

Teachers' Day Speech by the President of India, Shri Pranab Mukherjee at the Presentation of National Award to Teachers

New Delhi: 5 September 2014

1. I am delighted to be with you today on the occasion of the presentation of the National Awards on Teachers' Day. I extend my heartiest congratulations to all the teachers who are receiving the Award for their commendable work and service to the nation. Today, the 5th of September, is the birth anniversary of the former President of India Dr. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, a great philosopher, thinker, scholar and educationist of the country. Very many years ago, he had perceptively remarked and I quote, *"Education should be imparted with a view to the type of society that we wish to build. We are working for a modern democracy built on the values of human dignity and equality. These are only ideals: we should make them living forces. Our vision of the future should include these great principles"* – Unquote.
The Teachers' Day celebration is a mark of our respect and gratitude to the teaching community.
2. Children are the future of the nation. They are, in fact, the foundation on which a strong, vibrant and dynamic India shall be built. Children are exposed in their formative years most to their parents and teachers, who have a tremendous responsibility towards inculcating in their young minds a sense of values, discipline, dedication and commitment to the nation. A robust and quality-oriented education system is the force multiplier that shall transform India into one of the

leading nations of the world. We as a nation are now investing substantially in our education system. In the Union Budget for 2014-15, Government has allocated an amount of almost Rs. 29,000 crore for 'Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan' and approximately another Rs. 5000 crore for 'Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan'. Other important initiatives include launching of a School Assessment Programme and the 'Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya New Teachers Training Programme' for imparting new training tools and motivating teachers.

3. In the era of Information and Communication Technology (ICT), teaching-learning processes are changing. Teachers have to keep pace with rapidly changing technologies. It is vital for teachers to be comfortable in using ICT and to ensure that students get full benefit of ICT and emerge as citizens knowledgeable in the use of the information technology with the aim of pursuing higher education or entering the job market with relevant IT skills. To take advantage of the reach of the IT, Government has in the recent budget made allocations for setting up virtual classrooms as Communication Linked Interface for Cultivating Knowledge (CLICK) and online courses.
4. Teachers influence the life of students by being their role

models. They are the beacons of light who guide and motivate students throughout their academic life and, many a time, even beyond. India today needs many more competent and willing teachers to dedicate themselves to improving the standard and quality of education being currently imparted. Teachers have a vital role to play in the process of upgrading the quality of education which is a direct consequence and outcome of the quality of teachers.

5. A teacher ideally is one who facilitates his students in realising and maximising their potential. In recognition of this stellar role, teachers have since time immemorial been accorded a special place in our society. They have been called *Acharyas* in our ancient texts since they transmit the norms of acceptable conduct to our future generations. It is important that they impart not only knowledge and learning but also our traditional values which form the bedrock of our civilisation dating several millennia.
6. The Father of the Nation, Mahatma Gandhi, believed that student interest in learning is sustained not only by the subject matter of study but also, most importantly, by the teacher. Gandhiji recalled his childhood days to illustrate this point. He was taught Chemistry by two teachers. The teaching of one was continuous

and without explanation; the elucidation of the other was such that Gandhiji wished the class would never end. The instruction by one was absorbing and by the other insipid. I am sure all of us have had similar experiences during our student days where we have come face-to-face with teachers who have provided the necessary spark to light our creative journey. The difference an outstanding teacher makes to the learning process is central to the spirit of inquiry that needs to be kindled in young minds. The big challenge that we in India today face is to improve the quality of teaching and learning outcomes in our schools. This cannot be done without upgrading the skill and knowledge quotient of our teachers and without involving them fully as equal partners in the nation's progress.

7. The world today faces challenges of violence, terrorism, intolerance and environmental degradation. The values of truth, tolerance, integrity, secularism and inclusiveness need to be imparted to our children to make the world a safer and better place to live in. Dear Teachers, please remember that your mentoring and your way of educating our children must be such that it transforms them into capable, knowledgeable and worthy global citizens.
8. We are aware that our teachers are working under diverse contexts

and conditions. We also know that the working conditions of teachers in many places are sub-optimal. However, over time there have been substantial improvements in salary scales and in the construction of proper school buildings with toilets and drinking water. Regular upgradation programmes for teachers, in-service training and near at hand academic support systems have also been instituted across the length and breadth of our country. These constitute welcome steps, and are part of an ongoing process, aimed at making the work environment for our teachers positive and encouraging.

9. As teachers you devote countless hours of selfless service to the nation in nurturing our most valued resource – our children. Society and the country have high expectations from you. I am sure you will live up to these expectations in ample measure. I once again express my deep appreciation and gratitude to all of you, across the length and breadth of the country, who are imparting knowledge and learning to our future generations with dedication and sincerity. I also take this opportunity to congratulate all the 357 teachers who are being awarded today for their outstanding contribution in the field of education. I wish them the very best in their future endeavours.

Jai Hind!!