

**HON'BLE VICE-PRESIDENT OF INDIA, THIRU. JAGDEEP DHANKHAR**  
**INAUGURATED THE VICE-CHANCELLORS' CONFERENCE OF STATE,**  
**CENTRAL AND PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES OF TAMIL NADU – 2025 AT RAJ**  
**BHAVAN, UDHAGAMANDALAM TODAY (25.04.2025)**

Thiru Jagdeep Dhankhar, Hon'ble Vice-President of India, inaugurated the Vice-Chancellors' Conference of State, Central, and Private Universities of Tamil Nadu at Raj Bhavan, Udhagamandalam, today (25.04.2025), as the chief guest.

Thiru R.N. Ravi, Hon'ble Governor of Tamil Nadu and Chancellor of Tamil Nadu's 20 state universities, presided over the fourth consecutive Vice Chancellors' Conference. The conference serves as a vital platform for academic leaders to engage in dialogue, share best practices and shape the future of higher education in Tamil Nadu. This year's event brought together **32 - Vice Chancellors, Dean, Registrars, Directors from Central, State and Private Universities**. Sessions focused on technology integration in education, capacity building for learners, financial management in universities and strategies for wealth creation. Past editions of the conference have resulted in key policy recommendations and collaborative initiatives that have significantly impacted the state's higher education landscape.

Hon'ble Governor-Chancellor in his presidential address, Friends, we are indeed- with us, to guide us, to show us the way to excellence, a great visionary and intellectual giant and a powerful communicator, our honorable Vice President of India, Shri. Jagdeep Dhankhar ji. we are aware of immense pressure on your time, your hectic schedule. But the fact that amidst all that,

you have chosen to come over here to guide us, show us the way forward to excellence in education, especially in higher education.

It shows your relentless love towards the State of Tamil Nadu, Tamil people, especially the youths of Tamil Nadu and purpose of the conference, this is the fourth in the series when we started. In 2021, in the course of my visit to universities as the Chancellor, when I met the students, including the gold medalist, I found their aspiration is very low. Even the gold medalists were aspiring to get somehow a government job in class two, class three category. It was not a comfortable scenario. And then, we studied the education system in the state of Tamil Nadu.

And then, we came to know that we have two parallel streams of education in our state. One, vertically going up, the other side one being progress in decline.

The school education ASER report year-on-year tells us that how the private schools have been doing excellent. The government schools are on a steady decline, so much so that more than half the students in a government school, in high school, cannot read even a class two textbook.

More than half the students in government school cannot recognize two digit numbers between 11 and 99. And then we find that its continuation is even in the state universities. In the higher education, we needed to improve the quality, when we checked up, we found that our state, of course, we have one of the highest gross enrollment ratio over 50%. We also have the fact that our state universities produce more than 6,500 PhDs every year. Very impressive figure indeed, but the other side of the story is that out of 6,500 plus PhDs not even 1% is NET JRF qualified. We know what is NET JRF qualified because that is UGC that determines the eligibility mandate, whether the scholar is intellectually eligible to take up the research. We found a situation which was not very comfortable. When we found that our PhDs were doing menial jobs, even cleaning jobs. Not that the cleaning is bad, but the fact that after PhD if you do the cleaning job for 15,000 rupees it is something which is not a very

happy situations. And then we thought, "What? Why it is so?" There are various constraints. Among the constraints, we thought with all these constraints notwithstanding, "How do we improve it?" Then we realized that our universities, our state universities, they were not even talking to themselves. They were all working in silos run by the secretariat. Then we thought let- let there be a fusion. Let there be a meeting of minds because that is how the knowledge grows.

Because on the one hand, we find that the deemed to be universities, autonomous institutions are every year, year on year breaching the new height, marks of height in excellence. More than a dozen of our institutions deemed to be university and autonomous institutions are among the top 10 in NIRF ranking. Unfortunately, not a single one from the state universities. Our Madras University, which was once known to be the premier university in the country and in the top five, today it is nowhere in the reckoning.

This steady decline has a social consequences, consequences for social justice. Because it is the students from poor communities, Dalit communities, marginalized communities, those who cannot afford to go to the private, they go to these insti- these, these institutions. And if this is their fate, that on the one hand, we keep producing degree holders and PhD holders, on the other, they are worthy of nothing, it is, it is in fact, it is perpetuating the discrimination.

So this, we have started in 2022, and I'm happy to inform you that there has been a significant progress, noticeable progress. Because there is a lot of talent, a lot of scholarship in the deemed to be universities, autonomous institutions, they started coming with the handholding. And our NET-JRF number also started improving. In terms of intellectual property, though we were producing thousands of PhD, but there was no IP. There was no patent. What kind of research they were? Now, with the help, that also started improving.

And it was moving towards a win-win situation. Even in this conference, in the two days conference we have, we do invite resource persons from

industries, from academia. Here we will, in the two days, we'll be discussing about maximizing learning through application of artificial intelligence.

We are, we will also be discussing about how the capacity building of the students as well as the faculties. We have session by the principal scientific advisor to the government of India, who will be talking about frontiers of science and technology. We have also sessions about how to efficiently manage university finances, because our universities are in a very bad situations. Many of the universities, they have not paid salaries to the teachers for last several months.

And government has said that they are under no obligation to give them, to bail them out. This has been the situation. But we have been making modest attempt by bringing them together and making our youth aspirational, because there lies our future.

Unfortunately, in this conference, the state universities are not participating, because they have informed me, even in writing, that they have been warned by the state government not to participate. As of now, one of our Vice Chancellors is in police station. Some Vice Chancellors have reached Ooty, and something unprecedented happened, it never happened before. There was a midnight knock at their doors, where the secret police, a special branch of the state, went and told them, "If you participate in the conference, you will not be able to go home and meet your family."

I advised them, "Take care of your family. Don't, don't jeopardize their interest." I wish good sense prevails, because essentially this conference is meant to improve the quality. There's no politics involved in it, and it has been showing result. But perhaps people, those who are in the government, they feel for them, it is not something which is comfortable situation. Sir, with your, we are keenly looking forward to your advice, your guidance, which will enrich this gathering. We have the presence of all the deemed universities, chiefs, all the central, central institutes and autonomous institutions. We have more than 34, 35 institutions present here. They will, in two days, they will deliberate with your

guidance. And what the churning, with the churning, the nectar that will come out will be shared with all to the advantage of everyone. Sir, I'm... On behalf of all of us, I once again thank you. I express our gratitude to you. We shall remain ever beholden to you for your interest in the Tamil people, Tamil youth, and for guiding us. Thank you very much, sir. Jai Bharat.

On the first day of the conference, distinguished speakers from academia, government, and industry will present on various topics. Prof. (Dr.) Nirmaljeet Singh Kalsi, I.A.S. (Retd.), Former Chairman, NCVET, will address the 'Implementation of National Credit Framework (NCrF),' focusing on multidisciplinary education and skill integration. Thiru Ramprakash Ramamoorthy, Head of AI Research at Zoho Corporation, will discuss 'The Influence of Artificial Intelligence in Maximizing Learning Outcomes.' Thiru S. Rangarajan, Chairman & Managing Director of Data Patterns (India) Ltd., will cover 'Universities for Innovation & Entrepreneurship in Wealth Creation,' while Dr. A. Amarnath, Head of Medical Sciences at NIEPMD, will explore 'Careers in Rehabilitation for Persons with Disabilities.'

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