

SKILL DEVELOPMENT SHOULD BE A CONTINUOUS PROCESS: VICE PRESIDENT

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Vice President's Secretariat

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Innovations must help making the lives of people better;

Character, Calibre, Capacity and Conduct should be the guiding principles for people in public life;

Addresses Diamond Jubilee Celebrations of Educational Institutions run by Nachimuthu Industrial Association

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The Vice President of India, Shri M. Venkaiah Naidu has said that skill development should be a continuous process and the innovations must help making the lives of people better. He was addressing the gathering at the Valedictory of the Diamond Jubilee Celebrations of Educational Institutions run by Nachimuthu Industrial Association (NIA), in Pollachi, Tamil Nadu today.

Calling Arutchelvar Dr. N. Mahalingam, the founder of the institution, an ideal person who had contributed immensely for the uplift of the people living in rural Tamil Nadu, the Vice President said that such qualities should be emulated by young and the politicians of the present generation. Dr. Mahalingam was an MLA, educationist, philanthropist and was a contemporary of Late Kamaraj, C. Subramanya Bharathi, C. Rajagopala Chari. He gave up politics and worked for education & rural development. He was awarded Padma Bhushan to his invaluable social work, he said. Character, Calibre, Capacity and Conduct should be the guiding principles for people in public life, he added.

The Vice President expressed concern over the rising urban rural divide and stressed the need to create urban amenities such as educational institutions, uninterrupted electricity, access to drinking water and medical facilities at affordable cost for the benefit of people. He argued in favour of a bias towards rural areas in allocating funds, creating infrastructure at par with urban areas.

Addressing a young gathering of school children, the Vice President highlighted the need to acquire skills to grab the opportunities in the technology driven job market. Develop the habit of upgrading your skill set in line with the changing technology, he said. Skill development forms a fitting bulwark against the increasing vagaries of the global business environment and honing and polishing skills should be a continuous practice, he added.

Quoting report by a leading employment solutions company that claimed that more than 90% of

the engineering graduates of India were unemployable, the Vice President cautioned the young students understand the seriousness of the situation. He has asked teachers & educational institutions to take a good hard look at the curricula and the teaching method so that the gap between a classroom and the workplace can be bridged.

The Vice President said that government of India is extremely sensitive to the dreams and aspirations of young India and is doing everything possible in its power to support, nurture and empower the youth of the country. It is up to young people to make use of this opportunity, he added.

Tasking the universities, colleges and premier institutions to focus on innovation, the Vice President said that innovations must help making the lives of people better. Innovations should keep in mind the status of our environment as well. He highlighted the need to use Science & Technology to protect the nature and take steps to restore the lost balance in nature.

Earlier the Vice President has inaugurated the Diamond Jubilee Block and the Mirakle Wellness Clinic in the premises and went around the Wellness Centre and interacted with Doctors about the facilities and treatment given to patients.

The Minister for Rural Development and Panchayat Raj, Tamil Nadu, Shri S.P. Velumani, the Chairman, NIA, Dr. M. Manickam, the Secretary, NIA, Dr. C. Ramaswamy, more than 4000 Students, Faculty Members and other dignitaries were present on the occasion.

Following is the text of Vice President's address:

"I am delighted to be here with you today at the valedictory function of the Diamond Jubilee celebration of the Nachimuthu Industrial Association. It is always a pleasure to be amidst young students who would be the builders of a new India, a resurgent India, a resplendent India, an India that is the sum total of a billion dreams, an India that has the ability to nurture and fulfil a billion dreams.

Friends, it is a pleasure to recollect that I was here in this campus in the month of August 2003 to inaugurate the Alumni Centre on the occasion of the Centenary celebrations of the founder, Shri P. Nachimuthu Gounder.

Shri P. Nachimuthu Gounder, the founder of Anamalais Bus Transport Company, father of Arutchelvar Dr. N. Mahalingam, and a great embodiment of hard work and perseverance had a vision to start a technical educational institution in Pollachi. He strongly believed that it would benefit the youth of this countryside which has a predominantly agrarian population. The visionary leader's dream had to pause due to his untimely demise at the age of 52 in 1954. His illustrious son, Dr. N. Mahalingam made his father's dream come true on the 5th of September 1957 by establishing the Nachimuthu Polytechnic College (NPTC), under the aegis of the Nachimuthu Industrial Association (NIA).

I am happy to learn that this great institution is completing 60 years of its existence. Its endeavor to impart high quality, competency based technical education along with the necessary skills and abilities to face the challenging needs of the industry around the globe is truly laudable.

I am told this institution is also striving hard to attain international standards in terms of infrastructure, state-of-the-art computer facilities and techniques. It is also encouraging to note that it has at its heart a bunch of core values which it holds dear, the values of Equity, Transparency, Creativity, Team Work, Environmental Sustainability, Staff Development and Women participation in all its spheres of activity. To mark the celebration of four decades of

service and the 75th birth year of Arutchelvar in 1998, a self financing engineering college in the name of Dr. Mahalingam was also established. Dr. Mahalingam College of Engineering and Technology (MCET), is also celebrating its two-decades of service this year.

These are truly exciting times for India. There are quite a few reasons to justify this statement. One is that India today stands at the cusp of a tremendous demographic opportunity. India is a relatively young nation. More than 50% of its population is below the age of 25 and more than 65% is below 35 years. In 2020, the average age of an Indian will be expectedly 29 years, while it will be 37 for China and 48 for Japan. We are a young nation, full of youthful energy and enthusiasm, brimming with creative zeal. The Government has initiated schemes like Skill India, Digital India, Start Up India and Stand Up India to tap this huge demographic potential by channelizing the energies of the youth in the right direction and empowering them.

It is up to young people like you to make use of this opportunity. Focus on building knowledge that is both deep and wide in your subject area. My dear young friends, I cannot stress enough on the need to continuously learn and continuously upgrade your skills so that they stay relevant to the times. Skill training can thus be equated to empowerment of individuals through enrichment of capabilities leading to achievement of the highest order in economic, personal and social spheres. The country, however, has a big challenge ahead as it is estimated that only 4.69% of the total workforce in India has undergone formal skill training as compared to 68% in UK, 75% in Germany, 52% in USA, 80% in Japan and 96% in South Korea. It is indeed a challenge of formidable proportion and we need to step up skilling of the youth on a massive scale.

There are a few other reasons why I say that it is the best of times for India. We in India, are committed to building a five trillion-dollar economy by 2025, making India the 3rd largest consumer market in the world. India has climbed 30 places in the World Bank's Ease of Doing Business Index this year and IMF has forecast that India will grow at more than 7 percent in 2018 and 2019, ahead of other major economies. India is also rapidly expanding its infrastructure.

As mentioned earlier, the policy initiatives taken by the government such as Make in India, Skill India, Digital India, Smart Cities and Start-up India are opening up new opportunities. We have seen a strong global confidence in the Indian growth story with a surge in Foreign Direct Investments which reached over US \$ 62 billion in 2017-18. My dear friends, the stage is set for you to take the centre stage. The future of this great nation now depends upon your dedication and creative brilliance.

The development of any country depends greatly upon the quality of its engineers, its builders, its architects. I came across a very disturbing report by a leading employment solutions company that claimed that more than 90% of the engineering graduates of India were unemployable. The same issue was flagged by almost a decade ago. Nasscom estimates that 6 million people are required in cyber security sector alone by 2022. But we have a tremendous skill gap in engineering. We have to bridge this gap to make the best possible use of all the opportunities that we have access to, today. I request the teachers to take a good hard look at the curricula and the teaching methods, not only in engineering colleges but also in other educational institutions. The focus should be on continuously honing and polishing skills and on learning by constant practice.

It is sad to note that India, in spite of having one of the best talent pools and one of the strongest human resource bases of the world, is unable to keep up with the kind of scientific breakthroughs that are happening in the western world today. I was perusing an article on the recently decorated Nobel Prize winners of 2018. The winner of the Nobel Prize in Physics for

2018 has made a discovery that will have to be termed as miraculous. Arthur Ashkin has invented optical tweezers that grab particles, atoms, viruses and other living cells with their laser beam fingers. In layman's terms, this new tool would allow us to move objects using nothing but laser light! Imagine moving objects using just light! The invention would bring about paradigm shift in a number of scientific and technological arenas. Practical applications include but are not limited to removing bacteria without harming the surrounding healthy cells.

The world is now struggling to distinguish the boundaries between science and science fiction, anything seems possible now through science and technology. India should be at the forefront of pushing boundaries of knowledge and challenging dogmas. We have always been the '*Vishwaguru*', the wise teacher to the world, a '*Margadarshi*' par excellence. It is time we reclaim that status which is rightfully ours and you my dear young students will drive the innovation machine that will take us there.

Friends along with opportunities, India faces a number of challenges too. We still have about 20 per cent of people living below the poverty line. We are waging wars on multiple fronts now. On the one side, we are battling poverty, illiteracy, unemployment, infant mortality, maternal mortality, communicable and lifestyle diseases and on the other front we are fighting terrorism, extremism, degradation of moral values in the society and social evils like caste system and untouchability.

According to the National Family Health Survey 4 (NFHS 4), 38.4 percent of children in India are stunted and 21 percent wasted. We might not be able to find solutions to all these pressing problems at once. But a start can be made. The solution lies in science and technology, to be more specific, the answer lies in innovation. It is a great leveler. It brings about prosperity which would eventually usher in an era of peace.

These innovations need not be ground breaking, they need not cost billions of dollars and they need not be paradigm altering. There should be a simple covenant when it comes to innovation. It should contribute to making the lives of people better. It should contribute towards alleviating suffering and it should be equally accessible, available and useful to every section of the population, the last man in the row, the weakest, most deprived human being in the country should benefit from it.

India has always been known as the capital of 'Frugal innovations'. It is said that necessity is the mother of all inventions and we in India know very well what necessity is. Our once thriving economy which owned a lion's share in world trade was looted and plundered for centuries.. But we are slowly 'standing up', confidently on our own two feet. In every village in India, we have our own home-made innovators, with little or no formal education to boast about, still providing incredible one stop solutions with cheap resources that can even put the best of technocrats to shame. Engineering and management institutes are starting courses and financing research studies to better understand our commonplace yet extraordinary thinking.

From the Jaipur foot invented by Dr. Sethi who made it possible for the poorest of the poor to afford prosthesis to Padmashree Arunachalam Murugandam who hails from this very city and invested his life's savings to manufacture affordable sanitary napkins for women solely because of his concern for menstrual hygiene, India is teeming with innovative brilliance. From water wheels to bicycles fitted with dynamos to tree climbing machines, India, especially rural India, has showcased its resilience and spirit of survival to the world. You as future technocrats of the world, must learn from these innovators and explore the possibilities of adopting, adapting and scaling these innovations so that they can help a much larger number of people. No technology, however state of the art and futuristic,, will stand the test of time if it does not contribute tangibly to improving lives.

Innovations should also keep in mind the status of our environment. We have to understand that climate change is real. There is imbalance in nature and the scales have tipped to a point that nature is forced to react and react fiercely. A recent study done by the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology, Pune, highlighted that the number of extreme rainfall events have gone up by threefold in India. According to the study, there have been 285 reported flooding events in India over 1950-2017 affecting about 850 million people, leaving 19 million homeless and killing about 71,000 people. The recent flood in Kerala is a warning to us. If we keep up this model of development, the catastrophes which would befall us would keep growing in scale and scope. Our cities have exceeded their carrying capacity long ago. We have encroached upon river beds and have concreted agricultural fields. Therefore, I request our young technocrats to always make sure that development is sustainable and nature friendly and to innovate to restore the lost balance in nature.

Scientific and technological advancements should also benefit the vulnerable sections of our population, the differently-abled, the women, the children, the socially and economically backward classes and tribals. We are all equal inheritors, having equal rights to the wealth of this nation. We dream of making every city in India smart. But do we invest time and money to ensure that the swanky, smart infrastructure we intend to construct is accessible to a differently-abled person? Do we make sure that public instructions are always displayed in Braille formats, do we secure ramps in all public transport facilities? We must not fail our *Divyang* brothers and sisters. Every innovation we envision should be fuelled by their dreams as well. Not all kinds of innovations and models of development are suitable to all kinds of people. When we innovate for our tribal brothers and sisters, we should take into account their unique lifestyles, their fragile habitat and their centuries long seclusion. We should adapt technologies in a way that the benefits reach them but allow them to retain their unique way of life.

Friends, there is also a need to bring in more women into the field of science and technology. Some of the most celebrated scientists in world history have been women. India has a rich tradition of women's participation in all walks of life from science to philosophy to politics to the art of warfare. Yet, somewhere along the road, we failed to promote women in science and technology. No nation can make progress if women lag behind. With women constituting about 50 per cent of the country's population, every effort has to be made to empower them economically, politically and in every other field. With programs like *Beti Bachao-Beti Pado*, the government has taken the first step to ensure gender equality and to provide more opportunities to girl children. Studies have shown that increasing women and girls' education contributes to higher economic growth. To quote Swami Vivekananda, "There is no chance for the welfare of the world unless the condition of women is improved. It is impossible for a bird to fly on only one wing". When our innovations take flight, it should be using both wings. The flight should be powerful, steady, focused and relentless.

In the pursuit of excellence in innovations, we should also take care to retain and refresh what makes us Indian, our core values of sharing and caring. Science should never be without soul. The first and the foremost quality a successful innovator must have is empathy. Only when you imagine yourself in another person's place and walk a mile in their shoes would you know what their problems are. We should never give up our righteousness, our moral strength and our sense of justice and fairness. Science and technology should only compliment and elevate our humanity, our humility. We have no room for superciliousness and arrogance. We must forever remain in the service of humanity.

Friends, with industry 4.0 gathering momentum business expectations and skill demands are evolving faster than ever before. The future of manufacturing lies in automation and data exchange. At a time when we as a nation are taking flight and making efforts to narrow the gap between the available and required skills, it is heartening to note NIA Skill Foundation is offering

training programs to build capacities and capabilities among the youth to make them industry-ready. The qualitative educational service offered in this campus is noteworthy.

It gives me immense pleasure in joining the campus in its joyous moment and to be part of the valedictory function of the Diamond Jubilee celebration. I congratulate NIA Educational Institutions with 12000 students and 1500 employees, offering education from kindergarten to research, in 4 campuses inside Pollachi. I wish the institution good luck and I am sure the glory of this institution will soar higher and higher. May you lead the way to the creation of the resurgent, resplendent India.

Thank You!

Jai Hind!"

AKT/BK/MS/RK

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