

**Inauguration of National Law University, Orissa  
(October 31, 2009 – Cuttack, Orissa)**

**Address by Hon'ble Mr. K.G. Balakrishnan, Chief Justice of India**

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Shri Naveen Patnaik (Chief Minister of Orissa)

Justice I.M. Quddusi (Acting Chief Justice, High Court of Orissa)

Shri Bikram Keshari Arukh (Law Minister)

Shri Debi Prasad Misra (Higher Education Minister)

Dr. Faizan Mustafa (Vice-Chancellor, NLU-Orissa),

Dr. N.L. Mitra,

And Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am grateful for the invitation to attend the formal inauguration of the National Law University for the State of Orissa. This institution is of course the latest in the line of the autonomous law universities which have created some distinctive changes in the way legal education is perceived in our country. With each passing year, these National Law Universities (NLU's) have been attracting talented students to prepare for careers relating to the law.

The distinctive feature of these residential institutions is the due importance given to fundamentals such as regular attendance, active classroom discussions, mandatory writing assignments and continuous assessment. This approach inculcates qualities such as self-confidence, insightfulness, perseverance and a mental capacity for healthy competition. Furthermore, in a residential campus with students from diverse social, economic, regional and cultural backgrounds, learning takes place both within and outside the classroom. The students are given access to good libraries and

internet-based research facilities while also being exposed to a wide range of academic and co-curricular activities. These features are of course the main reason behind the success of the National Law Universities (NLU's) so far.

At present, legal education in India is at a crucial juncture where it faces several challenges on account of a rapidly transforming society and economy. The changes that we seek in our legal and judicial systems will only take place if we produce quality law graduates in adequate numbers. The role of the National Law Universities (NLU's) is vital in this regard since they can serve as model institutions for triggering reforms in the more than 600 law departments and colleges in India.

The foremost problem faced by the National Law Universities (NLU's) is that of an inadequate number of experienced and motivated teachers. Despite visions of competing with the best law schools in the world, almost all of our institutions have found it increasingly difficult to fill up all their faculty positions. Many commentators have identified the cause for the same in the relatively low remuneration offered to law-teachers when compared with other lucrative opportunities available to lawyers. While this reasoning is open to questioning, there is no doubt that Indian law schools need to devise creative solutions to attract talented and motivated faculty members.

The second collective concern for legal education in India is the need for promoting rigorous research activities. While the National Law Universities (NLU's) have considerably improved some aspects of undergraduate teaching, there is much to be desired when it comes to the delivery of postgraduate education as well as research initiatives. There is an urgent need to improve the curriculum and range of subjects taught at the postgraduate level in our Universities, since these programmes are meant to produce academics and researchers for the future. Centres of higher education should not merely be engaged in the transmission of knowledge but should also be producers of new knowledge. Law Schools must also resolve to offer specialisations that are in line with the career opportunities that are emerging for young lawyers.

I sincerely hope that in the coming years, this institution can play a leading role in respect of promoting a rigorous research culture. Research conducted under the aegis of academic institutions should not merely remain in the books, but should also translate into a definitive impact on law-reform, policy-making and other forms of public discourse. Outlets for legal scholarship should not be confined to journals circulated amongst a limited community of sitting judges, practicing lawyers and libraries of law colleges. Instead, legal research must also engage with broader social concerns and should be easily accessible to the general public. An effective model for Law Schools to distribute their research output is by way of hosting digital databases on the internet, whereby content in the form of academic commentaries, case notes, articles, reports and working papers can

be easily downloaded by any user. The creation of such databases will make legal scholarship accessible to a larger number of people and if the same is of a high quality then it will enhance the reputation of the institution.

It is also important for the various law schools, university departments and colleges in our country to build strong collaborations amongst themselves. In a scenario where there is a shortage of experienced teachers, there is a strong case for increased faculty exchanges as well as joint research projects. Furthermore, student-to-student interactions must also be better structured through institutional support for activities such as moot court competitions, seminars, 'Legal Aid' initiatives and student-edited publications.

The third issue that I would like to touch on is the question of career choices made by the graduates of the various National Law Universities (NLU's). Even though this is only the formal inauguration of this institution, it is my sincere hope that this issue will be given due consideration when the first batch of students is about to graduate in a few years from now. There is a distinctive trend among graduates of the leading law colleges to opt for jobs in commercial law firms or as in-house counsels for large business concerns. Several sections of the judiciary and the bar have voiced the concern that very few graduates from the top law schools seem to be opting for litigation, thereby frustrating the objective of improving the quality of the legal profession. The reasons behind such a trend are quite obvious. With the expansion of business and foreign investment in

India, there has also been a considerable increase in the demand for legal professionals to act in an advisory role. Of late, many young Indian lawyers have also been recruited by leading foreign law firms. For the young law graduates, these jobs are well-paying and offer the opportunity of quickly improving one's lifestyle. In fact one can understand the allure of these jobs for those who have incurred considerable expenditure for their education as well as those who seek to improve the living conditions for their families.

Nevertheless, it is important for the present generation of law graduates to realise that they have a much wider role to play in our society. A sound legal training can prepare an individual not just for the courtroom but also for pursuing several other careers where one can make a substantial difference to society. Legal education can also serve as a bridge to careers in teaching, policy-making, the civil services, journalism, international institutions, NGO's and in the long run even electoral politics. It is my sincere hope that even those graduates from the top law schools who are working in the corporate sector for the time being, will explore these options after they have attained a certain degree of financial independence. Nevertheless, the first and foremost career choice for all law graduates should be that of courtroom litigation.

While these issues are of general concern for legal education in our country as a whole, this institution has the opportunity to start afresh and learn from the experiences of the existing National Law Universities (NLU's). The National Law University for the State of

Orissa has the good fortune of being led by Dr. Faizan Mustafa, who is an accomplished scholar in his own right. I sincerely hope that under his stewardship, this institution will gain prominence as a centre for legal education and research.

With these words, I would like to convey my best wishes to the faculty members, staff and students of this institution and hope for their success in the future.

Thank You!

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