Central and State Governments. I would however like to flag a few important ones for consideration in this Conference.

- Despite our various achievements and the increased financial outlays, we are still quite some distance away from the goal of every child completing eight years of good quality education. What should we now do to accomplish the goal of **Universal Elementary Education** (UEE) by the end of the XIth Plan? Specifically, how, towards this end do we optimize resource use, improve implementation of SSA and MDM, motivate and train teachers adequately, improve attendance rates and make elementary education truly child-centred?
- Surveys of **attainment levels** of our school-children do not give much cause for satisfaction. How do we improve achievement levels of children in elementary and secondary schools, especially state funded ones?
- CABE had approved the **National Curriculum Framework** formulated by NCERT in September 2005. Since then NCERT has formulated syllabi and developed new textbooks for use by the CBSE schools. The challenge is for States and UTs to begin the process of curricular reform. I would be happy for feedback on how States and UTs are meeting this challenge.
- What action is being taken by States to meet their **enhanced share under SSA** in the XIth Plan?
- Though much has been achieved, many States such as West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand, MP, Rajasthan, Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Meghalaya, Orissa and Bihar, still need to open large numbers of **upper primary schools** so as to provide adequate access. What steps are these States taking in this regard?
- A target of **increasing the literacy rate to 85%** by the end of the 11th plan has been set. The gender gap in literacy is aimed to be lowered to 10 percentage points. This would in effect mean a target for male literacy of 90% and of 80% for female literacy. The 35+ age group will be the focus of adult education activities in the XIth Plan. The use of ICT for literacy has been emphasized. The schemes of 'Literacy Campaigns and Operation Restoration' and 'Continuing Education' have been merged and renamed 'Adult Education and Skill Development.' Skill development is also the focus of the schemes for Grants in aid to NGOs and Jan Shikshan Sansthanas now merged and renamed as 'Support to NGOs/Institutions/ SRCs for Adult Education and Skill Development.' The NLM in its revamped strategy for the 11th plan has focused on literacy linked with Livelihoods Governance and Rights. There is need for renewed emphasis on adult education if our literacy targets are to be met.
- What steps should be taken to increase the **Gross Enrolment Ratio** for higher and technical education from the present about 10% to at least 15% by the end of the XIth Plan?
- Despite increased outlays, we are still quite far from the goal of spending **6% of GDP** on education, which has been reiterated in the Approach paper to the XIth Plan. How best can this

responsibility be equitably shared between the Centre and the States?

How do we improve **quality of higher education**, especially in State-funded colleges and Universities? I understand that more than one third of teaching posts in State Universities are vacant. In many States, this is, perhaps, due to a ban on fresh recruitment, which needs to be urgently reviewed. The UGC, on its part, has tried to facilitate your filling up of the vacancies by waiving NET qualification for PhD candidates for teaching at post graduate level and for M.Phil candidates at the undergraduate level. We have recently decided to raise the retirement age for teachers in Central higher educational institutions from 62 to 65 years. States may wish to consider following suit, to address faculty shortage.

State Universities need to consider educational reforms by introducing the semester and credit systems, and adopting/adapting UGC-approved curricula with a view to improving the quality. It may be desirable to encourage all State level educational institutions of higher learning to go for **NAAC** accreditation or **NBA** accreditation in case of technical institutions. With a view to encourage accreditation, UGC reimburses the full cost of the NAAC accreditation process.

What further steps should be taken to bridge the existing gap in the participation and achievement rates of disadvantaged groups, notably girls, Scheduled Castes and Tribes, minorities and the differently-abled? During the next two days, we must, in my view, come up with some concrete steps to ensure that all our institutions, at every level, become compliant with the Central law to make them barrier free besides being energy efficient and environment friendly.

In the interest of promoting **Minorities'** education, I would urge States to be far more proactive in seeking central assistance under schemes of Madrasa modernization and appointment of Urdu language teachers. Special efforts will have to be made in the States to mobilise the minorities so that they avail of the educational facilities being provided by the States. Of course, in this regard, especially for encouraging minority girls, States are requested to have more women teachers, create more hostel facilities for girls, create more educational institutions in the minority concentration blocks and arrange for teaching of modern subjects in Urdu medium.

What steps should be taken in the field of vocational education, polytechnic education and higher and technical education so that we produce **adequate employable manpower** with high degree of relevant skills to meet the needs of our growing economy and to provide suitable avenues of gainful employment to our youth?

One essential step towards increasing the number of skilled persons is **increased State investment in polytechnic** education. A recent study has shown that while 80% of all degree granting engineering institutions are in the private sector, the corresponding figure for the polytechnic sector is lower than 20%. States must both increase investment in this essential sector and also encourage private investment. It is also necessary to better utilize the existing available infrastructure in the engineering colleges and polytechnics by having additional evening courses.

Several **emerging areas in Engineering** require very good knowledge in **Science**. The specific areas include Biotechnology, Material Science and Engineering, Electronics, Nano-technology and Polymer Science & Engineering. Good B.Sc students currently do not have opportunities to enter into these areas of technical education. To enhance their employability and to pursue research and innovation in these emerging areas. AICTE has recently approved lateral entry for B.Sc passed students in the 2<sup>nd</sup> year of undergraduate programmes in engineering and have recommended starting of Integrated M.Tech programmes of four years duration for B.Sc students with Mathematics as one of the subjects. The admitted students will get two degrees, a B.Tech and a M.Tech together at the end of four years.

An exercise done by us late last year revealed wide variations in **availability of seats in technical education** institutions per lakh population across States. I accordingly wrote to Hon'ble Chief Ministers of 12 large States, Bihar, Assam, Jharkhand, West Bengal, Himachal Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, UP, Rajasthan, Orissa, J&K, Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh, in November last year to take urgent steps to rapidly augment intake in technical education in their respective States so that they catch up with the national average and their students are not deprived of the opportunities of technical education in their home states. We are still waiting for substantive responses to the above letter, and I would look forward to getting some feedback from the Hon'ble Ministers of these States on this subject during the session on Technical Education.

How can we maximize use of ICT, including **EDUSAT** to widen access and improve quality of education at various stages? It is rather unfortunate that at present, the usage of EDUSAT is highly inadequate. Only 14 States have till now executed tripartite agreements with ISRO and this Ministry, for the utilization of EDUSAT. I urge the rest of the States and UTs to expeditiously sign the tripartite agreements and operationalise State-level Hubs and Sub-Hubs besides establishing Satellite Interactive Terminals (SIT) and Receive Only Terminals (ROT) in the educational institutions.

Ministry of HRD has been implementing the **INDEST-AICTE** consortium since 2002-2003 with the objective to procure e-journals and other electronic resources for academic activities through a centralized subscription process, for redistribution among its members. The University Grants Commission is implementing a similar scheme, namely **INFLIBNET**. State Governments may kindly encourage Universities/technical institutions in their States to join these consortia. This access to copyrighted journals would give impetus to research resulting in higher number of research publications and patents, etc.

The Indira Gandhi National Open University (**IGNOU**) has an extensive reach across the States; however this could be greatly strengthened if institutional premises could be made available to IGNOU for the setting up of study centers and other uses. Such partnerships could also lead to double-degree programmes. IGNOU would be happy to reimburse all variable costs and also will be willing to pay honoraria to those teachers who would be willing to put in extra hours of work on this account without in any way compromising with their normal work.

6. There are also some general points which feature on our agenda and to which I would like to call attention.

- We have informed State Governments that starting 1 July 2007, they must assume full responsibility for the work of **authentication** of educational certificates (and that we will cease to perform this function) so that their candidates do not have to travel all the way up to Delhi for this routine work. State Governments, which have not yet done so, must put all necessary systems into place before 1<sup>st</sup> July.
- Educational **statistics**, which should be the basis for any sound planning, are generally in a poor shape. This needs urgent attention and we seek your cooperation in this regard and would request you to also strengthen and revamp your statistical agencies.
- We have not been able to fully utilize allocations under certain Centrally sponsored schemes due to non-receipt of requisite **Utilisation Certificates** (UC) from State Governments. I regret to note that even funds meant for scholarships have lapsed on this account. State Governments and their Universities and other agencies need to give special attention to timely submission of UCs.
- States may also urgently consider setting up State **Councils of Higher Education**. According to available information, only Andhra Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal and Tamil Nadu have done this so far.

7. I recognize that Hon'ble State Ministers will have a lot to say on these issues mentioned by me as also other issues of their interest. However, as we have a very heavy agenda before us, I would request them to be brief in their interventions and to stick to the issues being discussed in each session so that everyone gets a chance to speak and enrich the discussions. Hon'ble Ministers who have brought printed speeches may please get them handed over to us for distribution instead of reading them out. All such speeches will form part of the proceedings of this Conference but in the interest of time management, they may be taken as read.

8. I hope that with your cooperation and valuable inputs our deliberations will be fruitful and will help all of us to come up with a very meaningful XI Five Year Plan."

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HB/RP/SB