Science is the cornerstone for progress of mankind: Vice President

Addresses valedictory session of 3rd India International Science Festival – 2017

The Vice President of India, Shri M. Venkaiah Naidu has said that science is the cornerstone for the progress of mankind. He was addressing the valedictory session of the 3rd India International Science Festival – 2017, jointly organised by the Ministry of Science & Technology and Earth Sciences, in Chennai today. The Governor of Tamil Nadu, Shri Banwarilal Purohit, the Union Minister for Science & Technology, Earth Sciences and Environment, Forest & Climate Change, Dr. Harsh Vardhan, the Minister of State for Science & Technology and Earth Sciences, Shri Y.S. Chowdary and other dignitaries were present on the occasion.

The Vice President said the scientific inventions have revolutionized the world and shaped every aspect of the modern life. He further time has come now for every Indian to work towards recapturing our past glory and make India one of the leading nations in scientific and technological innovations.

The Vice President said India to reach new pinnacles in Science & Technology concerted efforts from governments as well as different sections of the society is needed to hugely step up large scale R & D activities in different domains. He further said that artificial Intelligence, robotics, Internet of Things, big data analytics and digital manufacturing are going to change the way we are going to live. Corporate bodies and industries have to set aside an exclusive corpus for encouraging innovative, out-of-the-box R & D projects and disruptive technologies that could provide long-lasting answers to problems faced by the people, he added.

The Vice President said that we need to create an ecosystem for bright researchers to thrive and ensure that youngsters do not get stifled by rules, red tape and favoritism. He further said that they must feel free to discuss ideas and take up innovative research. Ultimately, science should find solutions to the problems faced by mankind and make this planet a better place for the present and future generations, he added.

Following is the text of Vice President's address:

"I am delighted to be present at the India International Science Festival-2017, the third in the series of such events being organized by the Ministry of Science & Technology, Ministry of Earth Sciences and Vijnana Bharati.

Science is the cornerstone for the progress of mankind. Scientific inventions have revolutionized the world and shaped every aspect of the modern life. Indians have made significant contribution to the field of science from ancient times and are now in the forefront in state-of-the-art space technologies and the IT revolution sweeping the world.

Friends, Science & Technology has been part of India's culture and tradition. The scientific bent of mind in ancient India was reflected right from the use of zero, place values, algebra, concept of atom, calculation eclipses, among others. 'Sushruta Samhita' talks of surgery while Charak describes hundreds of diseases, their causes and treatment methods.

The urban settlements of Mohenjo Daro and Harappa, production of highest quality steel and extraction of sugar are other examples when India was more advanced than the rest of the world.

"We owe a lot to the Indians, who taught us how to count, without which no worthwhile scientific discovery could have been made", vouched the great scientist, Albert Einstein.

Well-known writer and philosopher, Will Durant had this to say: "India was the motherland of our race and Sanskrit the mother of Europe's languages. India was the mother of our philosophy, of much of our mathematics, of the ideals embodied in Christianity… of self-government and democracy. In many ways, Mother India is the mother of us all".

After demonstrating our knowledge to the world in the ancient times in the fields of astronomy, mathematics, yoga and ayurveda, India somehow lost its way following Mughal invasions and colonization. The time has now come for every Indian to work towards recapturing our past glory and make India one of the leading nations in scientific and technological innovations in the coming decades.

For this to happen, there has to be concerted efforts from the governments as well as different sections of the society - right from teachers, who mould young minds, to universities and industries, who need to hugely step up R & D activities in different domains. Unless research is taken up on a large scale, India will not be able to reach new pinnacles in Science & Technology.

In spite of the remarkable scientific achievements the world has witnessed from invention of telescope to discovery of Higgs boson, mankind continues to face numerous challenges such as those relating to climate change, global warming, sustainable development, clean energy and water and diseases. Only science can throw up solutions for the present and emerging problems in the years to come. Artificial Intelligence, robotics, Internet of Things, big data analytics and digital manufacturing are going to change the way we are going to live. These areas need to be fully exploited with innovative and disruptive technologies.

Investments in S & T need to be stepped up to address various problems the country is facing today such as poverty, unemployment, pollution, diseases, urban-rural divide, lack of clean drinking water as also the issues relating to crime and security, among others.

Here, I would like to appeal to various corporate bodies and industries to join hands and set up an exclusive corpus for encouraging innovative, out-of-the-box R & D projects and disruptive technologies that could provide long-lasting answers to problems faced by the people.

I am happy that successive governments at the Centre have accorded importance to S & T and created the necessary infrastructure for scientists and academics to pursue their research. CSIR and ICMR are among the leading research bodies and have earned global recognition for their cutting edge work.

My advice to these two premier organizations is to create an ecosystem for bright researchers to thrive and ensure that youngsters do not get stifled by rules, red tape and favoritism. They must feel free to discuss ideas and take up innovative research.

I would like the Department of Science and Technology to work closely with the Ministry of Human Resources to make science learning interesting and interactive right from early schooling. This is needed to inculcate greater interest in science among school students so that more and more

youngsters take up basic research.

I am happy to note that the ministries have aligned their activities with the national agenda of the government towards Make in India, Start up India, Digital India, Swasth Bharat and Swachh Bharat. It is also a matter of pride that Department of Science & Technology is involved in a number of global projects like the 30-meter Telescope Project and Laser Interferometer Gravitational Wave Observatory project. I am also happy to note that India today is among the 12 biotech destinations and ranks third in the Asia-Pacific region. India also has the second highest number of US Food and Drug Administration (USFDA) approved plants after the USA and is the largest producer of recombinant Hepatitis B vaccine.

I am sure this series of India International Science Festivals will generate new ideas and act as a catalyst in promoting scientific temper among the people. Ultimately, science should find solutions to the problems faced by mankind and make this planet a better place for the present and future generations.

JAI HIND!"

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