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**"Where There Is Love There Is No Distance":**

**Amrita University's Satellite Link Is Inaugurated**

Saturday, 15 May 2004 -- Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham, Amritapuri Campus



It was a historic moment--both for Amma's Deemed University and for India. On 15 May 2004, Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham became the nation's first multi-disciplinary educational institution to connect its campuses via satellite. As Dr. S. Banerjee, the director of Bhabha Atomic Research Centre, put it during the satellite link's inauguration, "This will have a catalytic effect on education in the country."

The inauguration served not only to formally launch the satellite link, but also to provide its first effective demonstration--as the inauguration was held simultaneously at the four Amrita University campuses, with all present at each centre interacting freely via the link. The initiative was made possible through a unique "university-government-industry" partnership: an alliance between Amrita University, ISRO (India Space Research Organisation), Cognizant Technology Solutions and Cadence Design Systems.

The first message broadcast to the four campuses was none other than that of Amma, who congratulated and encouraged those who'd made possible the technological connection, while at the same time counselling everyone to not forget the importance of spiritual connection--the inner communion with the Atman and the communion of fellow hearts.

"Today, because of the communication between machines, even people in far off places seem very close," Amma said over the satellite. "Nevertheless, as the communication between hearts is absent, even those who are physically very near to us are really very far. The beauty of society lies in the communication between hearts."

After Amma's speech, the link was officially inaugurated in each of the campus centres: in Amritapuri by Padma Bhushan Dr. G. Madhavan Nair (Chairman of ISRO), in Cochin by Dr. S. Banerjee (Director of BARC), in Bangalore by Sri. Balu Doraisamy (President of Hewlett-Packard India) and in Coimbatore by Professor V.S. Ramamurthy (Secretary, Department of Science & Technology, Government of India).

Immediate uses for the satellite link will be in allowing Amrita University students to not only "attend" but also to interact in lectures taking place on the all four campuses. As Amrita University is home to computer, medical, management and engineering institutions, the link will also be used to build inter-disciplinary research laboratories--for example, in such areas as bio-engineering and nano-technology. But these are only the beginning. As Dr. Venkat Rangan, the

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Vice-Chancellor of Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham, explained in his speech, the next step lies in using the link to extend Amrita University-calibre education to India's remote masses.

In his speech, ISRO's Dr. G. Madhavan Nair explained how such satellite links hold the potential to transform India in terms of education and healthcare, both of which areas are being championed by Amma's institutions. He said how inspired he'd been just days before at seeing doctors at Amma's AIMS hospital evaluating patients in remote areas of Leh-Ladakh and the Lakshadweep Islands via an ISRO satellite. And now, he said, Amma's institutions were making bold steps on the educational front as well.

In Coimbatore, Professor V.S. Ramamurthy spoke along the same lines, reiterating how the power of the link lies in taking the universities to the students and in taking the hospitals to the patients.

One of the Amritapuri campus' guests of honour was Dr. Bharat Jayaraman, a professor from the State University of New York in Buffalo who has been involved with "distance teaching" for the past 20 years. Dr. Jayarman said he could not believe that a Deemed University not much more than a year old could have set up such a complex and advance satellite-link system.

In Her speech, Amma referred to a saying of Hers: "Where there is love, distance doesn't matter." She then recalled how one of Her brahmacharis had once quipped to Her, "Will you phone me when You are abroad giving programmes? Where there is a phone, distance doesn't matter." Amma said, "The satellite network being initiated today makes us feel the same way. It will help you to study and work better." Then Amma gave the mantra of success to the students: "Study while you study, play while you play, and work whole-heartedly and sincerely. Success will be yours."

Later, BARC Director Dr. S. Banerjee recalled Amma's words. Referring to the dedication and sacrifice of all involved with making the link operational, he said, "Where there is love there is no barrier--this is what we are witnessing here, as only love has made this possible."

--Sakshi



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