

**SPEECH BY THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA, SHRI PRANAB
MUKHERJEE TO THE DELEGATES OF THE TIMES HIGHER
EDUCATION “BRICS AND EMERGING ECONOMIES’
UNIVERSITIES” SUMMIT**

Rashtrapati Bhavan: Dec 2, 2015

1. I am indeed happy to have this opportunity to address the delegates of the Times Higher Education BRICS and Emerging Economies’ Universities Summit, 2015. I welcome the distinguished participants. I congratulate the Times Higher Education and their partner in India - O.P. Jindal Global University - for taking the initiative to organize this Summit on the important issue of “Why Emerging Economies Need World Class Universities”. I am happy that representatives from countries in BRICS region and many emerging as well as developed economies have gathered in this Summit to deliberate on challenges facing the higher education sector and on the importance of global bench-marking of educational institutions.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

2. India has one of the world's largest higher education system comprising 712 universities and over 36,000 colleges. The expansion of higher education network in India has enabled us to create access to higher education across the country. However, the quality of education in our institutes of higher learning remains a big challenge.

3. There was a time when India played a dominant role in the higher education system and we had renowned seats of learning like *Takshashila, Nalanda, Vikramashila, Valabhi, Somapura and Odantapuri*. However after them we have not been able to find a place in world rankings which is commensurate with our size, culture and civilization. India now has to work towards regaining that glory of the past. Being Visitor to 114 institutions of higher learning, I had been regularly emphasizing on how to improve rankings. I refused to believe that not a single university could come up to the standard required for being in the top two hundred universities in the international rankings.

4. I am happy that recently, two Indian institutions have been ranked amongst the top 200 universities in the world. One of the institutions is in the top 100 institutions in the engineering and technology category. It is my firm belief that there are many higher education institutions in India that have the potential to become one of the best in the world.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

5. The quality of education has a direct co-relation with inclusive growth and development. Emerging economies facing the challenge of meeting the developmental aspirations of their citizens must build an educational system comparable to the best in the world. A serious discourse on how to address the quality concerns in higher education should therefore begin at the earliest.

6. The higher education sector in India must align itself with the global education sector. The first University Commission of independent India, popularly known as the *Radhakrishnan* Commission of 1948, pointed out that universities need to have 'world-mindedness and national sentiments'. In the recent times, there has been a growing interest in world-class universities amongst scholars, institutional administrators and policy makers. A world-class university in today's time is one that can address the global problems of society having the entire world as its constituency.

7. Most bench-marking agencies give considerable weightage to research output and international outlook of an educational institution. To meet bench-marks, institutions need to provide greater emphasis on quality research that is recognized globally. This would help in their efforts to become world-class. What is needed further is for such

aspiring universities to reach out, communicate, exchange and encourage mobility of persons and ideas across the globe. Adopting a world-view would help an institution getting accepted by the global community of higher education. It will also add to its 'academic repute', a parameter considered by many global bench-marking and rating agencies, Times Higher Education in particular.

8. Over and above a focused attention on cutting-edge research and an international orientation, world-class universities must possess other enviable features. Some of them, to my mind, are high quality faculty members, meritorious students, an encouraging teaching learning environment, a high level of resource availability, sound infrastructure, and existence of considerable autonomy and robust governance structure. Presence of these elements in an institution would automatically reflect in higher international rankings.

9. Having said that, the parameters of global rankings, many a times, do not reflect the ground realities and socio-political conditions prevalent in various countries. Many countries have therefore adopted their own ranking mechanism with parameters more suited to the domestic setting. In the case of India, a 'National Institutional Ranking Framework' has been developed recently to evaluate educational

institutions. The National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) also operate in familiar territory, assessing and accrediting institutions of higher education in our country. I believe these national counterparts of the international rankings system will only reinforce and concretize the push towards accountability and quality in educational institutions. At the same time, they will inspire better performance of institutions leading to improved international rankings.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

10. The five BRICS economies represent over 3 billion people, which is 42 percent of the world population. They have a combined GDP of over 16 trillion US dollars with a world share of 20 percent, and foreign exchange reserves of over 4 trillion US dollars. In this context, the Times Higher Education 'BRICS and Emerging Economies Universities Ranking' is an acknowledgment of the potential which exists in the higher education sector in these five countries.

11. In today's era of globalization, which rests on the pillars of Collaboration, Cooperation and Communication, there are ample opportunities to use these "3Cs" to create many world class universities. The combined strength of the five BRICS nations can develop an educational eco-system for their citizens as well as for the world citizens. I hope that this Summit will come out with innovative

solutions, with the cooperation of the private sector, for the emerging economies to further strengthen their higher education system and in the process emerge as leaders.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

12. I once again compliment the Times Higher Education and O.P. Jindal Global University for taking the initiative and hosting this Summit to facilitate a greater understanding of the challenges of the higher education sector by all stakeholders. I am confident that this conclave will bring out new ideas and thoughts that are important for policy makers and educationists to build world class universities in the developing world. I wish all the participants and delegates of this Summit a very successful outcome of their endeavour. I welcome guests from outside India and wish for them not only a productive outcome of the Summit but also a comfortable stay amidst us. I wish the Summit great success.

Thank you.

Jai Hind.