

**SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER
ON OCCASION OF PAK-US FULBRIGHT SCHOLARSHIP
PROGRAM AWARD CEREMONY
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Chiarperson, HEC**

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Ladies and Gentlemen:

I am very pleased to join you in the Award Distribution Ceremony of Fulbright Scholarship Program. I deem it appropriate to extend my heart-felt felicitations to those of you who have won Fulbright scholarships and made their families and the country proud.

All of us are aware of the fact that this is an era of technological revolution and scientific advancement. No nation can aspire to reach glory and achieve economic development without making education its topmost priority. The secret to the phenomenal successes of the developed nations lies in their attainment of high literacy rates and productive human resource development.

In fact, these nations continue to focus on higher education, research, and innovation to meet the scientific demands of the 21st century and sustain socio-economic development.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

A large chunk of Pakistan's population comprises of youth aged between 15 and 24 years. I am proud to say that our youth have the talent, capacity and determination to make their mark in their chosen professions and careers. In order to utilize their capabilities we need infrastructure and extensive programs on long-term basis, which can tap the potential of this country so that the prospective abilities could be streamlined into valuable human resource; a human resource that can be utilized for the

economic advancement and development of our country and effectively contribute towards promoting peace and prosperity in the world.

Distinguished Participants

Our government aims to strengthen the education system that provides opportunities for all students regardless of their socio-economic background. National Education Policy 2009 introduced by the government marks a watershed in designing an institutional response to the challenges that our nation is facing in the field of education. The Policy is a fine mix of wide-ranging consultations and sharing of ideas of both public and private educational sectors.

I believe that we cannot bring about any major change in current educational culture, which is based on cramming unless we promote the culture of research, analysis and free inquiry in our educational institutions. Therefore we must focus on strengthening the domestic technological capability through research and development in order to be a self-sufficient nation.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Since its inception in 2002, Higher Education Commission has made remarkable efforts for the promotion of research and human resource development. HEC has launched different overseas scholarship scheme in which hundreds of students have been sent to technologically advanced countries such as Austria, France, Germany, Sweden, Netherlands and other significant numbers to China, New Zealand, Thailand , South Korea and Australia for PhD study. Under the various HEC Overseas Scholarship programs to date, 3238 scholars have proceeded abroad. Around 400 scholars have already returned successfully while 2838 students are currently abroad and returning on monthly basis.

Respected audience

The scale and speed of scientific discoveries, social development and technological advancement globally lends urgency to the need for positive action in strengthening our capability in areas of critical importance. USA has always stood by Pakistan in supporting the development of its people. Pakistan-US Fulbright Scholarship Program jointly funded by the two friendly nations is world's largest Fulbright Scholarship Program that envisages to produce 500 Master degree holders and 265 PhDs over a period of 5 years with a joint contribution of US \$ 150 million. The current scheme would supplement Government's and HEC's efforts for the provision of adequate number of trained Master and PhD manpower in science and technology as well as social sciences, Arts and Humanities with special focus on students from less developed areas of Pakistan.

Most importantly, this flagship international educational exchange program will help in promoting international goodwill through the exchange of students in the fields of education, culture and science. Throughout the history of the Fulbright Program, the participants have exposed their host communities to new cultures and ideas. In turn they have taken their experiences back to their home communities and shared them with their families, friends, and peers. This cultural exchange is an important part of the Fulbright Program's mission to promote mutual understanding.

In addition to academic endeavors, Fulbrighters have a unique opportunity to make a valuable contribution to their host and home communities in terms of promoting interfaith dialogue, harmony, tolerance, and peace.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

We are glad that this prestigious program has so far achieved 476 Masters and 185 PhD scholarship holders in four years. 176 Masters and 2 PhDs have completed their studies and are currently serving in Pakistan. This marvelous joint educational

collaboration focuses on increasing higher education institutional capacity as well as enhancing the research activities at R& D organizations so that we may be able to meet the international norms and standards in the fields of research and innovation.

It is a matter of great happiness that the successful adoption of Fulbright program in Pakistan has strengthened our bilateral relations and broadened its horizons.

People-to-people contact between Pakistan and the US is a unique characteristic of our mutual ties. This serves to strengthen the foundation upon which the edifice of our relations stands erected. Pakistan looks forward to further deepening our engagement with the people of the USA.

Today we have gathered here to give send-off to 157 awardees of the Fulbright Scholarships.

I hope that these students would not only acquire the required scientific and technical skills but also promote understanding between our peoples and societies and strive to ensure a prosperous and peaceful future for the coming generations. I expect that once you come back after completing your education, you would leave no stone unturned to contribute to the development of your country. It would not only be your responsibility but duty towards your Nation.

I wish you the best of luck in your endeavours.

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