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Dr Shashi Tharoor, minister of state for HRD has urged the Indian private sector to come forward in a big way to fund research and development programmes of Indian universities. He said this while addressing the '9th Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) Higher Education Summit 2013' on the theme 'Building Networks for Transforming Indian Higher Education' on November 15, 2013 at New Delhi.

He stated that research is the key to enhancing the quality of higher education institutions, an area which has remained neglected as most of the Indian universities are still primarily teaching institutions. He also mentioned that in India, the Government invests around 80 per cent in Research & Development, where as in the OECD (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development) countries and developed West, almost 75 per cent of the investment in R&D is from the private sector.

Dr Shashi Tharoor also emphasised on the need for vocational training among the students. He suggested that more private sector organisations need to come forward to set up centres of vocational training in order to complement the government's efforts in this areas. He said that the Government had decided to set up 200 plus community colleges, which will offer skill based vocational training to school dropouts to make them employable citizens.

Regarding education sector, the minister further added, "While some form of governance was essential, it is our hope that the tweaking of the policy framework will encourage foreign universities to set up their campuses in the country."

Mr Brad Wall, the Premier of Saskatchewan (Canada), whose speech was read out by Mr. Andy Melnyk, Senior Strategist, Innovation Saskatchewan, Canada, described India as a major priority for the Canadian province and called upon the stakeholders of the Indian higher education sector to avail of the high level of research and innovation in Saskatchewan universities to tackle India's major challenges such as food security and energy security.

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Ms Naina Lal Kidwai, president, FICCI, said that with a share of 64% of the total number of institutions and 59% of enrolment in the country, private sector is indeed a critical stakeholder and has been addressing to the country's needs." Entry barriers for setting up higher education institutions and universities should be removed. This will be a positive step forward to attract credible private sector to invest in the higher education space."

The two-day summit has been organized by FICCI in partnership with the Ministry of Human Resource Development and Planning Commission.