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Press Release

“Dr B. R. Ambedkar spread light into the thick of darkness”: Hon’ble Governor of Assam, Shri Acharya at Jamia Millia Islamia on the occasion of Ambedkar Jayanti 2025

Jamia Millia Islamia (JMI) joined the nation in paying rich tributes to Bharat Ratna Dr. B. R. Ambedkar on the occasion of his 135th birth anniversary in an impressive function at its FTK-Centre for Information Technology Auditorium on April 13, 2025, marking the beginning of a series of events to remember and revisit the legacy of the visionary leader. Hon’ble Governor of Assam, Shri Lakshman Prasad Acharya was the Chief Guest at the memorable function in the presence of Prof Harbansh Dixit, Advisor, Raj Bhavan Secretariat, Government of Assam who was the Guest of Honour at the function organized by JMI on the theme of “Baba Saheb Dr. B. R. Ambedkar’s Contributions towards Nation Building”. Prof. Vivek Kumar, School of Social Sciences, Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) delivered the keynote address at the event which was presided over by Vice Chancellor JMI, Prof Mazhar Asif along with the Registrar JMI, Prof Md. Mahtab Alam Rizvi.

The scintillating function began as the auditorium reverberated with a rousing chorus of the National Anthem followed by a soul-stirring rendition of the *Jamia tarana* by the university’s choir after which rich floral tributes were paid to Dr B. R. Ambedkar, the architect of the Constitution.

The Vice Chancellor JMI welcomed the Hon’ble Governor Shri Acharya ji by felicitating him with a memento and a shawl, followed by the felicitations of Prof Dixit by Registrar JMI, Prof Vivek Kumar by Prof Ravins and Dr Amit K. Verma, JMI and the welcoming of the VC JMI by Dr. Kapil and Dr Arunesh, JMI and the felicitation of the Registrar by Prof Rajan Patel, JMI.

Prof Mazhar Asif, VC JMI, in his welcome address which effortlessly blended Bhojpuri and Assamese languages radiating personal touch and warmth, said that he was immensely humbled and honored to receive His Excellency the Governor of Assam at Jamia Millia Islamia which has been a nurturing ground of Indian traditions and values and an outstanding example of the composite culture of this land. Invoking JMI’s rich history of over 100 years, going back to the pre-Independence India, Prof Asif said, “JMI is not just a university but a thought process and a mission whose moral richness and foundational values go back to Mahatma Gandhi, Rabindranath Tagore and the Ali brothers, among other illustrious nationalist founders of this historic institution, making

it an abode of deep-rooted cultural values of brotherhood and respect for all. "It is this *tehzeeb*, *sanskar* and *sanskriti* engrained in the very spirit of JMI that sets our students into a *transformative journey* metamorphosing them from *an Aadmi to an insaan*", said Prof Asif.

Reminding the audience that Dr Ambedkar was more relevant today than ever before, the Vice Chancellor said that many fundamental freedoms that we enjoy today like the freedom to speak, to practice any religion, move freely and wear any dresses, are attributable to him. It is remarkable that approximately 40% students of JMI hail from geographically, linguistically, socially and economically marginalized sections of society and this allows the university to play a seminal role in empowering not just their lives and communities but also to contribute to nation-building, Prof Asif said.

Prof Asif's announcement that this function was just the beginning and that JMI will celebrate the anniversary of Babasaheb every year with greater energy and gusto, met with a thunderous applause.

The keynote speaker was Prof Vivek Kumar, a world-renowned Sociologist and a public intellectual, who has served as professor and chairperson of the Centre for the Study of Social Systems, School of Social Sciences, JNU, and was visiting Prof Columbia University, New York and Humboldt, Berlin. In his address to a packed audience, Prof Kumar said that the following two questions were worth delving into: one, how should Dr. B. R. Ambedkar be analysed in an educational or a university system and how should it be different from an analysis undertaken by politicians or by ordinary people? He drew attention to the fact that the popular and the activist Ambedkar should be understood differently from a conceptualization of the 'academic' Ambedkar. Second, how do we avoid the reductionism of Ambedkar to only a Dalit messiah or just a Constitution maker or a draftsman as he was much more than that? Towards this end, Prof Kumar drew attention to the specific issue of: What is the perspective with which he produced his knowledge? He pointed to the following perspectives- historical, textual, evolutionary, comparative and international, as the basis of the philosophical foundation of Dr Ambedkar's epistemology of knowledge production. In addition to this, he reminded the students that Dr Ambedkar drew from a rich repository of sources including, archaeological, archival, census data, Commission reports, paper clippings from various newspapers and also experiential reality.

Prof Kumar congratulated Prof Asif for his efforts in reminding the youth of today about Dr Ambedkar's contributions and writings by organizing such an important function to mark his birth anniversary.

The Guest of Honour, Prof Dixit, in his address focused on the role of Dr B. R. Ambedkar in nation-building drawing closely from the speeches of Babasaheb to the Constituent Assembly and his propositions for the future of democracy in India. Prof Dixit emphasized that the Constitution was not an ordinary document flagging that its

workings was dependent on the intentions of those who implement it. He reminded the audience about the rich contributions made by Dr. Ambedkar to rid the society of caste and class-based discrimination and to secure social justice and dignity for all.

Prof Dixit reminded the students that “democracy was not a luxury” and the credit of the fact that India has had an uninterrupted democracy and parliamentary democracy has thrived since the inception of the country, goes to Dr. B. R. Ambedkar. Drawing heavily from comparative analysis of the U.S. and other nations which have had a history of discrimination based on race, gender and class, and witnessed their “separate but equal treatment”, Prof Dixit said that India has done exceptionally well on most counts. Prof Dixit recalled that Dr Ambedkar had cautioned that the worst days will dawn upon us when we push our selfish goals above the nation and it is this pitfall that we need to avoid ending with the reminder that the Constitution was for “We the People”.

The Chief Guest, Hon’ble Governor of Assam, Shri Lakshman Prasad Acharya, known for his contributions to education, politics and public service, congratulated JMI for organizing such a meaningful and momentous event to remember the valuable contributions made by Dr B. R. Ambedkar. In his evocative speech, he reminded the audience about the life of hardships that Babasaheb faced, being born in a place where he experienced discrimination due to his caste and how he persevered and emerged strong despite these roadblocks. Therefore, he beckoned students that in their moments of despondency they must look at a picture of Babasaheb to draw mental strength and courage. Quoting Ambedkar that it is those who are unafraid to die, truly know how to live, Hon’ble Governor Acharya ji said that students should be strong willed and determined as Ambedkar’s thoughts will provide strength to all of us.

Hon’ble Governor recalling Prof Asif’s words that Jamia transforms students from mere human beings to *insaan*, said that “the role of an educational system is to instill higher values so that we are able to rise above the narrow differences of caste, creed, religion and language and in so doing fulfill the duty of one human being unto another human being”. This should be the true aim and objective of education otherwise something is amiss in our teaching and learning process, Shri Acharya held. He added that Dr. B. R. Ambedkar’s name will be counted among the foremost in the ranks of those great men and women, who will be remembered for emancipating humanity. He said that Dr Ambedkar spread light into the thick of darkness and illuminated the path of humanity. Shri Acharya ji said that it was only befitting that we remember him not just as the architect and the father of the Constitution but also understand his philosophy and teachings from not just political and legal but also moral standpoints. Dr Ambedkar dedicated his life for the upliftment of Dalits, women, the downtrodden and oppressed, and other marginalized sections of society and our Hon’ble President of India, Smt. Droupadi Murmu exemplifies that Babasaheb’s values and vision has been realized and imbibed in the free country, he emphasized.

Shri Acharya ji, concluded by saying that Dr Ambedkar's message was very important today and holds immense relevance, and that it was not enough to know what he said but also to live it. The Governor also got a special picture taken with all the people from the State of Assam present during the function.

The function concluded by a presentation of the original copies of the Constitution to the Hon'ble Governor Shri Acharya by the Vice Chancellor and Registrar, JMI. Vice Chancellor and Registrar, JMI then presented a copy of the Constitution to Prof Harbansh Dixit. A copy of the Constitution was presented to Prof Kumar by the VC JMI and Dr Rajveer, JMI and then Dr Kapil, JMI and Dr Arunesh, JMI presented original copies of the Constitution to both the VC and Registrar.

Prof Md Mahtab Alam Rizvi in his vote of thanks said that JMI was fortunate to hold such a historic and landmark event in the midst of the Hon'ble Governor along with Prof Dixit and Prof Vivek Kumar. He summed up the key points made by the eminent speakers and said that the contributions of Dr B. R. Ambedkar would be remembered not just in the making of the Constitution and in the sphere of social justice and equality but also in the arena of the economy and how India's major economic institutions and the evolving economic policies draw from Dr Ambedkar's thoughts and ideas. The economy and the policy paradigm play an important role in the promotion of social justice and equity, he added. Prof Rizvi said that the youth are the future of the nation and our young research scholars must study the works and ideas of Dr Ambedkar and draw inspiration from it. He lauded the work of all the members of the organizing committee of the function - Dr Kapil Dev, Dr Rajveer Singh, Dr Arunesh Kumar Singh, Prof Ravins, Dr Amit K. Verma, Dr Dori Lal and also the NCC team, the Security team, the sanitation and the horticulture and the technical and administrative staff of the University for their painstaking efforts. The function was well attended by JMI officials, Deans of Faculties, Officiating DSW, Proctor, Security Advisor, Heads of Departments, Directors of Centres, OSD to VC, Foreign Students' Advisor, Chief Librarian, faculty members and students of the university.

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