Convocation Speech By Mr. Tishan Subasinghe

Address by the President of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Sri Lanka (CA Sri Lanka), Mr. Tishan Subasinghe, at the 2026 General Convocation of the Rajarata University.

- **The Chancellor, the Vice-Chancellor of Rajarata University**
- **Members of the Council**
- **Members of the Senate**
- **Deans of Faculties**
- **Members of the academic staff**
- **Proud parents, families and guardians**
- **Ladies and gentlemen**
- **And most importantly the graduating class of Rajarata University**

It is a great honour to be with you today, and a particular privilege to address you on an occasion that belongs, first and foremost, to you, the graduates.

Today is a day many of you have anticipated for a long time, and one that has been earned through dedication, resilience and determination, so at the very outset, I would like to extend my heartfelt congratulations to each and every one of you on reaching this important milestone in your life.

Your degree is much more than a qualification. It represents years of commitment, countless hours of study, examinations, assignments, deadlines and challenges. It reflects the discipline required to stay focused when things became difficult, and the determination to keep moving forward even when the path ahead seemed uncertain.

Yet, while today is a celebration of your achievement, it is also a celebration of the people who helped make this day possible. Behind every graduate seated here is a story of support: parents who made sacrifices, often quietly and without recognition; family members who encouraged you during difficult times; lecturers who challenged you to think differently; and friends who walked alongside you throughout your journey.

I hope that before this day is over, you take a moment to appreciate them, because success is rarely an individual accomplishment, and often, it is a collective effort built upon the encouragement, sacrifices and belief of others.

As you celebrate today, you should do so with a deep sense of pride. You have earned a respected academic qualification from a recognised university, and that achievement deserves recognition.

Your degree has given you knowledge, intellectual discipline and the ability to think critically. It has equipped you with the skills needed to understand organisations, evaluate challenges and navigate the increasingly complex world of business.

It has broadened your perspective and strengthened your ability to make informed decisions.
But while today celebrates what you have achieved, it should also encourage you to think about what comes next.

A convocation is both an ending and a beginning. It marks the completion of one chapter, but it also signals the start of another. The qualification you receive today is not the destination, rather, it is the beginning of a journey in which you will build your professional identity, expand your capabilities and create opportunities that may take you further than you can currently imagine.

The theme I have been asked to address today is the *importance of professional qualifications in an increasingly competitive environment*. I want to discuss this carefully, because I do not believe there is any contradiction between academic education and professional education. In fact, I believe they are at their most powerful when they complement one another.

A university degree provides a strong academic foundation. It develops intellectual capability, broadens your thinking and gives you a framework through which to understand the world.

Professional qualifications build on that foundation by strengthening practical expertise, professional judgement, ethical awareness and technical competence. The most successful professionals are rarely those who stop learning after graduation. They are the individuals who continue investing in themselves, continually developing new skills, expanding their knowledge and adapting to changing circumstances.

This has never been more important than it is today. You are graduating into a world that is changing at a remarkable pace. Technology is transforming industries and redefining how work is performed.

Artificial intelligence is reshaping business processes. Automation is changing the nature of many jobs. Organisations are dealing with increasingly complex challenges involving cybersecurity, sustainability, governance, data privacy, compliance and risk management.

The world that awaits you after graduation is very different from the one that existed just a decade ago.

As a result, employers increasingly look beyond academic credentials alone. They are searching for individuals who can apply knowledge effectively, solve problems, adapt to change and continue learning throughout their careers.

The question is no longer simply, “What do you know?” It is increasingly, “What can you do with what you know?” And perhaps even more importantly, “How prepared are you to keep learning, adapting and evolving when what you know today may no longer be enough tomorrow?”

As a Chartered Accountant, I have witnessed firsthand the extraordinary changes that have taken place within my own profession. Tasks that once required significant manual effort can now be completed in seconds through technology.

Complex calculations can be automated. Large volumes of data can be analysed instantly. Information can be accessed faster than ever before. Yet these developments

have not made professionals less important, if anything, they have made professionals even more valuable.

Technology can process information. It can identify patterns and generate responses. Artificial intelligence can assist decision-making. But technology cannot replace human judgement, ethical reasoning, empathy, leadership and accountability.

When difficult choices arise, someone must demonstrate the courage to make responsible decisions. And when trust is placed in an organisation, someone must take responsibility for protecting that trust. These are human responsibilities. They require competence, experience, judgement and character.

This is where professional qualifications can play a particularly important role. Professional qualifications do far more than provide technical knowledge, they cultivate discipline, skills, accountability and lifelong learning. They expose individuals to professional standards, ethical expectations and practical realities. They encourage continuous improvement and help professionals remain relevant in an ever-changing environment.

I therefore encourage all of you to explore opportunities for continuous professional development throughout your careers. Whether your interests lie in accountancy, finance, marketing, human resources, technology, entrepreneurship, project management, law, academia, entrepreneurship or any other field, never assume that learning ends with graduation. Your degree is a tremendous achievement, but it should also become the beginning of a lifelong commitment to growth.

In today's world, information is widely available. Knowledge can be acquired quickly. Technology provides access to resources that previous generations could scarcely imagine.

As knowledge becomes increasingly accessible, credibility becomes increasingly valuable. Organisations do not simply need knowledgeable people, they need trustworthy people. They need individuals whose judgement can be relied upon and whose professionalism inspires confidence. That trust is often what distinguishes exceptional professionals from merely competent ones.

My own career has reinforced these lessons repeatedly. Like many of you, I did not begin my journey with a perfectly mapped-out plan. I did not know exactly where my career would take me or what opportunities would emerge along the way. But I made a decision to continue investing in my professional development, and that decision opened doors I could never have anticipated.

It enabled me to work in different organisations, different industries, different continents and different countries. It provided opportunities to gain international exposure and experience environments that broadened my understanding of business, leadership and professional practice. Those experiences shaped my perspective and contributed significantly to the person I became.

Yet one of the most valuable lessons I learned was that success is not defined solely by how far you travel. It is also defined by what you contribute. Professional qualifications

can provide mobility and global opportunities, they can enable you to work in Colombo, Dubai, Singapore, London, New York or countless other locations around the world.

But they can also empower you to return home and create value for your own community and your own country. Both paths are meaningful. What matters is that you continue growing and continue contributing wherever your journey takes you.

The most influential innovations have come from people who thought beyond traditional boundaries. Facebook changed how people connect, Airbnb transformed travel, Netflix reinvented entertainment, and OpenAI is redefining the possibilities of artificial intelligence. Their success reminds us that the best ideas often emerge when different fields intersect. So stay curious, remain open to new perspectives and never limit yourself to a single discipline. Increasingly, the world rewards those who can connect ideas and turn them into meaningful solutions.

But as important as competence, qualifications and professional success may be, there is something even more important: character. Talent can create opportunities. Knowledge can open doors. Professional qualifications can enhance credibility. But character determines what you do with those opportunities.

Throughout my career, I have encountered extraordinarily talented individuals who undermined their potential because they compromised their integrity. I have also encountered quieter individuals who built remarkable careers because people trusted them completely, they were honest, they were dependable, they kept their word. And in the long run, those qualities mattered more than any title or qualification.

At some point in your career, each of you will face decisions that test your values. The easiest decision will not always be the right decision. You may face pressure to compromise standards. You may encounter situations where integrity appears costly.

You may be tempted to take shortcuts. When those moments arrive, remember that your reputation is built over many years but can be damaged in a matter of moments. Guard it carefully.

Professional success without integrity is ultimately fragile; professional excellence supported by integrity becomes enduring.

I would like to share one final personal reflection. Many successful careers appear straightforward when viewed from a distance. We often see achievements, titles and accomplishments, but we rarely see the challenges behind them.

I lost my father on the very first day I attended my professional lectures. I was nineteen years old. My mother suddenly found herself carrying responsibilities that no parent expects to face alone.

My younger sister was only eleven. Life changed dramatically. Everything I have achieved since then has been shaped not only by my own efforts, but also by the resilience, sacrifices and support of my family.

I share this experience because I want you to remember something important: no meaningful achievement is accomplished alone. As your careers progress, do not forget

the people who supported you along the way. Remember those who encouraged you when you doubted yourself. Remember those who believed in you before you achieved success.

Remember those who stood beside you during difficult times. Success becomes far more meaningful when it is accompanied by gratitude.

As you pursue your ambitions, I encourage you to maintain balance in your lives. Work hard. Pursue excellence. Strive to achieve your goals. But do not allow your profession to become your entire identity.

Make time for family, for friendships, for health, recreation and personal interests. A successful career should enrich your life, not consume it. The most fulfilled people are often those who achieve excellence professionally while also nurturing meaningful relationships and maintaining perspective.

Dear graduates, today is a day of celebration, but it is also a day of possibility. The future that awaits you will present opportunities that no previous generation could have imagined. It will also present challenges that cannot yet be fully predicted. There will be moments of achievement and moments of disappointment.

There will be times when your plans work perfectly, and times when they do not. There will be roads that lead exactly where you expected, and others that take you somewhere completely different. Embrace all of it, because every experience will teach you something valuable.

As you leave this auditorium today, carry your qualification with pride. But remember that your degree is not the final measure of your potential.

Your future will be defined by your willingness to continue learning, to adapt when circumstances change, to pursue excellence, and to remain true to your values.

Many years from now, people may not remember every qualification you earned or every position you held. But they will remember the difference you made. They will remember how you treated others, how you responded to challenges and whether your success created opportunities for those around you. That is the legacy that truly matters.

So go forward with confidence, with courage, and humility. Dream boldly, work diligently, learn continuously. Do not be afraid of change. Do not be afraid of failure. And never be afraid of aiming higher than others expect of you.

Graduates of Rajarata University, today you leave this university with more than a degree. You leave with knowledge, with potential, with choices, and with the ability to shape not only your own future, but also the future of the organisations, communities and society you will serve.

The world does not need more people who simply hold qualifications. It needs people who will lead with wisdom, who will act with integrity, who will create opportunities for others, who will leave things better than they found them.

Today, you receive a degree. Tomorrow, you begin building a reputation. In the years ahead, you will build a career. But beyond all those achievements, I hope you build something even greater: a life of purpose, a life of impact, a life that inspires others.

Congratulations once again. May your future be filled with opportunity, fulfilment and success.

Thank you.

Mr. Tishan Subasinghe