

WELCOME ADDRESS BY
VICE CHANCELLOR
PROF. DR. PIRZADA QASIM RAZA SIDDIQUI

Convocation 2008
University of Karachi

December 29, 2008

Honorable Chancellor, Members of Senate and Syndicate of the University of Karachi, Honorable members of the diplomatic corps, Ministers, Parliamentarians, Eminent citizens, Distinguished guests, Students, Parents, Ladies & Gentlemen.

I am privileged to offer you all, a very warm welcome to the Convocation 2008 of the University of Karachi.

As you know that institutions always flourish under the shelter of traditions and that it is these traditions that become the identity of institutions, the function of awarding degrees at the University of Karachi every year is a part of educational culture. The aim of this convocation is not just to award degrees but to express this reality that although the formal education of these students has completed, their journey for seeking knowledge still continues, because the journey for knowledge is never-ending. It is something that humans keep seeking from cradle to grave. The day a student's thirst for knowledge ends his/her mental deterioration begins. So I would put it this way that education can be completed but not knowledge. The students getting their degrees ought to keep this difference between education and knowledge in mind. This difference is also important because it has been observed that after the completion of their formal education our students' tie with books is generally cut off. They think that they have acquired whatever they had to in the field of education; therefore, there is no need to read books anymore. This is a very wrong conception. The reality is that the very aim of formal education is to arouse an unquenchable thirst for knowledge in a student. As man's knowledge increases with the passage of time, his ignorance is revealed to him. Newton, a big name in the world of scientific inventions, once said: "I still feel that I'm playing like a child with pebbles at the seaside and the infinite sea of realities is right in front of my eyes. This infinite sea of realities must be present in front of each student's eyes---whether he/she belongs to Arts or Sciences. Then only the plant of knowledge-based curiosity can grow in his/her personality and he/she can persuade him/herself to attain more and more knowledge.

I have already talked to you about the journey for the acquisition of knowledge. Another thing that I have to talk about is with regard to the aim of acquiring education. In our religious traditions, knowledge is not merely the name of providing information; it is referred to as 'light' which brightens the heart of a believer. How deplorable it is that the attainment of degrees is related to the attainment of employment. What I mean today is that education is not acquired for the sake of education but is acquired because a student's economic future is related to it. There is no doubt that among many other benefits of education one of the advantages is that it helps a student get a better job, but this is just a subsidiary benefit of education. The highest aim of education is to transform a person into a better human being---a person who is civilized, refined, humane, principled, noble, and tied to supreme values. If education fails to cultivate these attributes, then let me say that such an education is devoid of any advantage. A degree obtained as result of this kind of education has no more value than a piece of paper. Let me say it with regret that the education that is being provided from school to the university level is not fulfilling these aims. We are preparing a generation that has neither dreams in their eyes nor any ideals in mind. This generation, being a victim of aimlessness, has the attainment of material prosperity as its highest objective. Hence, this materialistic attitude has led to chaos and turmoil in our society. The rise in psychological diseases, the division of nation in the name of language, ethnicity and religion, the indulgence of young generation in incidents of violence---among the reasons behind the rise and spread of this and other such diseases, examining life from materialistic point of view lies on the top. Unless there is a change in our criteria and yardsticks for judging good and evil, situation will remain the same. Unless education is taken in its real sense, we will remain victims of deterioration in the same way. Thus, it is my humble request that do not consider education as a mere means of attaining materialistic prosperity. In fact, after attaining education consider yourself a servant of your country and society and be a paragon of those supreme values which education teaches.

After mentioning these important issues I would like to turn towards the University of Karachi and want to mention those projects, which we started in the last few years and which have reached completion by the grace of God.

This institution is one of the most prominent and the largest seats of learning in the country. During 57 years since its inception in 1951, University of Karachi has been serving the country and the nation by preparing the youth to accept challenging responsibilities in all walks of life. By now the university has developed 52 departments and 21 research centers and institutes. The academic and research activities are performed by more than 1000 competent and highly qualified teaching and research faculty, most of them possessing doctorate degrees and with nearly 2000 supporting staff.

The University offers academic programmes in B.S., Pharm-D (Pharmacy), BBA, BPA, B.S., B.L.I.S., M.S., M.A., M.Sc., M.L.I.S., MPA, M.Com, MBA, MPA, M.Pharm., Ph.D., DSc., D.Litt. Certificates and Diploma courses are also offered in French, German, Arabic, Turkish, Spanish, Japanese, Persian,

Sindhi and Bengali Languages and also in Petroleum Technology, Environmental Science , Statistics and Public Administration.

Today the university is recognized as a premier centre of learning and research in the Sub-continent and in the Third World. A number of scientists and scholars affiliated with the University are working in important positions both within and outside Pakistan and have won recognition. Students from several foreign countries are also pursuing the masters, doctorate and post doctoral programmes in International Centre of Chemical and Biological Sciences (ICCBS). This Centre has been designated as a WHO centre for Pesticides Analysis for Eastern Mediterranean region, COMSATS centre for excellence, TWAS centre of excellence and UNCSTD centre of excellence.

The newly developed Dr. A. Q. Khan Institute of Biotechnology and Genetic Engineering, Umair Basha Institute of Information Technology, Dr. Panjwani Centre for Molecular Medicine and Drug Development and Dr. Feroz Ahmed Institute of Mass Communication are some examples of the public-private sector partnership and the capacity building that is going on in the Karachi University. The newly constructed hostel premises for the foreign faculty and research scholars will be a source of great comfort to them as, staying there will save them considerable amount of precious time. Besides, construction of two buildings each containing classrooms at the faculties of arts and science and the management sciences building is in progress and expected to be accomplished in near future.

In loving memory of Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto Shaheed and in recognition of her services for the nation, a chair has been approved by the Hon. Chief Minister and established at the Karachi University. The University plans to upgrade this chair to the level of a full-fledged Institute. In this manner the university will show its resolve to preserve the sacrifices and devoted services of the benefactors of this nation to make them a bright segment of our history. The envisaged Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhuto Institute will contain latest research equipments and facilities, a convention center, an auditorium with capacity to seat 2,000 people and will, *Insha Allah*, become a renowned research institute in the near future.

The University having introduced B.S. programme in the year 2007, has this year, in 2008 modified its M.S./Ph.D. programmes as well in order to bring the academic standards on a par with the educational institutions in the developed world. A year ago we established the Faculty of Management and Administrative Sciences that envelopes the departments of Business Administration, Commerce and Public Administration, A Quality Enhancement Cell has been established at the University which functions for the sake of elevating quality of faculty members, students and the academic programmes. Such measures will not only enhance value of the degrees issued by this university but will also help the graduates acquire better career opportunities.

The research and academic output of the University has been commandable. The University has the highest concentration of Ph.Ds degree holders with a share of more than 28% of the national stock of the scientists. The University has produced 1055 Ph.Ds in different disciplines such as Arts, Science

and Pharmacy uptill 2007. In the year 2007, 143 candidates were awarded M.Phil. and Ph.D. degrees in various disciplines such as science, social and management sciences, pharmacy and medicine. At present more than 2600 students are enrolled for M.Phil/Ph.D. The faculty of Science has an excellent publication record in national and international journals of high impact factor. The University of Karachi due to its high standards is a major source of highly skilled and qualified manpower. A large number of its graduates have been contributing to the well-being of the society such as Governors, Vice-Chancellors, Ambassadors, Federal Ministers, Federal and Provincial Secretaries, Judges of Supreme Courts and High Courts, Commissioners and Head of public and private corporations.

The University has signed MoUs with foreign institutions for the elevating research and caliber of our students and teachers, mostly with the facilities of scholarship offered by these institutions. University of Karachi is a part of international consortium of seven international universities of Netherlands, China, Italy and France. This international consortium is soon going to launch M.S. programmes on climate change. International grants were won by ICCBS from Germany, USA, U.K. and Japan.

The Evening Programme (established in 1995) is educating more than 6,000 students most of whom are engaged in various professions of employment. This is a tremendous social service offered by the University of Karachi for the cause of education.

At home, in an effort to brighten the talents of our students and our faculty, we are in interaction with the industrial sector so that our youth become adequately acquainted with the latest practical and theoretical needs of the industrial sector where challenging positions await out graduates.

Conferences, seminars and workshops at domestic, national and international level are held frequently to disseminate the value of humanities as well as natural, social and management sciences among our students. Topics related to current global issues, concerns and developments are the themes of these events, from sports to justice, from economics to management and from environmental sciences to genetic engineering. During the current year, nearly 125 such national and international academic events have been conducted at the university. An international conference on Natural Products held at the campus, was attended by more than 150 foreign delegates.

Honorable Chancellor, apart from our academic responsibilities, we are also conscious about our social responsibilities. Progress and benefit of our whole society stands high in KU's priorities. In this scenario, linkage with industrial sector, raising funds at disastrous moments like earthquakes, floods etc., and conducting of Continuous Professional Development – HRM certificate course recently accomplished are a few instances of how much the University of Karachi is conscious of its corporate social responsibilities in the present times giving opportunities to students throughout country and professionals employed in management and industrial sector to advance their knowledge and skills. Development of the beautiful and spacious Botanical Garden at the campus speaks of artistic savor of the KU management. This garden, with a handsome selection of assorted plants is of high research value for the students of plant sciences. In the present global educational scenario of competitive

advantage and benefit, we are obliged to guide, with all possible exactness, our youth to diverse avenues of careers within our homeland. Education must be turning them into constructive citizens and more importantly such human being who can prove themselves positively compatible for any society of the world.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Besides development of academic and research labs and premises, the University is proud to have produced, since its beginning, a number of able scholars, academicians, scientists, researchers and administrators who have acquired key positions not only in the government and private sector, but also in foreign institutions of repute. I must pay my sincere homage and tributes to the parents of all the past and present students of the University whose devotions have made these successes possible. I must at the same time advise all the students to remember that their parents have borne years-long pains and faced innumerable hardships in their brought up and these parents must be most suitably respected and looked after by them.

The current economic situation all over the world is known to all of us. Pakistan has also experienced impact of this crisis which has penetrated in almost all sectors including the higher education. As a result, funding support to the public universities has suffered.

The university is trying hard to review its resource generation and management programme. The industries, the corporate sector, all eminent entities and citizens of Karachi and of course the alumni of Karachi University are requested to support the institution which will be given grateful acknowledgment.

I end my speech with prayers to All Mighty Allah that our beloved country, our lovely city and our *alma mater* Karachi University may remain peaceful and prosperous; and may Allah grant us pure light of knowledge and awareness!

Pakistan Zindabad.