

## Vice President calls for bridging digital divide to ensure equitable education

### Vice President urges private sector to chip in with affordable technology to close digital gap

### Develop a model of education that reflects Indian culture and ethos

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The Vice President, Shri M Venkaiah Naidu today called for bridging the digital divide to achieve universal primary education and ensure equitable secondary and higher education.

Releasing the book, 'Future of Education-Nine Megatrends' virtually through a video conference, he said "technology opens up new possibilities but also makes us realize the big digital divide in our society". The book was brought out by ICT Academy, a non-profit society and an initiative of the Government of India and the state governments.

Stressing the need to make technology accessible and affordable, the Vice President pointed out that there were many children who did not have access to digital devices. "We will have to address the issue of this wide gap", the Vice President added.

Shri Naidu said that a large number of students were impacted due to the lockdown as they find it hard to study online. Many of them need hand holding to shift from offline to online and require proper training to pursue education through online modes.

Stating that many parents in India still cannot afford digital devices, he said that bridging the digital divide was too big and complex for the government alone to accomplish the task and urged the private sector, especially educational technology firms to contextualize the products at affordable prices as per the needs of learners. "This is your time to make a momentous contribution to nation building and to securing a bright future for all our children", he added.

Quoting the Prime Minister, the Vice President said that in future "online should be main line, so that there is no need for any line". He appealed to all stakeholders to follow the PM's three word mantra of 'Reform, Perform and Transform' to create a better future.

With educational institutions going digital in the context of the pandemic, the Vice President said students and teachers were connecting through cloud-based platforms to communicate, share work, and complete projects. "Examinations are also being conducted online", he added.

Observing that Artificial Intelligence, Virtual Reality, and Augmented Reality will enter classrooms more rapidly, Shri Naidu said this would transform the way teachers teach and

students learn.

Urging teachers to impart teaching in tune with the changing requirements, the Vice President said that students can access machines anytime from anywhere in the wake of online laboratories. “The teacher now plays the role of a facilitator, guide, counselor, coach and many a time that of a friend to the student”, he added.

Observing that the huge demographic advantage is waiting to be converted into a demographic dividend, Shri Naidu said “we should not miss this opportunity. We should enhance access to knowledge and skills to all children so that each one of them realizes his or her innate potential”.

Highlighting the importance of value-based education, the Vice President called for developing a model of education that reflects Indian culture and ethos. “We need to inculcate cultural, moral, ethical and spiritual values among children”, he added.

### **Following is the full text of the speech –**

“I am happy to be with all of you today to release the book Future of Education - Nine Megatrends” and address you.

It would have been ideal to have met you face to face but you know that the current situation doesn't make this possible. So, I had to release this volume virtually and address you from the Upa- Rashtrapathi Niwas.

Today, we are in the midst of a major health emergency. We are all working together to emerge victorious.

In these difficult times, a number of aspects of our life are changing. Education is no exception.

Technology is playing a greater role and most of educational processes are being conducted online.

I am glad to know that ICT Academy, a joint initiative of the Government of India and the state governments has been using the power of technology to impart skills.

I am happy that it is bringing industry and academia closer.

I am also pleased to know that it is continuing to serve the academic community through initiatives such as “Sky Campus”. I applaud the ICT Academy for its efforts.

My dear sisters and brothers,

The book I just released highlights some important trends and points to the future in education. We must take note of them.

If you look back at the past, in ancient India, we had a system of Gurukula in which Shishya was sent to live at the Guruji's home. Based on the shishya's abilities, the Guru would suggest a customized curriculum. He used to design tests to make sure that the students mastered what was taught.

This was individualized learning at its best.

Then around 1000 BC, Takshashila University was set up and became a major centre of higher education. In this University, students used to learn as per their choice. Teachers had complete autonomy in designing courses. The course durations were also flexible.

Around the 5th century AD, Nalanda blossomed in modern day Bihar. The institution was very similar to today's universities and had lecture halls and residential quarters and libraries.

My dear sisters and brothers,

The education of the 21st century is very different from the Gurukula days and how education was delivered in Takshashila and Nalanda.

The education sector has been transforming rapidly in the last few decades. We have seen unprecedented expansion of opportunities. There has been a digital explosion and knowledge revolution. More children are in schools and universities than earlier. The skills required for a changing world have been evolving continuously.

In the midst of this transformation, we now have the challenging context of the pandemic.

This is forcing each one of us to seek new ways of doing what we have been doing for a number of years.

To survive in this new world, educational institutions are going digital.

Students and teachers are connecting through cloud-based platforms. They are communicating, sharing, working, and completing projects. Examinations are also being conducted online.

New technologies are being used. We can clearly foresee that in the years to come, Artificial Intelligence, Virtual Reality, and Augmented Reality will transform the classrooms.

This will also transform the way teachers teach and students learn.

These changes will make it necessary to have a reorientation of teacher training.

The teacher will have to learn new skills of delivering learning online.

The students would have to learn new skills. They have to be self-learners and collaborative learners.

Technology offers immense opportunities.

One can now carry a lot of books on a smartphone. There are a number of audios and videos available online. These learning resources compress time and space and make learning much more convenient and interesting.

Would it not be wonderful if sitting in a remote village in India, an aspiring scholar can access a book in the library at Harvard?

With online laboratories, students can access machines anytime from anywhere and can practice before getting into a real lab.

The teacher now plays the role of a facilitator, a guide, a counsellor, a coach and very often, that of a friend to the student.

As the book mentions, the role of the teacher will change from that of a “sage” on the “stage” to a “guide” by the “side” of the student.

Teachers must therefore adapt their approach to teaching in tune with the rapidly changing scenario.

My dear sisters and brothers,

Technology opens up new possibilities but also makes us realize the big digital divide in our society.

There are many children who do not have access to digital devices.

If we have to realize the dream of universal quality primary education, if we have to have an equitable secondary and higher education, we will have to address the issue of this wide gap in access to technology.

Technology must be accessible and affordable.

A large number of students are impacted due to the lockdown as they find it hard to study online. Many of them need hand holding to shift from offline to online. They require proper training to pursue education through online modes.

Many parents in India still cannot afford digital devices.

Bridging the digital divide is too big and complex a task for the government to accomplish on its own.

I call upon the private sector, especially educational technology firms to adapt and contextualize the products as per the needs of learners and price them to make them affordable.

This is your time to make a momentous contribution to nation building and to securing a bright future for all our children.

Bharat net is connecting all the villages with high-speed broadband network. With this, ensuring digital connectivity has become much easier.

The state governments, in collaboration with the private sector and NGOs must come up with out-of-the box solutions to make quality education at all levels a reality.

This is a moment of disruption. The way we live, learn, earn, rest and work is changing.

Let us understand the changes and adapt creatively to the new normal.

Let us prepare for and shape the future by turning adversity into an opportunity.

We have a huge demographic advantage waiting to be converted into a demographic dividend. We should not miss this opportunity.

We should enhance access to knowledge and skills to all children so that each one of them realizes his or her innate potential.

My dear sisters and brothers,

We need education for progress and development. Equally important is the role of education in character building.

Education should be value-based and make the students not only acquire knowledge but also wisdom.

The curriculum should include various aspects of our rich culture and heritage and highlight the importance of protecting nature.

Protect nature and preserve culture for a better future.

Teachers play the most crucial role in shaping the character of a child after his or her parents. Therefore, teachers should have societal concerns.

We must develop a model of education that reflects Indian culture and ethos. We need to inculcate cultural, moral, ethical and spiritual values among children.

I extend a special appreciation to Shri M Sivakumar, CEO, ICT Academy and Shri V Pattabhi Ram the author of the book for bringing out the thought provoking book, "Future of Education –

Nine Mega Trends”.

This book can be the starting point for a process of reflection and action. It provides a good basis for further work on transforming the learning process of tomorrow.

Finally, I wish ICT Academy all success in all its endeavours that contribute to nation building.

Thank you.

Jai Hind!”

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**VRRK/MS/MSY/DP**

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