

Welcome Speech

Respected Shri Kapil Sibal Ji, Hon'ble Minister of Human Resource Development
Smt. D. Purandeswari, Hon'ble Minister of State for Human Resource Development,
Shri Narendra Jadhav, Hon'ble Member (Education) Planning Commission, Hon'ble
Ministers of State Governments, Chairman, UGC, AICTE, NCTE, VC NUEPA, officials of
MHRD and State Governments, officials of Planning Commission, ladies and
gentlemen.

I welcome all of you to the State Education Ministers' Conference. This Conference
which is being held a day before CABE, will provide an opportunity to us to discuss
various issues related to the education sector.

India has a demographic advantage with a large population of young people.
But this advantage can only be realised if opportunities for youth expand on a
massive scale through the medium of education. Sustained efforts, strategic planning
and creative thinking will be critical to devise appropriate policies and measures to
enable India emerge as a knowledge economy to reckon with, and a global leader.

You are all aware that RTE has been implemented and it has become the
responsibility of States as well as Centre to implement it, in letter and spirit. I hope
we will discuss threadbare the issues in the smooth implementation of this Act.
Similarly, we will also discuss implementation issues of Saakshar Bharat and RMSA,
as also examination reforms.

During the first three years of XI Five Year Plan, Higher Education System of
the country has seen a major expansion. Various new initiatives have been taken to
expand the Higher Education System of the country by opening of new institutions
and upgrading the existing ones. Initiatives have also been taken to improve the
quality of the Education. Inclusiveness is also one of the major concerns during the
XI Five Year Plan. Schemes like Women's Hostel, Model Colleges in Educationally
Backward districts, Education Loan Interest Subsidy etc. have been initiated to

ensure inclusiveness apart from making special provisions for reservation of seats for the disadvantaged sections. A National Mission on Education through ICT has already been launched on 3rd February 2009 which will cost nearly Rs.5000 crore in the next three years and will provide internet connectivity to over 20,000 degree colleges and over 10,000 departments in the Universities. Number of initiatives has already been set in motion for improvement in higher education sector through institutional and governance reforms.

I am sure today's conference would be thought provoking and lead to germination of new ideas and commitment from the State representatives for the implementation in the initiatives taken in the education sector. I once again welcome you all and request Shri Kapil Sibal, Hon'ble Minister of Human Resource Development to kindly set the tone of the meeting by giving his opening remarks.
