

Tharoor blasts central edu policies at St Xavier's varsity convocation

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Kolkata: Parliamentarian Shashi Tharoor on Saturday criticized the Centre's educational policy which has failed to provide fair access to meritorious students.

Speaking at the first convocation of St Xavier's University he pointed out that just last week, students of Bengaluru's National Law School University who already pay Rs1,80,000 a year, were suddenly told their fees were being hiked by Rs 50,000. "The impact of this on students studying on loans or scholarships and belonging to economically weaker backgrounds, is perhaps unfathomable. This is arguably the best legal university in the country and a sound legal education is a foundation for our democracy. But our present government will not invest in subsidizing scholarships for our best students, preferring to waste its money on grandiose statues instead," Tharoor said.

"The case was no different at TISS Hyderabad, where students were forced to drop out as the administration changed its rules, demanding upfront payment for hostel and mess



Shashi Tharoor at the first convocation of St Xavier's University at New Town on Saturday

charges. The brunt of this has been felt the worst by students from the SC, ST and OBC communities, and all those who are pursuing their studies on scholarships and loans, which have suddenly become inadequate," he added.

The parliamentarian from Kerala said the accompanying worry was the brain drain due to lack of opportunities in the country. "We need to reverse the doctoral brain drain by adapting the best practices from across the globe, not only

in terms of overall infrastructure development, but also advancing research with milestones defined towards targeted outcomes. Additionally, we need to tackle the large number of dropouts in higher education, whose the major reason for leaving studies is a weak financial background," he said.

Speaking about the structural challenges that need to be addressed immediately, he said the Indian education system must add 'employability'

to the catechism of the country's education policy. "We are suffering from a systemic problem of skill mismatch between qualifications and jobs undertaken," he said.

"We are releasing graduates into an ecosystem that does not know how to use them; they settle for a constable's post as an alternative to frying pakoras as some political leaders have advised them to do," Tharoor said, suggesting a policy that encourages vocational study.