



सत्यमेव जयते

Address by the Hon'ble Governor of Andhra Pradesh  
Shri Biswa Bhusan Harichandan,  
at the Convocation of Vaikunth Mehta  
National Institute for Cooperative Management, Pune, Maharashtra  
on November 23, 2020 through video conference

I am happy to attend the Convocation Ceremony of Vaikunth Mehta National Institute for Cooperative Management (VAMNICOM), a pioneer in offering two-year full time residential Agri-Business Management programme at the post graduation level.

At the outset, I congratulate the students who have been awarded the degrees. It marks a well-deserved fulfillment of their academic objectives. All the professors, academicians and industry experts who tirelessly assisted the students in pursuit of their knowledge, deserve to be lauded as well. I also extend my best wishes to the parents and well-wishers, who have supported the students throughout their journey.

While this day will be undoubtedly cherished by the students for years to come, I am confident that the Institute will strive to set new benchmarks in the quest for strengthening the cooperative sector and improving agriculture sector.

VAMNICOM was named after Shri Vaikunth Bhai Mehta, a visionary and pioneer in the area of rural and cooperative revolution and was established with the vision of taking India forward with inclusive growth.

The contribution of Shri Vaikunth Bhai Mehta to the cause of Cooperative Education and Training was foundational. According to him, "Cooperative Training is not merely a prerequisite but a permanent condition of cooperative activities". He served as the Minister of Finance and Cooperation of the then Bombay State and was the first Chairman of Khadi and Village Industries Commission.

Since its establishment, VAMNICOM has been serving as an intellectual nerve center for the development of agriculture and rural sectors and contributing to the progress of Indian cooperatives.

The Institute has been catering to the needs of the cooperative institutions/agencies and Central/State Government Departments through various short-term and long-term programmes on management training, education, research and also offering consultancy services to Government, cooperatives, corporate entities and others.

Dear students,

Cooperative societies play a crucial role in strengthening rural economy and in ensuring socio-economic development of the country in inclusive and sustainable manner.

Cooperative Movement acts as an enabler to unify local human resources and channelize energies for the growth of rural India. The Indian cooperative movement, the world's largest movement, has its own inherent strengths and weaknesses. With more than 8 lakh cooperatives, they have a significant presence in all the areas of socio-economic activities.

Dairy cooperatives have ushered in milk revolution in the country making AMUL a household name. Institutions like IFFCO, KRIBHCO, and AMUL are some of the big success stories in the cooperative sector. Besides, there are a large number of cooperatives at the state-level such as urban cooperative banks, primary agriculture cooperative societies, housing, fishery and other forms of cooperatives which are making untiring efforts to improve the socio-economic conditions of the people in the rural areas.

At grass-roots level, the cooperative sector has a big role to play in bridging the urban-rural divide and creating opportunities for income generation.

I am happy that your institution is helping the cooperatives in developing decision-making skills and administrative competence through the Post

Graduate Diploma in Management (PGDM) and Post Graduate Diploma in Co-operative Business Management (PGDCBM) programmes.

I am happy to learn that the Institute has been providing active support and guidance to 14 state- level Institutes of Cooperative Management (ICMs) and five Regional Institutes of Co-operative Management (RICMs) through Faculty Development Programmes through PGDCBM apart from providing training on Agricultural Banking.

Built on values that encourage cooperation, empowerment, and solidarity, rather than just profits, cooperative societies play a vital role in providing support and sustainability to rural economic activities. They are also recognized as means of implementation for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) along with other private sector enterprises.

Cooperatives can help the small and marginal farmers who are in need of support in the form of inputs, harvesting, storage facilities, distribution channels and a network of the market information system.

Cooperatives must assume a greater role in mitigating rural distress by providing support facilities to farmers to ensure sustainability. Technical guidance is required to help agriculturists in processing their produce and reap benefits through value addition. Not having enough exposure to the changing market mechanism, lack of infrastructure facilities and technical skills are a few of the major obstacles faced by farmers and village artisans. The role of VAMNICOM assumes greater significance in the context of sweeping reforms brought about through the new Farm Act 2020, in agricultural sector.

Faced with competition from the organized sector, cooperatives find it extremely difficult to maintain their traditional employment. Such trends often create economic distress and result in experienced farmers migrating to urban areas in search of different livelihoods. If this trend is not reversed, we will be forfeiting the most valuable human resource that has the knowledge of farming and rural livelihood.

Through pooling of experience, knowledge and by helping one another, cooperative societies can help members to find solutions to problems. Agriculture cooperatives help farmers to pool their small and fragmented land holdings to take up intensive cultivation by using modern technology.

Agricultural processing cooperatives can enable farmers to gain through value addition of their product. Agricultural marketing societies could enable farmers to benefit from increased bargaining strength. By removing intermediaries they help farmers to directly interact with the consumers. The Government's e-NAM initiative will greatly help farmers in this endeavor.

In India, agriculture has traditionally played a vital role in economic development and together with fisheries and forestry, it is one of the largest contributors to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

Being the second largest country in the world in terms of agricultural output, India must take the lead in reforming the sector to make it more profitable and ecologically sustainable.

The foremost need of the country is to double the incomes of farmers by making agriculture resilient, sustainable and profitable. There is a need to introduce structural changes and both the Centre and the States need to accord highest priority to this aspect. Concerted efforts are required from every stakeholder to ensure that there is no agrarian distress.

Infrastructure development is one of the key factors to improve the agriculture sector and empower the farmers. Improving rural road connectivity, setting up more godowns, cold storage facilities, ensuring assured water and electricity supply are some of the key measures which need to be implemented. Providing timely credit to farmers is equally important. As the economy improves interest rates have to be reduced further and the crop insurance scheme should be made more attractive and should be implemented effectively.

Loan waiver and free power supply offer only short term relief. Proper marketing conditions should be created to enable farmers to their produce by removing restrictions on the movement of agri- produce.

The farmers should also be educated on the need to diversify crops and take up allied farm activities. A study by MANAGE has revealed that there were no suicides in the families of farmers, who took up allied activities.

I feel that the farmers should be encouraged to grow horticulture crops as also to cultivate cereals and pulses.

The extension officials should spend more time with the farmers and it should be made mandatory for students of agriculture to make field visits and interact with farmers to understand their problems.

Agribusiness is an important sector and there is a need for large pool of skilled manpower at managerial, supervisory and worker level to give a boost to this sector. In this regard, Institutions like the VAMNICOM must become facilitators to provide opportunities to those connected with agriculture and allied subjects.

I am confident that the youngsters who graduate from this course will have a successful career in the Agri-business sector, including agri-input sector, rural finance and banking.

I compliment VAMNICOM for its pioneering role in the area of Agri-Business Management by offering a two-year fully residential Post Graduate Diploma in Management (PGDM) - Agri-Business Management (ABM) leading to the award of a degree equivalent to MBA.

I urge upon the youth to tap the numerous opportunities in agriculture, especially, in the field of agri-business, agri-clinic, and dairy entrepreneurship and be the change agents by making Indian farming a profitable enterprise.

I once again congratulate all the students and convey my best wishes to them for their future endeavors. I appreciate the whole family of VAMNICOM institution and hope they will continue their efforts in updating the knowledge base and give the students the best possible education in the cooperative sector.

Jai Hind