

Dear students, renowned educational experts, distinguished guests

It is my honor to welcome you all for this reception.

Every year the consulate general of India in Birmingham organizes a welcome reception for the Indian students who have arrived at United Kingdom to open a new chapter in their life.

I am very much cognizant of the fact that for many of you, it is a different environment altogether.

For some of you, it may be the first time you start living your life on your own without any parental supervision!

For some of you it may be the first time, you start cooking your own food!

For some of you, it may be the first time you have visited a foreign country !

But one thing is certain,

You have all come to this country with the flying colors. With a lot of aspirations and objectives.

Whatever your objectives and aspirations! I wish you that you achieve them all.

As per our record, Indian students have joined more than fifty educational institutions and universities in Midland and Northern England. I mention only the institutions in Midland and Northern England, because our jurisdiction comes under these areas. If you consider the whole United Kingdom, Indian students must be studying in hundreds of Universities and Institutions. Every year more than 100 thousands Indian students are joining British Institutions. This figure reached a peak during last year.

Currently it is estimated that nearly 1.3 million Indian students are studying abroad. Most of them are studying in English speaking countries like Canada and USA, the UK and Australia.

The top five countries hosting the highest number of Indian students are Canada with 427,000 students, the USA with 337,630 students, the UK with 185,000 students, Australia with 122,202 students, and Germany with 42,997 students.

Which ever country you are studying, your welfare and safety is the top most priority for the Government of India.

Indian Embassies and Consulates maintain regular contacts with Indian students enrolled in Universities abroad. Senior Embassy officials also visit Universities and Educational Institutions in their respective countries of accreditation to regularly interact with Indian students and Indian Students' Associations. After I have assumed my charge in the Consulate as a Consulate, I have visited more than 10 Universities in my region and interacted with Indian students. You can see our social media postings on these visits. We are on facebook,

twitter and Instagram. You can follow us on any advisory for the students. We also have a website. We often issue student alert, so that you don't fall into troubles.

We also encourage you to register yourself with us. If you go to our website you can find the links.

Here I would like to mention about MADAD portal. There you can raise your grievances!

The grievances of the students are responded to almost on a real time basis through telephone calls, walk-ins, emails, social media, 24x7 emergency helplines, open houses and the MADAD Portal. Any complaint received from the Indian students abroad are taken up with the concerned University/Institution and the host Government, as the case may be for requisite action.

Cases of untoward incidents are immediately taken up by the Indian Missions/Posts abroad with the concerned authorities of the host country.

Operation Ganga (Ukraine), Operation Kaveri (Sudan) and Operation Ajay (Israel)!

During emergencies or crisis situations, Indian Missions/Posts abroad pro-actively help distressed/stranded Indian students overseas by providing them food, shelter, medicines and ensure their return/evacuation to India as soon as possible. stranded Indian students were evacuated to India through the Vande Bharat Mission, Operation Ganga (Ukraine), Operation Kaveri (Sudan) and Operation Ajay (Israel) from countries around the world. The return of many Indian students from Bangladesh was also facilitated by our High Commission.

Here I would like to mention some problems specific to the United Kingdom! We have two panel discussions ahead to discuss them all. But I would like mention two important problems that you should definitely aware.

There are some crime syndicates operating to target new students from India! They would target you on two important cases.

The first one is asking money to solve your visa issues! They will make you believe that you are in this country through wrong means. They will solve the issue if you pay the money. Please don't heed to them. Otherwise you will be in a trap.

Second one is about sleazy calls. You are all adults . You know what I am talking about. You may be trapped to talk to an underage child. That is a crime. If you are found to be talking to an under aged child inappropriately, you will be liable for criminal prosecution. Please be aware of that.

There are some other problems, Indian student community face here. That our experts will discuss in details.

Last year also we organised two panel discussions with the following themes

Living in the UK: Challenges & The Way Forward" and "Connecting Education, Work & Student's Welfare."

The second theme was vital connection between Education and employment.

We have organised similar discussions today also.

(This event was organized by the Consulate General of India, Birmingham, on the 24th of November, 2023, was a testament to our commitment to addressing the welfare, challenges, and scopes for Indian students pursuing education in this region. The conference was a vibrant confluence of ideas, experiences, and expertise, with a primary focus on understanding and enhancing the educational journey of our Indian students in the Midlands and North England. The Welcome Reception served as a catalyst for meaningful discussions and laid the foundation for two significant panel discussions: ***"Living in the UK: Challenges & The Way Forward" and "Connecting Education, Work & Student's Welfare."*** . The first panel delved deep into the challenges faced by our students as they navigate the intricate landscape of living in the United Kingdom. The insights shared by our esteemed panelists were not only enlightening but also laid the groundwork for identifying pragmatic solutions and outlining a pathway forward. The second panel explored the vital connection between education, employment, and the overall well-being of our students.)

I would request each and everyone of you to listen these deliberations carefully. You will learn a lot from these discussions.

You will be also given a chance for asking questions from our panel members and officials. Please don't hesitate to ask questions. You will learn a lot by asking questions.

With these few words, I conclude my welcome remarks.

I wish you all that

May your educational journey be filled with success, joy and the realization of your aspirations.