

**ADDRESS BY HON'BLE MINISTER OF LAW AND JUSTICE
AT THE NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON
LEGAL SERVICES, LEGAL EDUCATION AND THE STATE
OF THE PROFESSION: EMERGING CHALLENGES
HELD ON 25-26 APRIL, 2015 AT
NATIONAL LAW SCHOOL, BANGALORE**

It is a matter of delight and immense pleasure to be here at this National Conference. It is a privilege for me to be amongst the galaxy of leaders in the field of legal education.

The role of legal fraternity in strengthening the democratic polity and the principles of rule of law in our country has been well established. However, the goals of justice - social, economic and political, and of liberty and equality to its optimum are yet to be attained. Legal fraternity represents the most enlightened and traditionally respected section of the society. In a democratic polity, the role of this dignified profession has always been very important. It is the watchdog of democracy and ever vigilant in the matters concerning the rule of law as enshrined and guaranteed by our Constitution.

Our society expects the Bar to render professional services in the nature of legal aid, advice and advocacy, in a free and fearless manner, so as to bring about peace, prosperity and development for one and all. The judiciary, as one of the principal organs of the State, will be able to discharge its obligations in the administration of justice only with the total commitment and participation of its main component, namely, the Bar. It would be safe to assume that the

efficiency of judicial administration largely depends on the competence of the Bar.

The legal profession in India comprises, within its sweep, not only the practitioners of law in the courts and tribunals but also academicians involved in teaching and research of law, professionals engaged in the tasks of legislative drafting and legal advisers in the business activities requiring use of knowledge of legal processes and requisite skills for drafting of commercial documents. The legal education thus must be designed to generate talent that can cater to multitude needs of the State and society at large.

Barring few exceptions, it is generally agreed that the area of legal education has not seen any improvement, rather it has seen some deterioration over a period of time. The reasons can be many, starting with lack of qualified faculty, management of the institutions, poor infrastructural facilities, focus of the students and so on. What we need is a radical change in the way the educational institutions dealing with law are run, managed and developed. Though the prospects for legal education may not largely depend on the infrastructure and management alone, adequate care on these aspects is of utmost importance. It has to be equally acknowledged that the level of professionalism in any sector will depend upon the future which awaits its products coming out of the educational institutions. Hence the legal education in India can be comprehensively improved only when we deal with the future prospects of the graduates coming out of those institutions. The rapid growth in economy will provide opportunities for the young graduates to flourish. Globalisation and opening up of major sectors

for trade and investment have increased the scope of arbitration and commercial dispute settlement. Government is making efforts to make India an International Hub of arbitration. All this will certainly boost the prospects of the advocacy profession in India in days to come.

Hence what we need is to prepare our young legal professionals well in order to reap the benefits of reforms happening in this sector at national and global level and the reforms in legal education cannot wait any longer. In the context of changes ahead, it will be important to devote thought on how to adapt our legal education to modern conditions so that the coming generation may fit in the new scheme of things. Legal education is an investment, which if wisely made will produce most beneficial results for the society.

When we look at the present scenario, after passing School, the general preference of students for professional courses is medicine, engineering and so on. The legal profession does not come in the top 4/5 preferences. Actually it comes in the less preferred category. However, when we look at the position in other countries, law is amongst the top preferences and if they do not get law, they join other courses. Why can't we create such a scenario in India?

The scenario is gradually changing a little bit since the coming into being of National Law Schools which are doing pioneering job and have brought in innovative techniques in the field of law. At the same time, we need to improve the quality of institutions imparting legal education, if not to the standard of National Law Schools but

substantially. There are many private and autonomous institutions imparting engineering education almost on par with the IITs. On the same lines, private and autonomous Law Colleges should come upto the standards of National Law Schools. Only then the perception of students towards legal profession will change.

The National Law Schools who have earned a name for themselves for imparting quality legal education can actually lend a helping hand by guiding and supporting other private and autonomous institutions in the legal field. This will assure the students that legal profession is going to provide them a bright future. With improvement in the standards of legal education, the legal profession can actually support lawyers practicing in different branches like civil, criminal, commercial, corporate, cyber, intellectual property, and so on to go for specialization and become more professional in their approach. This will not only improve the competence of law graduates but also change their outlook for good.

Sometimes academicians are not aware about the recent changes made in the law. They need to update themselves about the changes brought by the Government as well as judicial pronouncements. Apart from updating themselves, they should spearhead the movement for change by bringing out inconsistencies in the current laws in force. The teaching institutions should look at the legal system and laws in practice critically and come out with suggestions so that the laws are made more harmonious and more relevant to the needs of the society in the present context. If the best minds at work in such large number of these institutions suggest the reforms/amendments to be made in our laws, we would certainly create a legal system which is much better conducive for

public. Hence, I call upon all of you not to confine your activities to teaching and learning law but also work with us to create a better system and better society.

Students would be learning and joining different branches of legal profession. Whatever branch of law be it may, their goal should be to defend the cherished principles of our fundamental rights, civil liberties and realization of rights of marginalized sections of our society. They must dedicate themselves to ideals of selfless public service and towards attaining greatest standards of proficiency in their area of profession.

I am confident that the National Conference will deliberate on the issues of legal education and its radical transformation so that legal profession becomes a beacon light of our society and polity, and provide a helping hand to the poor and needy. I thank the organisers for inviting me to this occasion and I wish the Conference every success in achieving its objectives.
