

**SPEECH BY THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA, SHRI PRANAB
MUKHERJEE AT THE CONVOCATION OF SRM
UNIVERSITY**

Chennai, Tamil Nadu: 28-12-2012

I am happy to participate in the Convocation of the SRM University. It is a pleasure to be amongst some of the brightest young minds in the country.

2. I am very happy to know that SRM University is today a multi stream university with over 33000 students and 2300 faculty members, offering a wide range of programmes in Engineering, Management, Medicine, Science and Humanities. Students have a wide choice of cutting edge programmes including nanotechnology, bioinformatics, genetic engineering, remote sensing and GIS embedded systems, computer forensics, etc. to choose from.

3. The University has a Sivaji Ganesan Film Institute which offers B.Sc in Film Technology, the first of its kind and an IAS Coaching Academy which offers training for the Civil Services Examinations. The Community Medicine department runs a rural health centre and an urban health centre. It conducts Health camps frequently and the University has signed an MoU

with the Government of Tamil Nadu for a special Tribal health project.

4. I believe SRM University is also the first private University in India to design, develop and launch a satellite - the SRMSAT in collaboration with Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO). The SRMSAT has been in orbit since one year and has completed 5173 orbits.

5. I am delighted to know foreign faculty members, flexible and dynamic curriculum, exciting research and global connections are features that set SRM apart. In the context of meeting the objectives of higher education in today's competitive world, the SRM University has played an outstanding role over the past 27 years.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

6. The country's economic progress is dependent on several critical factors. The quality of our human resources is amongst the most important of them. Higher education is the key to making available a large pool of skilled manpower for our nation.

Higher education not only decides a student's career prospects, but also shapes his or her personality.

7. Our country's education system is burdened with demands of both quantity and quality. The numbers of students who seek admissions in universities today far exceed the capacity of government educational institutions. We need many more universities to be able to address the demands of higher education. And along with quantity, we also need to focus on quality.

8. The standards of higher education in India today need improvement. In ancient India, we had universities like Nalanda and Takshashila which had established themselves as international centers of educational excellence where students from all over the world came and studied. In contrast, many Indian students today choose to go abroad for higher studies.

9. We need universities to provide quality education that meet international benchmarks. We must change the reality of our Universities not figuring in the list of top universities of the world. Indian universities should aim at becoming top educational institutions in the world with global standards of

research, teaching and learning. With unlimited demands and limited resources, it is important that the private sector also contributes its best to the provision of higher education in India. The private sector has played a key role in higher education in other countries across the world. Many top universities including Harvard, Yale and Stanford are the result of efforts of the private sector. There is no reason why Indian private sector cannot achieve similar results.

10. In India, students and parents are often skeptical of private universities. They prefer education in old and established public universities as opposed to private universities which are mostly newly built. To build the trust of the people, private universities must constantly prove themselves because they do not have the benefit of age. They must be able to promise a good future to the students and make sure that they fulfill all of their promises. I am happy to learn that this University has been able to secure good placements for its graduates. While I congratulate the University and the graduates for this, I must also point out that universities should have a vision beyond placements. Universities must satisfy the citizens that they are taking up the cause of education not for private profit but in public service. As

Mahamana Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, the founder of Banaras Hindu University has said Universities should not merely turn out men and women as engineers, scientists, doctors, merchants, theologians, but also as people of high character, probity and honour, whose conduct through life would show that they bear the hallmark of a great university. Of course, financial resources are an important consideration for all universities. But, there must be a vision to create a world class institute and to nurture young people who will change the world into a better place for all of us.

11. Higher education has made significant contribution to economic development, social progress and political democracy in independent India. But there is serious cause for concern at this juncture. As we stand on the threshold of the XII th Five Year Plan, challenges continue to exist with respect to quality and the provision of relevant education. Curricular reforms leading to regular revision and upgrading of curricula, introduction of semester system, choice-based credit system, and examination reforms are yet to take place in many higher educational institutions across the country. There is a clear, almost unanimous, view that higher education needs a

systematic re-look, so that India can educate much larger numbers without diluting academic standards.

12. The objectives of reform and change in our higher education system must be expansion, excellence and inclusion. I understand that the private sector today accounts for about four-fifths of enrolment in professional higher education. The standards of education, however, vary from institute to institute. It is essential that a transparent framework for better service delivery be established in the field of private education. The regulatory mechanism should facilitate accreditation of all educational institutions with clarity on incentives and consequences in order to improve quality, to ensure minimum benchmarks and to promote excellence in higher education.

13. Shortage of good faculty is a matter of serious concern. While the requisite number of good quality teachers cannot be made available overnight, we must tackle the problem by bringing in innovative teaching methodologies such as technology-enabled learning and collaborative information and communication technologies. Our teachers must be exposed to larger number of refresher courses and seminars so as to be up-to-date with the latest concepts in their discipline.

14. The SRM University has made a name for itself by imparting quality higher education in the private sector. It should now strive to spread to other Institutions in the country some of its models of teaching and curricula which are novel and can be emulated. The international advisory board it has established which advises the University on research, curricula and teaching methodology as well as the corporate advisory board which evaluates its engineering and management programmes based on industry trends, are important innovations which need to be adopted by others. The SRM University's programme of arranging opportunities for its students and faculty to meet Nobel Laureates is also worthy of special mention in this regard.

15. I congratulate the Chancellor, Vice Chancellor, faculty members, and non-teaching staff of SRM University on their achievements and wish the University continued success in grooming young men and women to emerge as leaders in their chosen walks of life. As I have already pointed out, education should be seen as a stepping stone to character building and societal development. I hope that all of you will work diligently in future and contribute meaningfully towards nation-building. I urge each one of you graduating today to always remember that

your mission in life should be to wipe every tear from every eye, as exhorted by the father of our nation, Mahatma Gandhi.

16. Let me conclude quoting once again, Mahamana Pt. Madan Mohan Malviya Ji, who, in a convocation address to the Banaras Hindu University, said, "Continue your studies throughout your life. Be just and fear none. Fear only to do that which is ill and ignoble. Stand up for right. Love to serve your fellow-men. Love the motherland. Promote public weal. Do good wherever you get a chance for it. Love to give whatever you can spare."

Thank you.

Jai Hindi
