

Sikkim Manipal University - Directorate of Distance Education conducts Convocation for its students in North India

SMU (Sikkim Manipal University)- Directorate of Distance Education organized its first Convocation for students who have graduated this year. **Prof. V. N. Rajasekharan Pillai, Vice Chancellor, IGNOU and Chairman, Distance Education Council; Mr. Luis Miranda, Guest of Honour, CEO & MD IDFC Pvt. Equity; Dr. Ramdas Pai, Pro Chancellor; Dr. K. Jayakumar, Vice Chancellor SMU and Prof. V.B Nanda Gopal, Director & Dean SMU** were present on this occasion.

Congratulating the students, Dr. K Jayakumar said 'the candidates receiving their degrees and diplomas from the Sikkim Manipal University are special in several ways. They have pursued their courses of studies under a lot of constraints of time and place compared to the students of the conventional universities. Without firm determination and commitment, it would be difficult to successfully complete a programme in the distance mode.'

Dr. Rajasekaran Pillai, Speaking on the importance of distance learning, said, 'Expanding human learning is essential to the achievement of every element in this agenda and knowledge is the path to freedom. Conventional teaching-learning methods cannot cope up with the scale of educational challenges, particularly in highly populated developing countries. Different technologies are needed to be harnessed to supplement the conventional teaching and learning process. There is a need to promote powerful models for applying technology to learning for various purposes'.

He further added 'With satellite and online classes, interactive classes should become the norm. In the technology-led learning, main concern is bridging the digital divide. The teacher's writing on the blackboard, his notes, the students' questions…..all this can be converted into digital form. 'Education for technology and technology for education' should be our slogan. With the use of technology, it becomes possible to teach the individual rather than the class, at the pace of the individual rather than the class average'

'In addition to the application of technology to expand and enhance the formal education system in the areas of school education, teacher training and higher education, the basic development agenda of improving health, reducing poverty and in sustainable development, there is a need for learning on a massive scale'.

Speaking on the occasion, Mr. Luis Miranda, CEO, IDFC Pvt. Equity said 'why we invested in Manipal Group because of value system, honesty, its vision ad professionalism from the group in disseminating education to the people, through this initiative, we are bringing together the strengths of industry leaders and MEG's capability of education delivery on a mass scale.

The industry-academia partnership helps us not only align their curriculum with industry requirement, it also helps us produce highly employable students. In addition, it helps students by preparing them in advance to take the real world challenges head-on, as they join the corporate sector.'."

Speaking about SMU, Prof. V.B Nanda Gopal, Director & Dean SMU said, 'Sikkim Manipal University, the Directorate of Distance Education was established in the year 2001 and since then we has been offering various career-oriented programs via the distance education mode. We aim at offering quality education and training in contemporary and emerging disciplines by utilizing the

services of in-house academics, a formal system expertise and Learning Centre faculty.

Elaborating he said, 'The institution has experience significant growth - at a rate higher than the nation-level increase of 20% in the distance education system, as reported for the Tenth Plan period. The enrolment data during the Fall 2007 session has some significant pointers. The enrolment of women has touched 25%. 62% of our enrolments are in the age group of 18-24 and 33% of our students are employed, indicating thereby, that our programs strongly support continuing and lifelong learning'.

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