

Educational institutes still continue to show us the way: Ramesh Pokhriyal

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Covid-19 has pushed all of us into an era of unpredictable uncertainty, but in this moment of crisis our educational institutions have emerged as a ray of hope. Top universities and research institutes around the world, including in India, are playing an active role in the fight against the pandemic. At the same time, it is essential for us to ponder and discuss what the post-coronavirus scenario can look like in our educational institutions.

Amid all the uncertainties and hindrances, our teachers are honouring their core values and ethical responsibilities. Although our educational institutes are closed, the teaching-learning process is going on continuously. Whether is online education, research or medical colleges of our universities as corona hospitals or schools as isolation wards, or other social activities, our teachers, researchers, scientists and other employees are devotedly working in this emergency. I heartily congratulate every person connected with the world of education. While millions of our students are playing an important role in spreading awareness among the people, our scientists, researchers and engineers are addressing immediate public health needs. They are doing remarkable work in the development of ventilators, personal protective equipment (PPE), testing kits and drugs, and in increasing immunity.

I have felt very strongly in my review meetings that in the last few years there have been strategic reforms in our educational world but the results are becoming visible now. We have been successful in fostering a new research culture. India is progressing by researching in special fields and by conducting basic research. We can

now move forward toward establishing a model of research. We are committed to providing quality education and innovative education from our primary schools to universities. Special efforts have been made to keep industry and innovation connected with research activities by facilitating direct flow of funds and resources. For improving the research culture there have been strategic policy shifts along with increased flow of investments. I believe the people of India have amazing potential. If we resolve to fight this crisis together, then we will emerge victorious. The education world will act as a catalyst.

When the corona crisis erupted, people expressed their concern that we were dependent on foreigners for our every need. But for the past two months our IITs, IIMs, NITs and universities have been coming out almost every week with a new initiative, new technology, innovation or solution.

I am happy to note that more than 20 research institutes in the country are working to develop vaccines for the treatment of highly infectious novel coronaviruses. In addition to our best academic and research institutions, the National Institute of Virology (NIV), Pune, and the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) are at the forefront. The Department of Biotechnology says the government has received more than 7,000 technology-based proposals from private companies and individuals to fight Covid-19. IIT incubators have been asked to focus on the research and development of portable ventilators, with particular focus on genome sequencing and the isolation of strains of coronavirus from blood samples. Researchers at IIT Delhi have developed a method to detect Covid-19 that can significantly reduce test costs.

The Covid task force has so far identified 500 organisations that are working toward the development of solutions to the prevailing situation in the country including AI and IoT based solutions. Many of our universities are using their 3D printing labs to make important parts of ventilators. Special campaigns are being launched to increase collaborative research with institutions of foreign countries to deal with the corona crisis. In a very short time, many reputed universities have built specialised hospitals for corona patients.

Under the leadership of the Honourable Prime Minister, we have been able to preserve the eternal values of the country and have excellently kept up the guru-shishya tradition which is commendable. I am glad that we have a network of more than 1,000 universities and 45,000 colleges and one crore teachers to overcome this crisis. My request to the leadership of all institutions is that as the head of the family, ensure that no one – students, teachers and administration – goes into any kind of depression or stress. Taking care of mental health is our priority. We should become more sensitive, diagnose the problems of students and also create an encouraging environment. With mutual efforts, we can do better for society, the country and the world at large.