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INDIA'S PATH TO PROSPERITY

INDIA NEEDS URGENT REFORMS NOW TO BECOME A DEVELOPED NATION BY 2047, OR IT RISKS SQUANDERING ITS BEST CHANCE TO ESCAPE THE LOWER-MIDDLE-INCOME TRAP

Presidency Group of Institutions (PGI): A Legacy of Excellence, Values, and Global Education



Presidency Group of Institutions (PGI) in Bengaluru stands as a beacon of quality education in Karnataka, recognized for its immense contribution to shaping the future of students. With a legacy spanning over four decades, PGI is home to 8 schools, 3 Pre-University Colleges, an Autonomous College and a State Private University, where the focus is on practical, interdisciplinary learning that equips students to meet the challenges of a rapidly changing world. Under the visionary leadership of Dr. Nissar Ahmed, the Founder of PGI, the institution has touched the lives of thousands of students, preparing them not only to excel in their careers but also to embrace cultural values that define their character.

Dr. Nissar Ahmed's commitment to accessible education laid the foundation for PGI's growth, a legacy that continues with the next generation—Mr. Suhael Ahmed, Dr. Nafeesa Ahmed and Mr. Salman Ahmed, —who are steering PGI forward, blending tradition with modern education.

Dr. Nissar Ahmed: A Visionary Educator and Philanthropist

You are the visionary and driving force behind this over five-decade old educational group of institutions. What inspired you to embark on this journey of providing better education for the youth?

My passion for affordable education began in 1976, when my uncle, the late Mr. Abdul Hameed and I, established the first School. Our vision was clear: to create a chain of Institutions that provided education on par with top-tier Institutions. By 1980 we had established 2 Schools, and I lost my uncle in a tragic accident thereafter. His untimely death in 1980 led me to shoulder the entire responsibility of the Schools which then went on to expand into a chain of Schools

as there was a dearth of quality K-12 Institutions.

Subsequently, in the year 2000, I realized there was a dearth of good colleges in the city which led us to foray into higher education. As I expanded into higher education, I noticed a significant gap: students were not being adequately prepared for the industry. Over the past 25 years, Presidency College and, more recently, Presidency University, which is nearly a decade old, have worked tirelessly to offer modern education across various fields, with state-of-the-art infrastructure, laboratories, excellent faculty fraternity, focusing on developing professionals who possess the knowledge, skills, and competencies required to thrive in an ever-evolving world.

What evolution have you observed since the inception of PGI, and what impact has it had on individuals, society, and the industry over the decades?

In the early years, rote learning dominated the educational landscape, with teachers focusing mainly on theoretical knowledge, offering minimal practical or experiential exposure. Competition was intense, and success was measured solely by exam marks. This scenario extended into higher education as well.

The 1980s ushered in technology and computers, which significantly transformed teaching and learning. The focus shifted toward practical learning, and individuals began valuing multi-skill



development over mere academic performance. Society evolved to assess students not just by their grades but by how well they performed in the professional world. Today, the approach to education is more holistic, blending knowledge, skills, and competencies with a hands-on, kinaesthetic learning experience that prepares students for real-world challenges.

In terms of methodology and pedagogy, what are your thoughts on the evolution of teaching styles over the past four decades?

Our focus at Presidency University is heavily inclined towards critical thinking and experiential learning. We have moved to a more interactive, AI and technology-driven hybrid, blended and application-based learning experience. This shift is evident across all our Academic Programs. Learning has evolved from being teacher-centric to student-centred, with an emphasis on skill development. Techniques like critical and analytical thinking, design thinking, and mind mapping have become integral to modern teaching. The integration of new technologies has

further transformed education, making it more information-driven and dynamic for our tech savvy students.

How important do you believe the combination of value-based education and core competencies is in shaping the youth?

Core values and formal education are deeply interconnected. Education today should be a blend of global perspectives and local relevance, ensuring that students are equipped with both the necessary formal knowledge and the skills required in contemporary industries. However, knowledge alone is not enough. A truly educated individual must also possess strong human values. Values shape character, which, when combined with knowledge and skills, lays the foundation for success in both professional and personal life. This philosophy forms the core of the Presidency ethos, guiding our institutions in shaping well-rounded, thoughtful and civic conscious citizens.

Do you feel that the mission you set out to achieve has been fulfilled, and what new benchmarks have you established for PGI?

Today, Presidency is a reputed education brand and we have always set high standards for ourselves.

As the poet John Keats once said, "... but I have promises to keep, and miles to go before I sleep." This sentiment resonates with me. The journey of building and growing PGI is far from over. I am reminded of the words of the Tamil poetess, Avvaiyar, who said, "What I have learned is but a fistful of sand, and what I don't know is an ocean before me." While we have overcome numerous challenges to reach where we are today, we continue to grow. The mission is an ongoing one, and our path of growth remains endless.

The responsibility of taking forward a formidable PGI legacy can be overwhelming. Was taking on the reins of PGI a conscious choice?

Taking on the leadership of PGI was indeed a natural progression for me. Growing up under my father's mentorship, I witnessed first-hand the incredible journey he undertook—transforming a modest two-room house into a renowned and one of the largest Educational Group. His passion for education and relentless pursuit of excellence are constants that have inspired me. While I acknowledge the weight of the responsibility and the enormity of the legacy, I firmly believe that with the foundation he laid and the lessons I've learned by working alongside him, I'm equipped to carry it forward. The journey isn't just about honoring the past, but also about envisioning the future. As Vice Chairman, I'm excited to lead with the same spirit of innovation and commitment that defined my father's legacy.

Could you briefly share how your family and education shaped you for the role of Vice Chairman of PGI?

My journey has been deeply influenced by both my family and education. Education was always the cornerstone of our household. My parents ensured that I had a strong academic foundation and a sense of discipline. They played an instrumental role in my upbringing. Their unwavering support and insistence on excellence shaped my values and prepared me for this leadership role. Additionally, the experiences and knowledge I gained through my formal education have been invaluable in understanding both the academic and operational aspects of PGI. My wife has equally been a great source of strength and inspiration.

What have you brought to the table of PGI that emanates from your experiences in the educational domain?

While PGI had already established strong operational systems, I believe the education landscape has changed, and with it, the approach to management. One of the key contributions I've made is embracing

Leadership Transition: A Vision for the Future

The leadership of PGI has successfully transitioned to the next generation.

Mr. Suhael Ahmed, Vice Chairman of PGI, reflecting on the high standards set by the Founder and to continue to enhance it. Under his guidance, PGI has adopted modern management practices and introduced innovative strategies to ensure that PGI remains an agile and forward-thinking institution.



■ Suhael Ahmed
Vice Chairman
Presidency Group Of Institutions

Dr. Nafeesa Ahmed, Director of Presidency Schools, has further elevated the quality of education at PGI by focusing on innovation, inclusivity, and excellence. Her exemplary academic credentials include Master's in International Management from Royal Holloway, University of London and also whetted her skills in management and leadership at the famed Harvard School. With a global outlook, she has fostered an environment that nurtures critical thinking, leadership, and emotional intelligence. Dr. Nafeesa has been particularly focused on empowering women and creating opportunities for young leaders to emerge in the education sector.



■ Dr. Nafeesa Ahmed
Director
Presidency Group of Institutions

a more collaborative leadership style. I introduced the RACI framework (Responsible, Accountable, Consulted, and Informed) into PGI's academic and operational structure, which has helped streamline processes and improve accountability across all levels. This shift has allowed us to be more agile and responsive to changes, ensuring that we stay ahead of the competition. I have always pushed for innovation—particularly in adapting to the rapidly evolving K-12 and collegiate sectors. Additionally, we are studying the potential for expanding beyond Karnataka, with the possibility of establishing a Deemed-to-be University, subject to the approval of relevant authorities. It's about stepping forward with a fresh perspective while respecting the values and strengths we've always had.

PGI is close to completing 50 golden years of its establishment. What are the plans that you would unveil for the celebratory year?

As we approach this monumental milestone, the 50th anniversary of PGI represents not just a reflection on our achievements, but also an exciting opportunity to look ahead. The journey has been remarkable, but the future is where the real promise lies. We have always believed that PGI is one big family, and every person who contributes to its success is an equal stakeholder in its legacy. For this celebratory year, we want to bring that family spirit alive by hosting grand alumni reunions across all our institutions. These events will not only honour the past but also showcase how far we've come and the incredible community that we've built together. We'll also be unveiling new initiatives that reflect our vision for the next 50 years, ensuring that PGI continues to lead in shaping the future of education.

You have set an example that anything can be achieved by a woman if she has set her heart to it. How true does it stand in your life as one at the helm of an educational institution in a male-dominated sector?

For me, leadership has always been about vision, resilience, and determination. My journey has been deeply influenced by the values instilled in me by my father, Dr. Nissar Ahmed, who has always believed in the transformative power of education. As a woman leading in a sector traditionally dominated by men, I've learned to challenge norms, inspire others, and foster an inclusive culture that encourages growth for all. It's not just about setting an example for other women, but also about empowering those around me to embrace their potential. The road has never been easy, but it has been incredibly rewarding. I believe that with the right mindset and a commitment to breaking barriers, women can lead and transform any field, just as we are doing at PGI.

When you took on the mantle as Director of PGI schools, what were the challenges that

you encountered in giving new direction to the institutions?

Taking on the leadership of PGI schools, was a significant responsibility that required both courage and conviction. The challenge wasn't just in carrying forward his legacy but also in infusing my own vision for the future. I sought to create an educational environment that was more than just about academics — one that prepares students to lead with innovation, empathy, and global perspectives. Another challenge was transitioning the institutions to embrace modern educational tools and practices while preserving the core values that PGI was built upon. Balancing these two aspects — tradition and innovation — required careful thought and collaboration at every level.

What are the steps taken by you to make education at PGI of global quality and standards?

At PGI, our mission is to constantly evolve and keep pace with global educational standards. We've integrated cutting-edge technologies, including AI, robotics, and data-driven learning methods, into our curriculum to ensure that our students are prepared for the future workforce. We have also formed strategic partnerships with renowned international institutions to offer students global exposure, which enhances their academic and cultural experiences. Our faculty development programs are regularly updated to reflect the latest teaching methodologies, ensuring that our educators are equipped to lead in the classroom. Additionally, we have implemented infrastructure that focuses on sustainability and innovation, making PGI a dynamic environment for growth and learning.

What is the emphasis that is given to students where focus is given to their holistic development and the outcomes thereof?

At PGI, we believe in nurturing students holistically, not just academically but also in terms of emotional intelligence, leadership, and social responsibility. Our curriculum is designed to encourage critical thinking, creativity, and practical problem-solving skills. We place a strong emphasis on experiential learning — programs like Model United Nations (MUN), internships, and leadership training provide students with opportunities to develop communication skills, teamwork, and global awareness. Additionally, we focus on Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) to foster mental well-being and ethical development. These programs prepare students not just to excel in their careers, but also to become responsible, empathetic leaders capable of making a positive impact on society.

What are your future plans for PGI schools in terms of collaborations with foreign institutions and the industry?

As we look to the future, my vision for PGI is to strengthen our ties with global institutions and industries to provide our students with unparalleled opportunities for growth. We are expanding

Dr. Salman Ahmed, Vice President of Presidency University, an iconic youth entrepreneur and a 'go to' person on the PGI campuses. His Teachup programme, where students from the Presidency University mentor students in Government schools in Karnataka, entirely his concept, is a unique example of building strong synergies among the youth and a robust campus with all the freedom to explore and excel in academics and beyond.



■ Mr. Salman Ahmed
Vice President
Presidency University

our collaborations with prestigious universities worldwide to facilitate exchange programs, joint research, and student internships. Furthermore, we are establishing stronger industry partnerships to offer hands-on learning opportunities in emerging fields such as AI, data science, and entrepreneurship. Our goal is to create innovation hubs where students can engage in real-world projects, and gain the necessary skills and experience to thrive in today's competitive job market. We want PGI graduates to be not just academically proficient, but also industry-ready professionals with a global mind-set.

How much credit would you give to family values, and who is your inspiration that has shaped you as an individual with a stellar professional identity?

Family values have been the cornerstone of my personal and professional identity. Growing up in a

household where education was not just a priority, but a passion, I was taught the importance of integrity, hard work, and resilience. My father, Dr. Nissar Ahmed, has been a beacon of inspiration, not just in his academic contributions, but in his unwavering commitment to serving the community. His vision for accessible education and his determination to build PGI from the ground up have shaped my approach to leadership and education. My mother, Mrs. Kauser Nissar Ahmed, has also played a crucial role in shaping my character — teaching me the importance of compassion, multi-tasking, and balance. Her support and guidance have been invaluable. Their influence is what drives me every day to continue their legacy and to ensure that PGI remains a place of excellence, innovation, and inclusive growth.

India is maturing into an affordable global hub for quality education. How is PGI aligned to this assessment of an institution of higher education?

India is increasingly becoming a global center for accessible and high-quality education. At Presidency Group of Institutions (PGI), we are fully aligned with this transformative shift. Presidency University, through its autonomy, offers programs that meet international standards, ensuring that our students receive world-class education at affordable rates. The University has partnered with 150 plus prestigious international universities, focusing on academic and research collaboration. Many of our students benefit from pursuing higher professional education with these esteemed global institutions. Additionally, our campus hosts a growing number of international students, underscoring PGI's reputation as a key player in global education. Our ongoing international partnerships and our commitment to

quality, affordability, and innovation position us at the forefront of India's educational evolution.

Of late, what are the new colleges that have come up under the aegis of PGI or those on the flanks to be inaugurated?

Presidency University has been proactive in expanding the scope of programs under the University's umbrella. Recently, several new schools and faculties have been launched to offer cutting-edge, industry-driven courses. These programs reflect the evolving needs of both the job market and academic innovation. We have also introduced technology-focused programs that prepare students to be industry-ready in fields like AI, robotics, and data science. Looking ahead, we are excited about the possibility of opening a School of Liberal Studies that will offer a diverse array of programs, ranging from Fine Arts to Performing Arts. PGI's vision remains forward-looking, with plans for continuous growth and academic diversification.

What are your expansion plans for PGI campuses in other parts of Karnataka or in any other part of the country?

As a state private university, Presidency University is currently focused on expanding within Karnataka. Over the next few years, we also plan to establish new pre-university college campuses across the state, continuing to build on our reputation for academic excellence. We will adopt a cautious, research-based approach to this expansion, assessing the educational landscape and environmental factors before making any strategic decisions.

Karnataka is an IT and industrial hub of the country. How are you aligning the New Education Policy for encouraging experiential learning for the students to become industry-

worthy?

Presidency University has embraced the key principles outlined in the New Education Policy (NEP) 2020, particularly its emphasis on interdisciplinary education and experiential learning. Our curriculum is designed to foster both academic excellence and research-driven knowledge. We have implemented the Outcome-Based Learning (OBL) model and adopted a Choice-Based Credit System (CBCS), offering a mix of core subjects, electives, and hands-on learning experiences such as internships and capstone projects. These initiatives ensure that our students gain practical, real-world skills, positioning them as industry-ready professionals. Furthermore, the university's emphasis on industry collaborations allows students to engage with leading IT and industrial sectors, ensuring that their learning experience is relevant, dynamic, and tailored to the demands of the job market.

A Legacy of Family Values and Visionary Leadership

The success of PGI is deeply rooted in the values upheld by its leadership. Dr. Nissar Ahmed's vision for quality education, his commitment to social good, and his philanthropic spirit have been the guiding lights for PGI's growth. The involvement of his wife and children in continuing his work ensures that these values remain at the heart of the institution's operations.

At PGI, the legacy of excellence, innovation, and cultural sensitivity continues to shape the minds of young leaders. As the institution prepares for the next chapter, it remains steadfast in its mission to provide affordable, world-class education while preparing students to thrive in a globalized world.

