

High Commissioner's Remarks at the Indian Council for Cultural Relations Pre-Departure Orientation Program for Nigerian Students for the Academic Year 2026-27 under India-Africa Maitri Scholarship Programme

Good afternoon, young scholars of Nigeria.

Let me start by conveying my heartiest congratulations. You are 40 outstanding Nigerians chosen from thousands of applicants. Today, you stop being just students. You become bridges between India and Nigeria. You become India's guests, and Nigeria's ambassadors.

ICCR Scholarships have brought students from around 160 countries to India for 75 years. India believes in your talent and our shared future.

As an ICCR scholar, you will experience a land of contrasts: from the Himalayas to tropical beaches, from centuries-old yoga and Ayurveda to cutting-edge IT hubs in Bengaluru and Hyderabad, and from vibrant festivals like Diwali and Holi to classical dance forms like Bharatanatyam and Kathak.

Nigeria is among the largest beneficiaries of ITEC and ICCR scholarships, with more than 25,000 Nigerians trained in India. This partnership is guided by mutual respect, non-interference, and the shared vision that human resource development is the foundation of sustainable growth.

You will go to universities that built India's IT revolution, launched rockets to the moon, and made vaccines for the world. You will learn in labs, but also on the streets. You will learn that India, like Nigeria, is diverse, ambitious, and young. You will learn to argue, to innovate, and to respect.

We expect from you to always follow three simple rules. **First**, your attendance must be 75%. Your results must be strong. ICCR is generous, but not lenient. **Second**, respect Indian laws, Indian culture, and your university rules. **Third**, after your degree, come back. Build Nigeria. Use Indian technology for Nigerian farms. Use Indian medicine for Nigerian hospitals. That is the real return on our investment.

I assure you that India is not foreign to you. You already know India. You watch Bollywood. You eat at Indian restaurants in Lagos. You take Indian medicines. Now India will know you. Wear your Nigerian attire on Culture Day. Cook jollof for your hostel. Teach them Afrobeats. Names like Davido, Rema, Wizkid, Burna Boy are already well known names in India. But also learn to say "**Namaste**", and enjoy monsoon. You are never alone. In case of any emergency situation please reach us on WhatsApp or Email. We are just a call away.

I would insist that on arrival to India please save the emergency number of High Commission, contact number of your University and Nigerian High Commission in Delhi in your mobile number which will be a life-saver in any unwanted situation.

Finally, scholars, when you land in Delhi or Pune or Bengaluru, take a deep breath. You are making history. Nigeria and India are old friends. But you are the new generation that will make this friendship unbreakable.

Study hard. Stay safe. Make us proud. Safe journey, and see you in India. Thank you.