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'Public funding key to balancing quality and access in education'

Not enough investments are being made in public institutions of higher learning, says Ram; he also emphasises the importance of differential institutional missions to combat mediocrity

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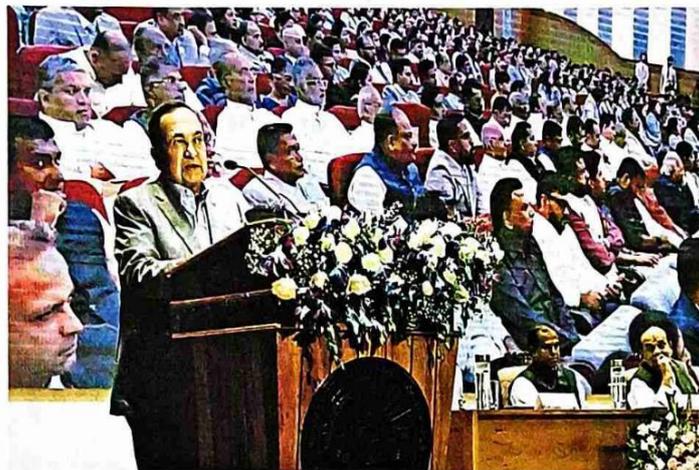
The first principle for reconciling excellence in the field of education is a robust commitment to public funding, said N. Ram, former Editor-in-Chief of *The Hindu*, and Director of The Hindu Publishing Group.

Speaking at the inaugural ceremony of Kristu Jayanti (deemed to be university), which was accorded the status in July 2025, Mr. Ram pointed out that not enough investments are being made in public institutions of higher learning.

Standardisation

Mr. Ram also emphasised the importance of differential institutional missions to combat mediocrity.

"You cannot use the same model everywhere. Today, in the pursuit of un-itariness, a certain standardisation is imposed, which only makes for mediocrity. There are authoritarian forces trying to impose un-itariness, sometimes through the UGC. I've seen it with Governors trying to



N. Ram, former Editor-in-Chief of *The Hindu* and Director of The Hindu Group, speaking at the inaugural ceremony of Kristu Jayanti (deemed to be university) in Bengaluru on Monday. K.MURALI KUMAR

usurp the powers of elected State governments. While it has happened before, now it's happening on a scale that is truly depressing," he said.

Stressing on the importance of embedding equity into academic design, he noted that it shouldn't be limited to reservations during admissions. "Reservation policies deliver to a large extent, but academic designs still seem to work against providing real opportunities for those who

are first-generation learners or from marginalised and underprivileged backgrounds," said Mr. Ram, who also spoke about the need for a student support framework to address the hidden costs of education.

AI reshaping education

Commenting on the way Artificial Intelligence is reshaping education, Mr. Ram said that change is happening at a speed and depth that seems to be different from what previous

technological transformations brought about.

While the technology facilitates personalised learning at scale, academic support and accessibility, research acceleration, knowledge discovery and administrative efficiency, it also poses an immediate risk to academic integrity, he said.

"The other risk is intellectual dependency and there's a danger of cognitive atrophy. There's also the criticism that since

these large language models are trained on existing data, they reflect biases, inequality, and structural injustice. There are concerns about data privacy and surveillance," he added.

Mr. Ram pointed out that researchers and faculty at the deemed to be university have the opportunity to make significant contributions in the rapidly developing field before things go out of control.

Logo unveiled

Mr. Ram also congratulated the officials of Kristu Jayanti for reconciling the pursuit of quality and excellence with being accessible and affordable.

The inaugural ceremony witnessed the formal release of the commemorative book *Luminescence - The Silver Journey of Kristu Jayanti*, authored by Fr. Augustine George and Fr. Joshy Mathew. Mr. Ram unveiled the official university logo at the event.

"As we step into our university status, we renew our resolve to shape minds, inspire values, and serve society through transformative education," said Vice-Chancellor Fr. Augustine George.