

**PRESS INFORMATION BUREAU
GOVERNMENT OF INDIA**

New Delhi, November 10th, 2015

**MAULANA AZAD, FIRST EDUCATION MINISTER OF
INDEPENDENT INDIA**

The 8th National Education Day will be celebrated this year on 11th November, the birth anniversary of the great visionary and freedom fighter Malauna Azad whose real name was Abul Kalam Ghulam Muhiyuddin. A renowned scholar and poet, Maulana Azad was well versed in many languages, a brilliant orator and was one of the foremost leaders of the Indian freedom struggle.

Maulana Azad stood for universal humanism, Indian nationalism and Hindu-Muslim unity in India. He is remembered in the history of India not only for the role he played in the freedom struggle of the country, but also as the first Education Minister of independent India from 1947 to 1958. He made exemplary contributions in nation-building and institution-building, leaving his indelible imprints in the field of education.

Maulana Azad considered schools as laboratories which produce future citizens of the country and, therefore, emphasized on quality education. He firmly believed that educationists should be the role models and should build the capacities of the spirit of inquiry and entrepreneurial and moral leadership among students. He was a strong advocate of universal primary education, girls' education, free and compulsory education for all children upto the age of 14, vocational training and technical education. He put emphasis on the teaching of modern sciences and also on the education of women. In 1949, in the Central Assembly, he emphasized the importance of imparting instruction in modern sciences and knowledge and also observed that “no programme of national education can be appropriate if it does not give full consideration to the education and advancement of one-half of the society – that is the women”.

In higher education, his priority was to improve the facilities for higher technical education in the country, so that India could be self-reliant in high quality skilled workforce. Among his other achievements, he is credited with the establishment of the Indian Institutes of Technology, School of Planning and Architecture at New Delhi and the University Grants Commission, an important institution for coordination, determination and maintenance of standards of higher education in the country.

Maulana Azad emphasized the significance of culture and heritage while formulating his educational plans and policies. He felt that the cultural content in Indian Education was very low during the British rule and needs to be strengthened through curriculum. He established most of the major cultural and literary academies we have today, including the Sangeet Natak Academy, Lalit Kala Academy, Sahitya Academy as well as the Indian Council for Cultural Relations.

Despite being an eminent scholar of Urdu, Persian and Arabic, Maulana stood for the retention of English language for educational advantages and national and international needs. However, he firmly believed that primary education should be imparted in the mother-tongue and emphasised the need to develop provincial languages as the medium of instructions.

Throughout his life, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad stood for the unity of India and its composite culture. For his invaluable contribution to the nation, he was posthumously awarded India's highest civilian honour, the Bharat Ratna in 1992. In honour and remembrance of his invaluable contribution to the Indian education system, his birthday, **11th November**, is celebrated as the **National Education Day**.
