

President, LG address KU-HED conference on NEP-2020

Srinagar, Sep 20: The University of Kashmir and J&K's Higher Education Department (HED) Sunday organised a daylong conference to discuss various aspects of the New Education Policy-2020 to enable its timely implementation in the Union Territory.

President Ram Nath Kovind was the Chief Guest at the conference titled "Brainstorming on implementation of NEP-2020 in Jammu and Kashmir", while J&K's Lieutenant Governor, Mr Manoj Kumar Sinha, addressed the conference as the Chief Patron.

In his video-message released at the inaugural ceremony held at the SKICC here, President Kovind, said: "There cannot be a better way to realize your dreams than through education. The NEP is nothing short of a revolution".

The President said NEP-2020 would take India to new heights of academic excellence, even as he expressed his desire to see Jammu and Kashmir emerge as an epicenter of quality research, innovation and skill development in near future.

Asserting that he has been interacting with school-children from J&K every year, the President said: "J&K is a reservoir of extremely intelligent, talented and innovative children. And I feel the NEP implementation will provide us with students with more 'ignited minds', if I borrow that phrase from my predecessor Dr APJ Abdul Kalam"

"J&K used to be rightly called the paradise on earth. And through this conference, we must deliberate on methods and devise ways to restore this glory using education as a tool," he said.

The NEP, the President said, will "prove to be a milestone in achieving academic excellence. Education is the biggest catalyst for change and our youth the potent agents of social transformation. And wherever these two forces have come together, it has changed the course of history." "It is not at all surprising that Kashmir became a favourite place for pan-India intellectual community and also scholars from other countries to explore different fields of knowledge. This quest for knowledge was uplifted by the serene Himalayan surroundings to search for true meaning of life," Kovind said. "So this land with such a shining past should add new chapters of excellence to its history. Why the land of scholars cannot walk around with the rest of the country on the path of progress and academic excellence".

LG Mr Manoj Kumar Sinha, Chancellor of the University of Kashmir, said: "The NEP will bring revolution in the academic scenario of the country."

"Education, as Nelson Mandela says, is the most powerful weapon you can use to change the world. I would like to take this opportunity to tell this august gathering that education will bring prosperity, peace and harmony in the society if we use this tool effectively and efficiently," he said.

"Apart from being a historic document, the NEP is like an academic lake where the reflection of experts, parents and students and all other stakeholders is visible. This Policy will train the youth of the country to face future challenges in a robust manner," Mr Sinha said. "A large number of youth in Kashmir is hit by drug menace. We want universities' psychology departments to counsel them, make course modules for them, and go for their periodic mentoring and monitoring," he said, asserting that some study internship programmes should also be launched in this regard by the University of Kashmir soon which "will be a big community development initiative".

Asserting that student feedback was a "healthy global practice", Mr Sinha said: "Though many fear it will create problems, I am confident that such a culture will boost the confidence of our students who will feel that their mentors and teachers are listening to them."

Mr Sinha said: "While we talk of aatm-nirbhar bharat (self-reliant India), our collective focus should be to ensure professional and quality research in our institutions so that while our youth come out of the colleges and universities, the opportunities of employment are available to them."

Mr KK Sharma, IAS, Advisor to J&K Lieutenant Governor, laid out a detailed roadmap for NEP implementation in the UT.

"The NEP has not only to be understood by the government but by teachers too. It is the principals of colleges and staff in universities who have to understand that if we take the benefit of such a transformation that's happening after more than 30 years, it will transform India. But each person has to participate to make it happen," he said.

"We will be doing similar conferences for school education because the NEP calls for a comprehensive integration of school and higher education. It is the degree college principals who will have to be the torchbearers of this change because the NEP offers a different style of working and conversion of existing academic institutions into multi-disciplinary institutions offering vocational programmes. So our degree college principals have to go through this policy so that in coming weeks, we hear their views," he said.

In his welcome address, Vice-Chancellor, University of Kashmir, Prof Talat Ahmad, said: "During this conference, the whole gamut of issues related to the NEP implementation in the UT shall be discussed by the participants and the proceedings shall inform strategies and roadmap for smooth implementation of the Policy in our universities and higher education institutions."

"The NEP provides a holistic vision, a comprehensive framework for higher education across the country, and focuses on making the country's institutions seats of multidisciplinary research and innovation through establishment of state-of-the-art research and teaching facilities. I am proud to say that our university and other universities in the UT have been graded very highly by the NAAC and the NIRF. Recently we (KU) have stood at 17th rank among top 70 public state universities out of more than 800 state universities assessed in the country," he said, thanking the President, Prime Minister, J&K LG, and Advisor Sharma for taking keen interest in development of J&K's academic institutions.

During the inaugural event, Prof Ved Prakash, former UGC chairman, delivered an expert talk on "NEP-2020 and Higher Education". "To make the NEP a reality on ground, it is important to know how well we understand this Policy, how well we take the state machinery on board for its assistance and how we can finance our efforts at the institutional and governmental levels," he said.

"Equity and quality will have to go hand-in-hand, else it will widen the inequalities," he cautioned.

Prof Prakash called for critical analysis of the Policy by the Task Force constituted by the UT government on the NEP-2020.

KU Registrar Dr Nisar Ahmad Mir presented vote of thanks at the inaugural ceremony, which was, among others, attended by Advisor Baseer A Khan; Vice-Chancellors of several J&K Universities; Principal Secretary School Education Dr Asgar Samoon; Director NIT Srinagar; IGP Kashmir Mr Vijay Kumar; Deputy Commissioner Srinagar; Director Colleges, academics and principals from degree colleges in J&K, and also officers of the UT administration.

Three technical sessions were held during the day-long brainstorming. In the first session, Prof Mehraj-ud-Din Mir, VC, Central University of Kashmir, and Prof Talat Ahmad gave detailed presentations about the issues pertaining to the implementation of the NEP-2020. The speakers at the second technical session included Director NIT Srinagar Dr Rakesh Sehgal, Prof Mushtaq Siddiqui, VC IUST Awantipora and Prof Nazir Ahmad, VC SKUAST Kashmir. Speakers at the third technical session were Prof Seema Naaz, Principal GDC Pampore, Prof Mohammad Ashraf, Consultant Examinations KU and Prof Yasmin Ashai, Nodal Principal Kashmir Division.

At the end of the technical sessions, a detailed presentation was given by Mr KK Sharma, Advisor to the LG, on implementation of the NEP-2020.

The technical sessions concluded with the vote of thanks by Dean Research KU, Prof Shakil A Romshoo. The rapporteurs at the conference included Dean Academic Affairs Prof Akbar Masood; Dean Research Prof Romshoo; Prof G M Sangmi, Dean College Development Council, KU; Prof Neelofar Khan; Prof Shabir A Bhat, Director HRDC; Prof Bashir Ahmad Rather; Dr Maroof Qadri, Director IT and SS; Prof Ruhi Kanth, Principal IASE and Prof Khurshid Ahmad, Principal SP College.