

SPEECH OF DR. NAJMA HEPTULLA, HON'BLE GOVERNOR OF MANIPUR AT THE INAUGURAL FUNCTION OF 4<sup>TH</sup> NATIONAL TEACHERS' CONGRESS, ORGANIZED BY MAHARASHTRA INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY ON 15<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER, 2020 (ONLINE)

Dr. Murli Manohar Joshi ji,

Padma Vibhushan,

Veteran Leader and former Minister for HRD,

Mr. Eric Falt, Director of UNESCO, New Delhi

Dr. Tomio Mizokami,

Professor Emeritus, Osaka University of Foreign Studies, Japan and  
President, Kansai Japan India Cultural Society,

Dr. Vijay P. Bhatkar, Padma Bhushan, Chancellor, Nalanda University,

All the respected dignitaries present today,

Ladies and gentlemen,

I feel really honoured to have an opportunity to address you at this inaugural function of 4<sup>th</sup> National Teachers' Congress through online. I would have been delighted to be in your midst in person on this auspicious occasion, but cannot do so due to COVID-19 pandemic.

I do not intend to dilate on the topic as all the distinguished personalities who are present today must be highlighting very important views on the topic.

As we are all well aware, education is fundamental for achieving full human potential, developing an equitable and just society and promoting National development. Providing Universal access to quality education is the key to India's continued ascent and leadership on the global stage in terms of economic growth, social justice and equality, scientific advancement, National integration and cultural preservation. Universal high quality education is the best way forward for developing and maximizing our country's rich talents and resources for the good of the

individual, the society, the country and the world. India will have the highest population of young people in the world over the next decade and our ability to provide high quality educational opportunities to them will determine the future of our country.

During the last few months, several eminent personalities in the field of education and media of the country discussed the merits and demerits of the new National Education Policy (NEP), 2020. This Policy was passed after more than three decades - first one was framed in 1986 and modified in 1992. During this period of more than three decades, significant changes were noticed in our country pertaining to socio- economy and the globe at large. Therefore, it appears quite legitimate that the education sector also needs to strengthen itself towards the demands of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and the needs of the people and the country. Quality education as well as innovation and research will be the pillars on which India will become a knowledge super power. It is, in this context, a New Education Policy is needed at this juncture.

The New Education Policy 2020, that will certainly be a landmark in the history of education in India, for, the policy is comprehensive, holistic, far sighted and will certainly play a pivotal role in the Nation's future growth. The policy is welcomed by one and all of our Nation which seeks to transform India into a vibrant knowledge society. It is a pride in India as well as acceptance of the best ideas and practices in the world of learning from across the globe.

It is a matter of great satisfaction to note that one of its loftier goals is to bring crore of out-of-school children into the school system and reduce innumerable dropouts. More importantly, to reduce the burdensome syllabus, focus on vocational education and environmental

education are crucial aspects well covered by NEP. Students will be much more empowered and have the opportunity to choose the subjects they wish to study.

More importantly, barring Medical and Law Colleges, the NEP also makes an attempt to improve governance by bringing in a single regulator to look after all educational institutions. This is a significant step. In addition, the NEP also aims at a holistic education by envisioning the convergence of science and arts streams. The focus on ethics and human and Constitutional values will go a long way in the creation of an enlightened citizenship essential for deepening our democratic roots.

The policy also expands the scope of foundational education, increasing the school-going years from 3 to 18 instead of the prevalent 6 to 14. This will enable a more holistic development of children in the formative age group of 3-6 years. Setting up a National Mission on Foundational Literacy and Numeracy is a much needed, timely step to improve the quality of education at the primary education level. NEP recognises the importance of nutrition to the all-round development of children and has therefore included a provision for an energy-filled breakfast, in addition to the nutritious mid-day meal, to help children achieve better learning outcomes.

A much-discussed stipulation in the NEP stresses that the medium of instruction until at least fifth grade (preferably eight grade) will be in a regional language that is recognised as being native to India. This is a welcome step, as mother tongue plays a highly critical role in the overall development of the child. Mother tongue, which a child hears right from the moment he or she is born, provides personal identity, connects with culture and is crucial for cognitive development.

As far as my personal view is concerned, it is quite fascinating and unprecedented development in the newly framed NEP is education in mother tongues which will, indeed, help children develop an interest in regional literature and culture and help them understand better the customs and traditions that are indigenous to a particular region. I am glad that the policy places great emphasis on classical languages of the country.

India is a large and diverse Nation having different languages, dialects and mother tongues. We have now seen that number of developed countries in the globe educate their children in mother tongues. When there is a world congregation, leaders of different countries prefer to speak in their mother tongues even though they are quite conversant in English which is lingua franca of the world. Glaring example is that great scholars of the world prefer to write and speak in their own mother tongues. There is a certain pride associated with speaking one's mother tongue and we must inculcate this sense of pride in our children also. However, most fascinatingly, despite the importance given on regional or mother tongues, NEP categorically highlights that there would be no imposition of any language and no opposition to any language. This is, indeed, a welcome step of this Policy.

In this modern society, today, for example, a student, particularly in urban cities, starts formal education at the age of 3 by sending them to Kid's Centres by means of play schools. Thereafter, the child moves to a K.G. School - Kindergarten 1 and 2 and 12 years of Secondary then Higher Secondary education. Nevertheless, in the new NEP, the structure proposes - firstly developmental stages of the child – secondly, early childhood, school years, and thirdly, Secondary stage.

My late grand uncle Maulana Abul Kalam Azad ji, one of the greatest leaders of our Freedom Movement and the first Minister for Education of

Independent India had the vision and foresight to recognize the need of quality and secular education for a new born democracy like India. Therefore his first focus was on building a strong institutional edifice for a modern educational system for the country. Its result, we have seen today in the form of the University Grants Commission, the Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) and several other bodies which he founded to promote higher education in the country. In recognition of his farsighted and invaluable contributions in the field of education, 11<sup>th</sup> November, his Birth Day is celebrated in our country as “National Education Day”.

Once my grand uncle said, “I don’t mind if young minds of our country going abroad for higher education but I want that Educational institutions of our country should be of that standard so that foreign students should also get education here as was the case during the time of Takshila and Nalanda”.

I was closely associated with Dr. Murli Manohar Joshi ji when he was HRD Minister and he contributed a lot of inputs during his time in the field of education. We all still remember his contributions.

The invaluable efforts made by the Maharashtra Institute of Technology to organize this mega event is quite commendable and praiseworthy and I am fully confident that organization of such Congress at different parts of the country will have a very good impact in the society.

Thank you,

Jai Hind.