Remarks by Chief Guest Mr. Sitaram Kunte, IAS, on the occasion of the 27th Lalit Doshi Memorial Lecture held on 27th August 2021

Good Evening Ladies and Gentlemen.

Greetings to Mrs. Pratima Doshi, Mr Ajit Nimbalkar, Dr. Meenakshi Gopinath, Mr Bharat Doshi, Mr. Abhishek Krishna, and all the eminent persons present for this 27th Lalit Doshi Memorial Lecture.

I really appreciate a very personal description of Mr. Lalit Doshi, given by his classmate and friend Shri Ajit Nimbalkarji.

It is an honour to be with you all today, though, virtually due to COVID pandemic on the occasion of this 27th Lalit Doshi Memorial Lecture.

I understand that it is the tradition of the foundation to invite the incumbent Chief Secretary of the Government of Maharashtra to this event every year. I have attended many Lalit Doshi Memorial Lectures in the past and I have also benefited from the intellectual content that has been there in each of those lectures. In my opinion, it is very much appropriate that Chief Secretary of Government of Maharashtra is invited to be the Chief Guest. It gives us an opportunity to pay our respects and tributes to Lalit Doshi, our former colleague. His legacy is such that he was not only respected and admired, as just mentioned by Mr. Ajit Nimbalkar Sir, but was also very much loved.

In the tributes and eulogies to Mr. Lalit Doshi, one finds repeatedly a reference to the fact that he was loved. This quality alone is indeed a great honour for any civil servant. As you all know, civil servants can never please everybody, and so to get this attribute of being loved is quite unique. Hence, I am very happy to be here. I am also the Chairman of the IAS Association of Maharashtra and in that capacity also I pay my humble respects to legendary IAS officer of Maharashtra Cadre.

I belong to the 1985 batch of IAS and Mr. Lalit Doshi was from the 1966 patch. Hence, naturally he was a lot more senior to me. Nevertheless, I had few occasions to interact with him and work with him. In those days we were young officers posted in districts and we would often come face to face with Mr. Lalit Doshi, who would always passionately endeavour to promote industry and business in the state. For youngsters like us, at that time, Mr Lalit Doshi, was

often regarded as a role model and working in the sector of industry, was almost like one of the dreams that a young IAS officer can look forward to. So, in that sense, we all as youngsters really got inspired from the work done by Mr. Lalit Doshi.

The foundation by organizing these memorial lectures over the past 26 years is definitely helping to perpetuate the memory of Mr. Lalit Doshi. It is also contributing by way of bringing to us thoughts and visions of distinguished persons from various disciplines. And I personally benefited from many of the lectures in this series. In spite of the hardships due to pandemic, the foundation has continued to do this, which is quite commendable. I think even on the online platforms, we can get as much good content as Mr Nimbalkar Sir mentioned every year we used to gather in Yashwantrao Chavan Auditorium, but I think now the technology has progressed and online platforms are also equally good.

This year the foundation has invited Dr. Meenakshi Gopinath, an educationist par excellence. Higher education is an important and critical subject of national interest. With the announcement of the National Education Policy 2020, there is going to be a paradigm shift in the higher education sector. There is the need to improve the employability of young graduates. This aspect is probably being addressed in the new education policy. It has also become imperative to improve the quality and quantity of research in higher education, which also seems to be getting addressed under the new policy. There will be new thrust towards internationalization of higher education and there will be an endeavour to curb profiteering in this sector.

Thus, the National Education Policy seeks to reform higher education sector in a significant manner, which has the potential to bring this sector at par with the best international standards. I am sure from Dr. Meenakshi Gopinath's lecture today we will have many interesting takeaways for the administrators, for the policymakers, for the educationists and all others who are today going to listen to her lecture. So, I am very happy to attend this lecture and I hope to learn a lot from Dr. Meenakshi Gopinath's Lecture.

I conclude my remarks with best wishes to the foundation and thank them for giving me this opportunity to be the chief guest for this function.

Thank you.