TWENTY-SECOND ANNUAL COMMENCEMENT CEREMONY OF USIU IN NAIROBI JUNE 17, 2000

ADDRESS
BY
H.E. MR. R.K.BHATIA INDIA'S HIGH COMMISSIONER TO KENYA
Dr. Garry D. Hayes, Chancellor of USIU in Nairobi,
Dr. Freida A. Brown, Vice-Chancellor,
Esteemed faculty members, dear graduating students,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you very much for your gracious invitation and for a generous introduction. Thank you also for giving me 30 minutes, but I will try to use less time!

2. The invitation to be the Chief Guest at the Twenty-Second Annual Commencement Ceremony of your prestigious institution is a unique and significant privilege for me. May I express my profound gratitude to the leadership of the university for this invitation. I am truly delighted to be with you all today. By a happy coincidence, my son too will receive his first university degree in another part of the world later today!

3. Coming from the land of Taxila and Nalanda - perhaps the world's oldest academic institutions, I firmly believe that university is a temple of learning and knowledge. It produces those who later emerge as the elite of the society. Thus, it returns to the society much more than what it receives. A university is, of course, more than bricks and marble, laboratory equipment and personal computers, library and cyber cafés. A university's soul is its faculty and the youth which comes to pray and profit at this temple. The richer and the more productive is the interaction between the two, the greater respect the university commands at large.

4. Often older universities are respected much more - recall the awe names such as Oxford, Cambridge, Harvard and Sorbonne evoke. However, in a fast changing and growing world, new universities are needed. When they are established, they do not need to wait for decades or more to build a special reputation for themselves. Its professors and students can reduce those decades to years. USIU in Nairobi seems to me to be firmly on its way to winning a solid and positive reputation for itself.

5. My admiration for your university is not due to diplomatic politesse. It is based on the insights received through my visits to the campus, the interaction I have had
We have seen how vastly technology has been changing the way we live, work, think, communicate, trade and travel in a globalising world. People will change jobs more than they did in the past; they will need more and diverse skills; they will need to master more knowledge too. Hence, the degree being awarded to you today is the instrument that will help you in further knowledge-acquisition; it is the beginning, not the end, of your education.

11. Thirdly, the years you have spent at your alma mater will certainly help you in meeting the future challenges that lie ahead, but they will not insulate you from them. Only your own personal philosophy, your principled approach, your cultural heritage, religion and spirituality are capable to guide and protect you. By thinking and talking about and crafting a customised set of personal values - belief in professionalism, diligence and integrity; social purpose and responsibility; enlightened patriotism and duties as a world citizen, you will justify the faith your teachers have placed in you.

12. Finally, an integrated outlook encompassing your own beliefs and values and outside influences will help. As Mahatma Gandhi observed, "I do not want my house to be walled on all sides and its windows stuffed. I want the cultures of all lands to be blown about my house as freely as possible. But I refuse to be blown off my feet by any."

13. My message is not original. In life, an approach that is principled yet pragmatic, philosophical yet practical, has more chances of success than a uni-dimensional doctrinaire approach.

14. It will be wonderful if you devoted some time to a contemplation on today's message when the party is over tonight. I can assure you that such contemplation has the potential of many more parties in future!

15. As you, filled with hopes and dreams, ambitions and apprehensions, embark now on the most important journey - the journey of your life - you will, we hope, aspire to be
South Asia and 300 million in Africa - are required to make do with less than $1 per day. Further, much of the population is relatively young, with 40 per cent of it being below the age of 20.

20. Disparities affect even the unfolding digital revolution. The US possesses more computers than the rest of the world. Japan's capital, Tokyo, has perhaps more telephones than the whole of Africa.

21. In an increasingly knowledge-based world, promotion and expansion of knowledge and its productive use for development is crucial. One of our highest priorities should, therefore, be the investment that would assist in bringing the technological and knowledge gap between developed and developing countries. We in the developing world must develop our knowledge base through collective efforts for we are aware that the growth of knowledge is a crucial factor in economic development.

22. Environmental degradation has now become a grave global problem. To put it candidly, we seem to be plundering the Nature's bounty with little sense of responsibility towards posterity. The result is global warming, disturbing trends in climate change, deforestation, desertification and a deepening water crisis. It is evident that, essentially, environmental problems have been created by unsustainable patterns of production and consumption in the developed countries. This must change. Developing countries too need to contribute their share in devising the required solutions. There is now consensus in the international community that, besides Governments, the private sector and the civil society and media will have to play a progressively significant role in protecting environment. That is where our young generation comes in; it must show greater awareness of what is at stake as well as higher vigilance to cope with the challenges.

23. And then there is the alarmingly growing reach of HIV/AIDS and its impact on our youth. It is estimated that about 50 million people have been infected with HIV since the early 1970s, 16 million have died. Of nearly 36 million people now living with HIV/AIDS worldwide, over 23 million are in sub-Saharan Africa. In Asia, the new HIV
27. In order to understand India, we need to visit the past and also explore below the surface. No wonder, India has been a fascinating challenge to scholars of all ages. As David William Martin, an Australian author, wrote recently, "India provides prodigious helpings of every conceivable kind - diverse cultures, multiple languages and dialects, religion and religious architecture, of great tracts of history witnessing the triumphs and the tragedies of the powerful...." Similarly, Prof. Max Mueller, the respected authority on ancient India, observed a long time back, "If I were asked under what sky human mind has most fully developed some of its choicest gifts, has pondered over the greatest problems of life, and has found solution to some of them..... I should point to India."

28. As you - some of the finest young minds of Kenya - move forward to discover new horizons of knowledge, may I invite you to visit, study and explore India - her mysteries and inner strengths, the boundless treasures of learning, and the frontiers of unfolding scientific and technological change. Our IT revolution has made countries such as USA, UK, Germany and Japan sit up, take notice and court the reservoir of Indian software talents. It deserves closer notice in Kenya for it has the potential of much mutual benefit.

29. With about 7000 Kenyan students in various Indian universities today, we may be said to be running a large university for Kenya. We are proud and happy doing so for the cause of stronger India-Kenya friendship. We hope that at least some of you will get engaged in strengthening the multiple bridges that link India and Africa - the natural partners for human development.

30. I am delighted to learn that USIU offers courses in History and International Relations that cover India too. May I take this opportunity to invite the students who take these courses, to come forward and assist us in strengthening India-Kenya relations, especially by joining the Kenya-India Friendship Association that strives to promote better understanding between the two countries.
27. In order to understand India, we need to visit the past and also explore below the surface. No wonder, India has been a fascinating challenge to scholars of all ages. As David William Martin, an Australian author, wrote recently, "India provides prodigious helpings of every conceivable kind - diverse cultures, multiple languages and dialects, religion and religious architecture, of great tracts of history witnessing the triumphs and the tragedies of the powerful..." Similarly, Prof. Max Mueller, the respected authority on ancient India, observed a long time back, "If I were asked under what sky human mind has most fully developed some of its choicest gifts, has pondered over the greatest problems of life, and has found solution to some of them..., I should point to India."

28. As you - some of the finest young minds of Kenya - move forward to discover new horizons of knowledge, may I invite you to visit, study and explore India - her mysteries and inner strengths, the boundless treasures of learning, and the frontiers of unfolding scientific and technological change. Our IT revolution has made countries such as USA, UK, Germany and Japan sit up, take notice and court the reservoir of Indian software talents. It deserves closer notice in Kenya for it has the potential of much mutual benefit.

29. With about 7000 Kenyan students in various Indian universities today, we may be said to be running a large university for Kenya. We are proud and happy doing so for the cause of stronger India-Kenya friendship. We hope that at least some of you will get engaged in strengthening the multiple bridges that link India and Africa - the natural partners for human development.

30. I am delighted to learn that USIU offers courses in History and International Relations that cover India too. May I take this opportunity to invite the students who take these courses, to come forward and assist us in strengthening India-Kenya relations, especially by joining the Kenya-India Friendship Association that strives to promote better understanding between the two countries.