

SPECIAL ADDRESS

by

Shri Pon. Radhakrishnan,

Hon'ble Minister of State

for Shipping, Road Transport & Highways

at the

Second Convocation

of the Indian Maritime University

Chennai : 19-01-2016

Respected Union Minister of Road Transport, Highways and Shipping Shri Nitin Gadkariji,

Chancellor of the Indian Maritime University Shri V. Krishnamurthy,

Vice Chancellor of IMU Shri K. Ashok Vardhan Shetty,

Officers, Faculty and Staff of IMU, proud Parents, my dear

Students, members of the Press, Ladies and Gentlemen.

It gives me immense pleasure to participate at the Second Convocation Day celebrations of the Indian Maritime University and to deliver the Special Address. The Indian Maritime University is one of the youngest Central Universities in India. IMU is everyday growing from strength to strength. I understand that the top rankers in the Common Entrance Test for admissions to IMU Campuses and its 37 Affiliated Institutes invariably opt for IMU Campuses because of the status associated with a Central University and its Art of State infrastructure facilities. The Ministry of Shipping has sanctioned Plan Funds of Rs.295 crores for the 5-year period from 2014-15 to 2018-19, and Non-Plan grant of Rs.40 crores per year. To use a maritime analogy, the ship of IMU is now sailing full speed on the high seas! It is my fond hope that IMU should become a Centre of Excellence and contribute meaningfully to nation building in general and to the maritime sector in particular.

I understand that over 2187 graduates and post graduates in various disciplines such as Marine Engineering, Nautical Sciences, Naval Architecture & Ocean Engineering, Shipbuilding & Repair, Port and Shipping Management, International Transportation & Logistics Management, and Maritime Law are getting their degrees today; of these, about 366 are getting their degrees *in-person*. My hearty congratulations to all of you. This Convocation marks your transition from student to maritime professional. This is an important milestone in your lives, and an occasion of great pride and satisfaction. I would also like to compliment the Faculty and Staff of IMU as well as the parents and family members present here. It is your tireless efforts and support and encouragement which made this day possible for these young men and women.

Not many people, even in India, are aware that the seas around us were dominated by Indian mariners for over 3000 years right up to the 13th century. While activity on the west coast was confined mainly to commerce with ports in the Persian Gulf, Red Sea and Mediterranean sea, our eastern shores witnessed the launch of a massive cultural and religious colonisation of South East Asia by sea. The Imperial Cholas, Rajaraja and Rajendra the First, sent several naval expeditions in the 11th century to Indonesia and Sri Lanka, and regarded the Bay of Bengal as the 'Chola Lake'. It was the decline of India's prowess at sea by the 14th century which was to a large extent responsible for our colonisation by the European powers such as the Portuguese, the Dutch, the British and the French.

Today, the sea lanes in the Indian Ocean are among the most strategically important in the world accounting for two-thirds of the world's oil shipments, one-third of its bulk cargo, and half of the container traffic. More than half of the world's armed conflicts are also presently located in the Indian Ocean region. With a coastline of 7,500 kilometres and an Exclusive Economic Zone of over 2 million square kilometers, and with over 90% of our international trade carried via sea routes, it is imperative that India maintains not only a strong Navy but also *a strong Merchant Navy*.

Ladies and gentlemen, Shipping is, and will continue to remain, the dominant mode of transacting global exports and imports. Shipping is also the cheapest mode of transport, thanks largely to the container revolution. Many people think that modern information and communication technology techniques are responsible for globalization. But a larger factor is cheap shipping, which enabled many factories to be relocated from Europe and North America to East Asia and South Asia, and but for which our supermarkets and departmental stores will not be stocked with goods from all over the world. As the world gets more globalised, and as trade barriers go down and world trade goes up, the demand for shipping and skilled seafarers will continually go up. But the global shipping industry also happens to be *cyclical* and goes through periodic booms and busts.

There have been about 25 such trade cycles in the global shipping industry since 1750. The industry witnessed a boom between 2002 and 2008, and is witnessing a prolonged slump in certain sectors from 2009 onwards due to various global economic factors. I am hopeful that the global shipping industry will look up again in the next one or two years leading to better job prospects for our mariners.

I take this opportunity to appeal to all the maritime stakeholders – the Indian Maritime University and its Affiliated Institutes, the Directorate-General of Shipping, and in particular, the Shipping Companies – to join hands and work towards a goal where our seafarers are well-educated and trained, enjoy improved working and living conditions at sea, command professional respect, enjoy a better career path and long term career prospects in shore-based jobs, are psychologically and emotionally happy, are willing to solve problems and manage risks.

Only then we will be able to continue to attract talented students to the shipping industry. Otherwise, the Generation Next is going to opt for other professions that are less demanding and less socially challenging but almost equally paying.

Maritime disciplines are more of a practical nature, and till IMU was created, there were no Post-Graduate or Doctoral Programmes in Maritime disciplines. IMU has started M.Tech in Naval Architecture & Ocean Engineering; Dredging & Harbour Engineering besides Ph.D in its Visakhapatnam Campus. IMU runs MBA in Port & Shipping Management and International Transportation & Logistics Management in its Chennai, Kolkata and Kochi Campuses. But these cover barely 5% of IMU's students. 95% of the students are Undergraduate in the major maritime disciplines of Marine Engineering, Nautical Science and Ship Building & Repair. The 37 affiliated institutes of IMU are also offering only Under-Graduate Studies as of now, with DNS being the most popular course.

I further understand that IMU proposes to start M.Tech (Marine Engineering) and M.Sc (Shipping Operations, Finance & Policy), from the academic year 2016-17 onwards. We are hopeful that this would fulfill a long-felt need of the industry. IMU is for the entire maritime sector, both at sea and on shore. Since seafarers alternate long spells aboard ships with shorter spells on shore, IMU has also planned to offer the same M.Sc Course in a 'modular system' via distance education, with each module taking about 2 to 3 months and covering diverse subjects such as Shipping Law, Shipping Finance, Marine Insurance, Chartering, Ship Breaking, Port and Terminal Management, Port State Control, Bunkering and Alternative Fuels, and so on. A seafarer who completes a module will get a Certificate; if he completes a set of related modules, he will get a PG Diploma, and if he completes all the modules he will get the M.Sc Degree.

The Lloyd's of London and many UK universities have such a system and IMU will have this in place hopefully by the beginning of the academic year 2017-18. I also understand that Chennai, Mumbai, Kolkata and Kochi Campuses will be made Centres for doing research leading to Ph.D from 2017-18 onwards.

Dear Students, you are the next generation, and our country sees you as the harbinger of change and progress. I consider you to be extremely fortunate for having the opportunity of studying in this premier institution. Your training here is not just a ticket to your bright future, but is also a responsibility towards society, that you must always be conscious of.

You are on the threshold of a new life, and what you have gathered in course of your stay here will enable and empower you. Always remember that your conduct and behaviour, ought to do credit to the institution that you have graduated from. Your personality must reflect the quality of the education that you have received. The need of the hour is for each of you to be a front-runner in the nation-building exercise. In all your endeavours demonstrate sagacity and compassion, resolution and vision. Look within your heart to find not just your mission but also the means for achieving it. **As Swami Vivekananda had said, – “All power is within you; you can do everything and anything; believe in that, do not believe you are weak.”**

In this context – I would like to say that the Hon'ble Prime Minister of India Shri Narendra Modi ji launched many programmes for holistic development of the Country including **Sagarmala** project in the Maritime sector. All of us must join and promote the programmes of nation building like adoption of villages, Swach Bharat, Digital India, Make in India and Start Up India.

In the end, I would like to once again congratulate all the students graduating today. Remember Dr. Kalam's words who said: "*Dreams are not those which you see in your sleep. Dreams are those which do not let you sleep, till you have fulfilled them.*" So, whichever field you choose, there is no short cut to success – so work hard, and contribute to nation building.

Thank You God bless you all. **Jai Hind !**