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REDEFINING THE LANDSCAPE OF HIGHER EDUCATION

“As we evolved as a group, we are at yet another interesting phase of education, which is not only dynamic but builds a unique innovative environment”- says the ebullient Founder Chancellor of Presidency University and Chairman of the Presidency Group of Institutions, Dr Nissar Ahmed.

The NEP 2020 has drawn the ancient strings into the modern definition of higher education and stress is back to universal and seamless education, skill based learning, vocational training and value based education. The new National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 has introduced transformative reforms aimed at reshaping India's education system to meet modern challenges. It prioritizes holistic, multidisciplinary education, a restructured school curriculum, and early childhood care. Its key initiatives include the promotion of online education and the establishment of a National Research Foundation. “As a group, Presidency group of institutions are sensitive and adaptive to the major realms of changes brought about by the paradigm shift in education. Four decades ago, we were evolving as a group and fitting into the postcolonial era of education and created a niche for the group doling out quality education in both the K-12 and higher education sector. As we evolved as a group, we are at yet another interesting phase of education, which is not only dynamic but builds a unique innovative environment,” says the ebullient Founder Chancellor of Presidency University and Chairman of the Presidency group of institutions, Dr Nissar Ahmed.



Participating actively and being at the forefront of the dynamic education scenario, the Presidency Group of Institutions (PGI) has become a beacon of educational excellence, reflecting India's evolving education landscape. Dr. Nissar Ahmed, an educationist and philanthropist, is the visionary behind PGI. His name resonates with academic

excellence and social commitment. Dr. Ahmed's journey into the educational landscape of India began in 1976, at a time when the country was in dire need of high-quality education. Along with his uncle, Mr. Abdul Hameed, he established St. Paul's English School in Nandini Layout, Bengaluru. The sudden demise of his beloved uncle left



Dr. Ahmed to continue the journey alone, but he remained steadfast in his pursuit of transforming education in the region.

Dr. Ahmed's relentless dedication has resulted in the expansion of PGI, which today comprises a university, a degree college, three pre-university colleges, and eight schools, all spread across Bengaluru and Mangalore. The institutions collectively serve nearly 30,000 students from India and around the world and employ approximately 3,000 dedicated professionals, all dedicated to nurturing the next generation of leaders. The institution's commitment to personalized attention and student support ensures that every student could excel.

Under Dr. Ahmed's visionary leadership, PGI institutions have consistently embraced innovation, ensuring their academic programs are updated to meet the evolving needs of the job market and global economy. The emphasis on holistic development, quality teaching, and strong industry collaborations has equipped graduates with both technical proficiency and leadership skills to succeed in today's competitive world. The success of PGI is also reflected in its extensive alumni network, which includes over 58,000 graduates, many of whom have gone on to secure influential positions both in India and abroad. It is not uncommon for the children of alumni to join PGI, further cementing Dr. Ahmed's legacy and the enduring trust in the institution.

The impact of Dr. Nissar Ahmed's work has not gone un-

noticed. He was named among the 50 leading 'Edupreneurs' in India by Education World in 2013, and the Presidency Group of Institutions was honored with the title of 'Most Promising Education Institute' in 2013-2014 by Lord Swaraj Paul, Member of the House of Lords, UK Parliament. These accolades are a reflection of Dr. Ahmed's ability to innovate and inspire in an ever-changing educational landscape.

In 2017, Dr. Ahmed was recognized as 'The Doyen—Guardian of Knowledge' by The Hindu Group for his exemplary contributions to education in Karnataka. The recognition continued in 2019 with the 'Lifetime Achievement Award in Education Leadership' from Education World Magazine. He was awarded an honorary doctorate by Bangalore University in 2023. In 2023, Dr. Ahmed was recognized as one of the prominent visionaries contributing to India's economic growth, as part of the country's journey to a 5 trillion-dollar economy.

As India's higher education landscape continues to evolve, institutions like the Presidency Group lead the charge in driving positive change. 'We are not only adapting to modern educational demands but also contributing to the broader goal of making quality education accessible to all, regardless of socioeconomic background. Through research initiatives, technology integration, and a commitment to excellence, we have been shaping the future of education in India, empowering students to become future leaders in various fields,' Dr Ahmed adds.

The history of the Presidency Group demonstrates that visionary leadership, a strong educational foundation, and an unwavering pursuit of excellence can achieve unparalleled success.

Focus is on Post-independence, the Indian government focused on expanding access to quality education and establishing premier institutions like IITs and IIMs at the time when challenges such as inequitable access and outdated curricula persisted. In 1968 and 1986, the National Policy on Education (NPE) was introduced, stressing universal education, vocational training, and the modernization of curriculum. However, the implementation faced challenges like regional disparities, inadequate funding,

rote learning, privatization pressures, lack of trained teachers, and surging population growth.

India's higher education system has undergone numerous transformations over the years, focusing on access, quality, and alignment with international standards. The gross enrollment ratio has been increased by opening new universities and interdisciplinary learning aimed at equipping students with relevant skills and fostering a holistic education approach, integrating vocational training and technology. Through the years, institutions have emphasized improving research output and faculty development, which creates a more dynamic and innovative academic environment.

The implementations of these reforms have often been hindered by the lack of infrastructure development, teacher education, and a uniformity of quality among regions. While urban institutions have made significant progress in adopting modern educational reforms, rural and smaller institutions face greater challenges in adapting to these changes. However, this reform structure has established a strong grounding for the future, enabling higher education to be extended to expand globally, aligning with the demands of globalization.

The rapid growth of the IT sector since the 1990s has revolutionized the Indian economy, creating millions of jobs and positioning India as a global leader in tech innovation and outsourcing. Academic institutions in the higher education sector have played a pivotal role in this growth by producing a skilled workforce, with institutions like the IITs and NITs at the forefront of technical excellence. These institutions have focused on skill development and industry-linked programs, which have gradually increased the employability of graduates, which addressed the changing demands of the ever-evolving job market. The digitalization of education has further enhanced classroom learning through digital platforms, fostering an inclusive environment for students across urban and rural India. Additionally, the expansion of higher education, with an emphasis on multidisciplinary studies and research, has opened new avenues for innovation and global collaboration, empowering India to compete on the world stage.

