

Convocation Address

Guest of Honour - Dr. A. Ramachandran

Hon'ble Vice-Chancellor, Kerala University of Fisheries and Ocean Studies (KUFOS)

**at the 33rd Convocation of the Indira Gandhi National Open University
at Regional Centre, Cochin**

17th February, 2020

Good Morning and Greetings to one and all

Respected Regional Directors of IGNOU Regional Centres - Dr. J.S. Dorothy, Regional Director Cochin, Dr.M.Rajesh, Regional Director Vatakara, Academics, employees of the Regional Centres, Coordinators of IGNOU Learner Support Centres, the distinguished guests present here, correspondents from print and electronic media and dear IGNOU students.

It is indeed a proud privilege for me to be present amidst you for the 33rd Convocation ceremony of this prestigious University - Indira Gandhi National Open University; popularly known as 'IGNOU- the People's University'. At the outset, I would like to congratulate all the graduating learners for the successful completion of their academic programmes.

IGNOU, known to be the largest University in the world has made significant contributions in democratising Higher Education in the country by providing access to large number of aspirants through the Open and Distance mode. This is attested by the fact that this Mega University today serves the educational aspirations of over 3 million students in India and other countries through 21 Schools of Studies and a network of 67 Regional Centres, around 2,667 Learner Support Centres and 29 overseas Partner Institutions.

I am delighted to note that this University is offering 228 academic programmes ranging from certificate, diploma, graduate degree, post graduate degree and doctoral programmes to cater to the educational aspirations of a very large clientele of lifelong learners; not only in India but also at an International level through the Partner Institutions. It is indeed heartening to learn that the learners who enroll in IGNOU represent the very profile of our society itself - as there are housewives, employed class, professionals, technocrats, administrative officers, entrepreneurs,

researchers, young students, senior citizens, jail inmates to name a few . I congratulate IGNOU for continuously striving to build an inclusive knowledge society through inclusive education and thereby making significant contributions to the Human Resource Development of this country.

I am happy to learn that the University in the 33rd Convocation being held today is awarding over 2 lakh degrees, diplomas and certificates to the learners who have successfully completed their respective Programmes of Study. It is interesting to learn that the main function is conducted at IGNOU Headquarters at New Delhi and also simultaneously at 39 Regional Centres in the country. Gold medals are also awarded to over 78 meritorious students in this Convocation.

Dr. Ramesh Pokhriyal 'Nishank', Hon'ble Minister, Human Resource Development, Govt. of India in his address has appreciated IGNOU for having unprecedented expertise in developing and launching academic programmes that are needed in the present context and deeply useful for learning communities. In his address, he also stated that the Government is creating avenues for enhancing Gross Enrolment Ratio of the country to 50%. In this context, IGNOU and similar institutes have an important role.

It is a pleasure to note that IGNOU Regional Centre Cochin since its establishment on 17th November, 1988 has been continuously striving to provide Open and Distance Education in the State of Kerala and the Union Territory of Lakshadweep. Over the years, the activities of IGNOU in the region grew and a number of Study Centres were established with substantial student enrolment in various academic programmes of the University. I am happy to note that presently there are 34 Learner Support Centres under Regional Centre, Cochin. It is noteworthy to mention that the Regional Centre Cochin with the current jurisdiction of six districts - Alappuzha, Ernakulam, Kottayam, Idukki, Palakkad, Trichur and the Union Territory of Lakshadweep has been able to attain a student registration of 25,340 learners in the year 2019. Regional Centre, Vatakara since its inception in the year 2011 and with the current jurisdiction of five districts - Kannur, Kasargod, Wayanad, Kozhikode, Malappuram and Union territory of Mahe-Puducherry is also making significant contribution to Higher Education through Open and Distance Education catering to the educational aspirations of learners of North Kerala region.

I am pleased to learn that from Regional Centres - Cochin and Vatakara, three students are eligible to receive the gold medals from IGNOU Headquarters from Honorable Minister of HRD, Govt. of India. I congratulate each of them, on this great occasion, I am extremely happy to learn that there are 6182 learners being conferred Degrees/ Diplomas / certificates for this 33rd convocation under the Cochin Regional Centre and Vatakara Regional Centre.

Dear students of this mega University, this convocation is a significant milestone in your academic growth. The degrees and awards earned by each one of you is a result of your relentless hard work and immense dedication. Hence, it is indeed a proud moment for all of you, as much as it is for your academic counselors, guides, functionaries of Learner Support Centres, family and parents. May your quest for higher learning continue all through your professional life. Learning, as you will agree, is a lifelong process. May the knowledge and expertise gained through the Programme of Study with IGNOU empower and motivate you to explore new horizon of knowledge.

Education is the ability to meet life's situation, it is a character building process, enhancing one's personality and making him/her rational, capable, responsive and intelligent. India has had a very rich heritage of higher education, which goes back to about six thousand years, from the Vedic Period (BC 1000–600) onwards. In its size and diversity, India has the third largest higher education system in the world, next only to China and the United States. The demand for higher education and the magnitude of planned reforms is growing considerably in India with over 50% of its population below the age of 25. This has created a huge demand and responsibility to transform India as a leading hub for higher education in the world to cater the need of this ever growing population.

Despite significant progress over the last ten years, Indian higher education is faced with four broad challenges:

- 1) The supply-demand gap: India has a low rate of enrolment in higher education, at only 23.6 %, compared with 32% in China and 36% in Brazil. There is enormous unmet demand for higher education. The Indian government aims to achieve 30% gross enrolment immediately.

- 2) The low quality of teaching and learning: The system is beset by issues of quality in many of its institutions: a chronic shortage of faculty, poor quality teaching, outdated and rigid curricula and pedagogy, lack of accountability and quality assurance and separation of research and teaching.
- 3) Constraints on research capacity and innovation: With a very low level of PhD enrolment, India does not have enough high quality researchers; there are few opportunities for interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary working, lack of early stage research experience; a weak ecosystem for innovation, and low levels of industry engagement.
- 4) Uneven growth and access to opportunity: Socially, India remains highly divided; access to higher education is uneven with multidimensional inequalities in enrolment across population groups and geographies.

The three central pillars of the government's plans for education reflect these realities: expansion, equity and excellence. Over next few decades, every aspect of higher education is being reorganised and remodelled: funding, leadership and management, quality assurance, accountability, relationships with industry, international collaboration and the way teaching and research are conducted. Emphasis will be placed on strengthening existing institutions. IGNOU plays a significant role in expansion, equity and excellence.

Dear students, while successful completion of your academic programme is a matter of pride and joy, it is also a stepping stone to the opportunities and challenges that lie ahead of you in the future. We live in an era where technology transition is happening at a very rapid pace. Every day new concepts are being introduced, established paradigms are being advanced and research & development (R & D) is providing new vistas for further exploration and application. As a graduate, one needs to assimilate the latest developments of your specific discipline and strive to make meaningful contributions to the society and thereby for nation development. I am sure you will make full use of the knowledge and skills acquired through your Programme of Study with IGNOU for the well being of the society and nation. I recall the words of Honourable Dr. A P J Abdul Kalam, 'The purpose of Education is to make good human beings with skills and expertise'. May your degree unlock many doors for you. May the degrees earned further facilitate each one of you to continue to be good human beings with compassion for the needy, conviction for the righteous and zeal to uphold good virtues in life.

I once again congratulate the IGNOU Regional Centres Cochin & Vatakara for the best efforts and contributions being made in the field of Open and Distance Education in the State of Kerala. My best wishes to IGNOU to scale greater heights in the future. May greater number of learners be able to fulfill their educational attainment from this great Institution in times to come. I also once congratulate all the meritorious students who are receiving their degrees. In the end, I wish every IGNOU graduate present here and who receive degree in absentia, a successful and satisfying career, good health, prosperity and success in all your endeavours.

God bless you. Thank you.
