

Key Note Address of Mr. E.Ahamed, Minister of State for External Affairs and Human Resource Development, Government of India at the Conference on “Education, Empowerment and Excellence” organized by Indian School, Al Ghubra in Muscat on 22.1.2012

Her Excellency Dr. Madeeha, Hon’ble Minister of Education, Sultanate of Oman

H.E. the Ambassador of India in Oman Mr. J.S. Mukul

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

At the outset I take this opportunity to express my gratitude for having invited me to address this august gathering. This is the fourth educational conference that I am attending in last two days. I had two international conferences in

Chennai day before yesterday – one in Loyola College, another at Dr. B.S. Abdur Rahman University and yesterday one in Doha where I addressed the Principals of 120 Schools, affiliated to CBSE, at their 24th Annual Conference of Gulf Council. Today I am here with you. I am happy that I have, after assuming the additional charge of the Ministry of Human Resource Development, the company of the academia besides the diplomats.

The theme of the Conference - “Education, Empowerment and Excellence” is quite appropriate in today’s world when there is a significant disconnect between education systems

and the needs of 21st century employers, both public and private. There is a mismatch between what employers, individuals and governments seek and what respective education and training systems provide.

Excellence in education should not be just a matter for national debate and dialogue; it should be the cause for urgent social action and demand. Education should be truly creative and should be in touch with the complete life of people – economic, intellectual, aesthetic, social and spiritual.

Education today needs to create leaders, thinkers, philosophers and creators. Leaders,

who are credible, committed to serve, belief in lifelong and continuous learning and are imbued with values and virtues.

Government of India is committed to make drastic changes in the education system in the country so as to bring about quality and excellence in the education. With this in mind, the Government has taken initiatives to bring revolutionary reforms in the field of education and the major initiatives which includes the Right to Education Bill, 2009 ensuring the right of children to free and compulsory education.

As our primary education programs achieve a degree of success, there is growing demand for secondary schools and colleges. We are committed to universalizing secondary education. We should seek not just functional literacy, but good quality education – education that is affordable, accessible, equitable and available to everybody who seeks to study.

Government of India has adopted a neo-liberal approach to expansion of education in recent years. In higher education, we have been following a multi-pronged strategy – strengthening existing institutions of higher learning along with a massive expansion plan by

way of setting up a large number of public funded institutions keeping in view the aim of doubling the access ratio to higher education. Besides setting up of new institutions of higher learning both in basic and applied areas of study, we have also decided to create some national level resource institutions. In this context, I may mention here that we have decided to have around 800 universities of all types i.e. an increase of 300 more, with nearly 50,000 colleges, and ten of our institutions/universities will feature among the top 100 of the world.

The Government has accorded blanket permission to all institutions of higher learning to

collaborate with foreign institutions in all areas of mutual interests. We are encouraging our institutions to undertake both faculty exchange and joint research programmes with institutions from abroad.

Friends, India has a demographic advantage of youth. Young people only know rapid change, you have probably noticed the changing demands of young people. I am certain that the quality education that has been the endeavour of our government would not only empower communities but provide opportunities to them for excelling in their respective fields.

Ladies and gentlemen, I am very happy that Indian School, Al Ghubra, on the occasion of its celebrations of over 20 years of excellence, is organizing this Seminar in coordination with the Ministry of Education, Sultanate of Oman.

India and Oman are linked by geography, history and culture. The Sultanate of Oman is one of our most important partners in the Gulf region. Our relations have matured over the years and both countries attach high priority to the relations with the other. The decision of the Indian Government to confer the Jawaharlal Nehru Award for International Understanding on His Majesty Sultan Qaboos Bin Said for the year

2004 shows the strong relationship between the two countries. During the successful visit of Hon'ble Prime Minister of India to Muscat in November 2008, it was agreed that the historical ties should be transformed into a strategic relationship by upgrading the cooperation in various areas.

A Memorandum of Understanding between India and Oman in the field of Higher Education was signed in 2007 and a Joint Working Group was set up to implement various programmes. Educational Consultants India Limited under the Ministry of Human Resource Development, which deals with placement of foreign students in

Indian Institutions, besides Direct Admission of Students Abroad Scheme, has placed self-financing students, including omani nationals, in various Indian Institutions for higher education. Ed.CIL has placed about 54 NRI students from Oman for B.Tech courses under DASA Scheme.

I once again take this opportunity to congratulate the organizers of this event and wish them a great success in all their future endeavours.

Thank you.