

**Address by Smt. D. Purandeswari MoS (HRD) to the Indian  
Residents settled in Mombassa.**

I am greatly delighted to be with you in this coastal city of Mombassa to meet the Indians settled here. Whenever I visit a foreign country I make it a point, time permitting to meet the Indians settled in that country so as to have a direct interaction with the members of the Indian diaspora. Such visits have proved highly fruitful, informative and useful. The historic city of Mombassa is one of Africa's major tourist destinations located on Kenya's Eastern Coastline bordering the Indian Ocean and is famous for best beaches, diverse marine life and world-class hotels.

Like the African countries, we have all been under colonial rule for centuries and had to win our independence with sustained struggle and with lifelong sacrifice. When we attained our freedom, the country and the people were left in a state of stark misery, deprivation and penury caused by colonial exploitation.

Because of this striking commonality which India shares with the most of the African countries, there grew up a natural closeness and friendship between the people and governments of African countries and India. I am glad to observe that this spirit of friendship and closeness between us have grown up over the years to a strong bond of comradeship. This bond of friendship was re-iterated several times and last in March 2005 when His Excellency Prof Anvang Nyong'o, Minister for Planning and National Development, Republic of

Kenya came to India and met Shri Arjun Singh, Minister of HRD, Government of India. Both sides emphasized the need for further collaboration between the two countries in various targeted fields. As on date, we have in place Agreements between India and several Governments like Republic of South Africa, Republic of Tanzania and the Great Socialist Peoples Libyan Arab Jamahiriya ( Agreement yet to be signed) on the cooperation in the field of education. These are all welcome developments signifying a growing sense of camaraderie.

When we attained in 1947, the most challenging task before us was the country's development. Our leaders realized correctly that without widespread reforms in education, the country's development would just be a cry for the moon. More than a century and a half back our colonel masters introduced Western System of Education in the country. The new system of education fulfilled a major requirement of providing the colonial masters with an educated elite class who would serve the interest of the British Raj. But with the attainment of the Independence this limited role of education outlived its utility and lost its relevance. Soon a demand grew up for a new educational system which could address the needs of a country in the changed political scenario. Accordingly in 1948 the Government of India appointed the University Education Commission under the Chairmanship of Dr. S. Radhakrishnan. The Commission duly recognized education as a critical input in human resource development which was essential for the country's upward trajectory growth. Hence the Commission felt that no reform was more important or, urgent than to transform

education to suit needs and aspirations of the people and thereby make it a powerful instrument of social and economic progress. This is how we made our first tryst with programme of educational reforms.

Few global goals have as consistently and as universally been supported as the notion that every person in every corner of the world should have complete exposure to modern education. The World Conference on Education for All held in Jomtien in 1990 set this process in motion by adopting that the goal of Universal Primary Education be achieved by 2000 AD. The World Education Forum in Dakar in 2000 reaffirmed and extended this commitment. Universal primary education with complete gender equity in primary and secondary education was affirmed again in the same year as Millennium Development Goal. As early as 1948, Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights had envisaged, “Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit.” We accepted all these laudable notions and norms. India is a party to the convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) which inter alia recognizes the development of child’s personality, talents and mental and physical ability to their fullest potential. India is also a signatory to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in the year 1992 which makes it incumbent to protect and monitor the rights and privileges that our children have been guaranteed or enumerated in the convention. The most recent

initiative taken by India in this direction is to adopt the National Charter for Children in the year 2000. These international initiatives which we adopted without any inhibition make it amply clear that we are open to any measures which is designed to increase the well being of our children, who constitute focal points of our commitment to Education for all. We believe that it is only in the liberation of the children and their freedom through education that the citizens in the country can enjoy real democracy. It is only education that can break the intergenerational cycle of poverty and deprivation. It is only through education that the first step towards equity and bridging of disparities can be taken. It is only through education that possibilities for new opportunities and making choices begin to emerge for all classes of citizens.

In 2002 the 86<sup>th</sup> Constitutional amendment was brought in India to make education a fundamental right and Article 21-A was added: **“The State shall provide free and compulsory education to all children of the age six to fourteen years”**. The legislative intervention envisaged in this article is intended to bring about a metamorphosis in universalizing education on a mass scale and lead to a paradigm shift in educational reforms. Serious dialogue is on between the Union and State governments in regard to this matter.

In this connection I would like to make a passing reference that India has one of the world’s largest higher education systems. There were only 20 universities and 500 colleges at the time of independence. At present, there are 370 universities comprising 222 State Universities,

21 Central Universities, 109 Deemed Universities, 5 Institutions established under State legislations and 13 institutes of national importance established by Central Legislation. In addition, there are 18,064 colleges including around 1902 women's colleges. We are aware that compared to our requirements, these members are quite meagre and recently the National Knowledge Commission has drawn Government's attention to this problem. We are in the midst of a serious dialogue in the matter.

The 21<sup>st</sup> Century is universally acknowledged as the "Knowledge Century" which means that Knowledge or brain power should be reflected in a country's competitiveness, advancement and human capabilities. Human capabilities are a function of the well-being of a people and the investment we make in human capital formation. The ability of a nation to make best use of its knowledge or brain power will ultimately determine its place in the comity of nations in the present century. We therefore realize that lifelong learning education should be a high priority for all. The UNESCO has propounded four objectives of learning namely I) Learning to know , II) Learning to do, III) Learning to live, IV) Learning to be. Based on these four pillars the present century provides the enhanced opportunities that are essential for full and meaningful citizenship in the knowledge society which is fundamental to the development of a nation.

Before I end, I would refer to some of the broad features of higher educational system which have some impact with foreign students and foreign universities.

- a) First our present policy encourages collaboration and academic exchange directly between higher educational institutions of India and those from other countries. We have streamlined the guidelines on procedures to be observed by Indian Universities for signing MOU with many foreign universities.
- b) Second many Indian Universities have introduced 'India Study Programme' in their course offerings, in view of growing interest abroad in regard to India's rich culture and tradition.
- c) Third the Government of India encourages foreign students to come over to India to pursue directly their higher studies. The Direct Admission of Students Abroad (DASA) Scheme 2007-08 has been inaugurated where under Educational Consultants India Ltd (Ed. CIL) has been designated as the Coordinating agency and Single Window facility' for the direct admission of eligible foreign Nationals/ Persons of Indian Origin (PIOs)/ Non-Resident Indians (NRIs) to undergraduate engineering programs offered by the National Institutes of Technology (formerly Regional Engineering Colleges) and other centrally funded institutions (other than IITs) and Punjab Engineering College, Chandigarh, under the Direct Admission of Students Abroad (DASA) Scheme. The institutions covered under this

- scheme are known for providing quality education in Engineering and technology. All these institutions have reasonably good facilities for accommodation, sports and extra curricular activities; and
- d) Finally, in education sector, foreign direct investment is allowed under the automatic route without any sectoral cap since February, 2000. Central Legislation on regulating the entry and operations of Foreign Education Providers is awaiting introduction in Parliament.

In conclusion I would like to re-iterate that when we fought for our political freedom, we had taken a pledge to achieve growth with equity and distributive justice. We therefore want that our educational system to be so fine tuned as to enable us to attain an inclusive growth which eradicates illiteracy and provides the common man with access to basic education, health care and shelter so that the poorest of the poor can enjoy in full measure the fundamental right to live with dignity. This is our vision, this is our mission and this is our commitment from which we shall never get deflected in our stride for development.

Thank you,