

**SPEECH BY THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA, SHRI PRANAB
MUKHERJEE AT THE ANNUAL CONVOCATION OF JAMIA
MILLIA ISLAMIA**

New Delhi: Nov 17, 2014

1. It is a happy occasion for me to be here today for the Annual Convocation of Jamia Millia Islamia, one of the premier centres of higher learning in the country. To start with, let me thank the University for inviting me to be a part of this venerable occasion.
2. This historic institution was founded in 1920 by luminaries like Maulana Mohammad Ali Jauhar, Maulana Mahmood Hasan, Hakim Ajmal Khan, A.M. Khawaja, Dr. Mukhtar Ahmad Ansari and Dr. Zakir Husain. In 1925, its campus was shifted from Aligarh to Delhi. In 1962, Jamia was granted 'deemed university' status and in 1988, it became a Central University.
3. Since its inception, Jamia has fostered understanding of India's rich history and culture, including the cultural traditions of Islam.

Through its academic programmes, it has instilled in students a national perspective. Jamia has a wide academic profile. It caters to learning in a variety of disciplines at various levels from undergraduate to PhD. It is heartening to know that there are over thirty centres dedicated to research in areas like peace and conflict resolution, women's studies, media and governance, north-east studies, dalit and minority studies, and comparative religions and civilization.

4. Jamia has been a proponent of gender and social equality. To support the academic ambitions of the disadvantaged, it runs special courses like Communicative English and self-enrichment programme. Jamia has also been a practitioner of Gandhiji's principle of *nai talim*, an educational curriculum which does not distinguish between education and work. I am happy to learn that Jamia provides vocational training as part of its teaching model.

Dear graduating students:

5. I congratulate all of you on coming out with flying colours. Having toiled hard to earn your degree, you have a justifiable sense of pride and satisfaction. This is your moment of glory. At the same time, it is also an occasion to ponder over your priorities in life.

Whatever field you choose to work in, make your contribution to the society. Being the bright young minds of our nation, help mitigate the problems afflicting us. As we grapple with issues like drinking water, sanitation, infrastructure, health, crime and gender bias, your perceptive insights coupled with initiative can help overcome them. You will find your education useful only if you make yourself useful to the society. Never be petrified by failure. Mahatma Gandhi had said and I quote: “*The season of failure is the best time for sowing the seeds of success*” (unquote). The road ahead is not easy to travel. But armed with knowledge and exposure that your alma mater has provided, you will sail through rough waters. This is my firm belief.

Friends:

6. Mankind has always been instinctive towards progress. And, it is education that is one of the differentiating factors. Education enriches human lives, advances human thinking, propagates new thought and enhances human capacity.
7. Education is a potent vehicle for social emancipation and economic rejuvenation. Economic growth in the future will depend

more on efficient use of resources and deployment of better technology and processes. Knowledge and education will propel economies even more in the years to come. It is therefore pertinent that our education sector, particularly higher education, is able to meet this challenge.

Friends:

8. We have made rapid strides in boosting our higher educational infrastructure. There are 723 universities and over 37,000 colleges in our country. Yet, many of our institutes lack quality that denies students world-class education. Many bright students leave the shores to pursue studies abroad. We cannot lose our talent, and for that, we have to up-grade our educational standards. There is not a single Indian institution amongst the top 200 universities in the world according to reputed surveys. I do believe that some of our institutions are better than what the rankings project. Our leading institutions have to approach the ratings process in a more systematic and proactive manner. However, it is also a fact that an all-out effort to revamp our academic system is the need of the hour. Some of the immediate steps would be to ramp up physical infrastructure including classrooms, fill up vacant faculty positions, attract talent from abroad, review and change curriculum to make

it inter-disciplinary and industry-oriented, and promote centres of excellence after identifying core competencies.

9. Technology has to be harnessed to overcome handicaps like faculty shortage and lack of competency in domain areas. The National Knowledge Network and the National Mission on Education in ICT are key technology initiatives in the education sector. They have opened a window of opportunity in sharing of course material, lectures and best practices. They can bridge distances, forge tie-ups amongst experts scattered by geography, and also make education less costly and more convenient. Our institutions have to build expertise to use these technology solutions in a more effective manner.

Friends:

10. Research is the key to the expansion of knowledge frontiers. Our country has capability in several areas like space technology and ICT. The successful Mars Orbiter Mission is a testimony to our growing scientific prowess. Nevertheless, there is a general neglect on research. Especially, the focus on research activity is lacking in our universities. Unless our institutions become hotbeds of research activity, we as a society will fail to realize the potential that we

otherwise are destined to achieve. We have to make teaching and research an attractive career opportunity. We have to promote research amongst under-graduate students by adopting an inquiry-based approach to subjects and project work. We have to attract meritorious students for doing PhD. Cutting edge research calls for multi-disciplinary approach and pooling of expertise. We have to be proactive in seeking research cooperation with universities abroad. A number of MOUs have been signed by Indian universities with their counterparts in various countries. It is gladdening to note that Jamia has signed MOUs with institutions in France, Germany, UK, Finland, Canada, Japan and Australia. A concerted effort is now required to implement these agreements in letter and spirit.

11. Technology development and innovative ideas can transform the lives of the common man, society and the nation. There are novel ideas that could be tapped for greater common benefit. Our higher academic institutions have to provide a platform where grassroots innovation can be mentored and moulded. Creative thinking and a spirit of inquisitiveness have to be promoted in our learning institutions. Scientific temper and analytical rigour have to be cultivated, and plurality in academic approach and autonomy of mind encouraged.

Friends:

12. Universities, being an integral part of the society, have to assume greater responsibility for overall development and mitigation of problems concerning our society at large. The Government has taken important initiatives recently, aimed at financial inclusion, creation of model villages, Clean India and digital infrastructure. Universities have to be active participants in these programmes and undertake outreach activities for their successful implementation. More importantly, universities have to produce socially-conscious individuals who are imbued with core values like patriotism, compassion, tolerance, honesty, discipline and respect for women. I am confident that the students who have earned their degrees today will take part in nation-building in a meaningful way.

13. With these words, I conclude. I once again compliment all the graduating students. I also wish the management and faculty of this University the very best.

Thank you.

Jai Hind.
