

## VALEDICTORY ADDRESS<sup>1</sup>

Respected Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Amar Pal Singh,

Distinguished members of the faculty,

Learned guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

And Dear Students,

Namaskar and a very good evening to you all.

1. It is both a privilege and a pleasure to be present today at **Dr. Ram Manohar Lohiya National Law University** on the occasion of the **4th RMLNLU– Lakshmikumaran & Sridharan International Arbitration Moot, 2026**. I extend my sincere gratitude to the University for inviting me. Institutions such as yours are not merely centres of legal education, they are spaces where the future of the legal profession is quietly shaped, where young minds are moulded not just in knowledge but in character, discipline, and a sense of public responsibility.
2. To all participants, I extend my warm congratulations.

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<sup>1</sup> Speech by Hon'ble Mr. Justice Pankaj Mithal on the occasion of Award Distribution and Valedictory Ceremony of the 4<sup>th</sup> Ram Manohar Lohiya National Law University- Lakshmikumaran & Sridharan International Arbitration Moot, 2026 at Lucknow on 5.4.2026.

3. Moot court competitions are not merely contests of advocacy; they are platforms of training. They cultivate discipline of thought, precision of language, economy of expression, and dignity of conduct. Every participant who has stood before the Bench today has already gained something invaluable, an experience that textbooks cannot provide. The moments of preparation, the pressure of questions, and the reflection afterward all contribute to building a lawyer who is not just technically competent, but morally and intellectually grounded.
  
4. Moot courts, in many ways, are **rehearsals for the real courtroom of life**. There was a time when young law graduates encountered courtrooms only after entering professional practice, and advocacy was learnt gradually in the course of real litigation. Moot court competitions have **transformed that journey by bringing courtrooms into university classrooms** and allowing students to experience the discipline and intensity of advocacy at an early stage.
  
5. One may even say that a moot court is to advocacy what a **practical examination is to a school subject**, or what a **science laboratory is to classroom theory**. In a laboratory, one does not merely read about a concept; one sees it, tests it, applies it, and learns from error. Likewise, in a moot court, one does not merely read the law; one lives it, speaks it, defends it, and feels

the pressure of its application before entering courtroom life. It is this practical training that makes mooting such a valuable part of legal education.

6. In a lighter sense, one may draw a **parallel with cinema**. There was a time when people went to cinema halls to experience storytelling, and when television entered homes, it was said that cinema had come home. Similarly, **moot courts have brought the courtroom into the classroom**. Yet, just as watching a film at home differs from experiencing it in a theatre, a moot courtroom, however rigorous, remains a simulation. Just as a **pilot trains on a flight simulator** before taking command of a cockpit, **you are training here**. The real courtroom carries consequences, clients, and responsibilities that no academic exercise can fully replicate. The simulation ends where the responsibility begins.
7. Law is not the art of speaking loudly; it is the art of persuading responsibly. It requires the ability to understand the strongest version of the opposing case before responding, and it demands a balance between conviction and humility. Advocacy is not merely a profession; it is a constitutional responsibility. Courts are spaces where rights meet power and where the voice of the vulnerable seeks articulation.
8. The theme of this moot, **international arbitration**, is particularly resonant in our era of “**Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam**” - the world is one family. Today, commerce knows no borders. A contract signed in Delhi may be executed in

Dubai with financing from London. In this interconnected reality, national boundaries become secondary to the need for a unified, neutral, and efficient dispute resolution framework. International arbitration serves as this “common language” of global justice, ensuring that trade is not stifled by the complexities of diverse local statutes.

9. As trade, commerce, infrastructure, technology, and investment increasingly **transcend national boundaries**, arbitration has emerged as one of the most important mechanisms for **resolving commercial disputes in the modern world**. It is valued because it offers neutrality, party autonomy, confidentiality, expertise, and the possibility of enforceability across jurisdictions. It reflects the reality of a connected world, where disputes cannot always be confined within the limits of one nation’s courts. In that sense, international arbitration is not merely a legal process; it is an instrument of global commerce and cross-border trust.

10. India’s civilisational ethos has long recognised the importance of resolving disputes through dialogue and collective wisdom. The concept of “**Panch Parmeshwar**” reflects a tradition where justice was rooted in impartiality and social balance. This enduring principle continues to find expression today in modern mechanisms such as arbitration.

11. Consider the legendary encounter between **Alexander the Great and King Porus**. When the defeated Porus was brought before Alexander, the dialogue

that ensued was not merely between a victor and the vanquished, but a recognition of mutual dignity. When asked how he wished to be treated, Porus replied, “Like a King.” This historical moment underscores that even in the aftermath of conflict, there is space for a “settlement” based on mutual respect, a core tenet of why we choose arbitration over the raw power of prolonged litigation.

12. In ancient times, before conflicts escalated into war, rulers did not immediately resort to force. They sent messengers, individuals entrusted with the delicate responsibility of carrying proposals, conveying grievances, and exploring the possibility of peace. In the **Ramayana**, Angad was sent to Ravana’s court with a message of reconciliation, and in the **Mahabharata**, Lord Krishna himself undertook the role of a peace envoy, seeking to avert the war of Kurukshetra through dialogue and reason. These messengers were not mere carriers of words; they were representatives of restraint, dignity, and the hope that conflict could be resolved without destruction.

13. In the **modern world**, this role finds its reflection in **ambassadors and diplomatic representatives**. Just as ancient messengers stood between war and peace, ambassadors stand between conflict and cooperation, seeking resolution through dialogue rather than confrontation. In the realm of international arbitration, lawyers and arbitrators perform a similar function. They act as intermediaries between disputing parties, not merely to argue positions, but to facilitate structured resolution within a legal framework.

14. The medium has changed, the forums have evolved, and the language has become more technical, but the underlying principle remains constant: that dialogue must precede conflict, and reason must be exhausted before escalation. Where once a messenger carried the hope of peace across kingdoms, today the arbitrator carries it across jurisdictions.

15. In this evolving landscape, the role of lawyers must also be viewed with a broader perspective. Lawyers and judges are entrusted not only with interpreting statutes and precedents but also with fostering dialogue, promoting reconciliation, and shaping the ethical climate of society. The true essence of the legal profession lies in the ability to resolve conflicts while upholding justice. As our tradition reminds us, “यतो धर्मस्ततो जयः” that means where there is righteousness, there is victory. Fairness and justice are not optional virtues; they are the foundation on which legal systems endure.

16. As **Mahatma Gandhi** observed, “*The true function of a lawyer is to unite parties riven asunder.*” This elevates advocacy from a technical skill to a moral responsibility. Every legal professional carries the opportunity, and the obligation, to transform disputes into constructive dialogue, adversaries into collaborators, and conflict into resolution. In international arbitration, where parties may come from diverse legal, cultural, and commercial backgrounds, this responsibility becomes even more critical. The lawyer’s role is not merely to argue but to facilitate understanding and ensure fairness.

17. Lawyers and judges have long been regarded as **officers of the court**, but today there is a need to recognise them as **architects of peace**. The ultimate purpose of the legal system is not merely to adjudicate disputes but to preserve harmony in society. In arbitration, this principle is manifested most clearly: justice is not only a matter of law but also a matter of ethics, human relationships, and social cohesion.

18. Yet, we must speak candidly about the current state of affairs. The **Arbitration and Conciliation Act** was introduced with the promise of being a **speedy and cost-effective remedy**, an alternative to the perceived lethargy of traditional courts. It was meant to reduce delay, control expense, and provide a practical alternative to court litigation. However, we must ask ourselves: have we remained true to that vision?

19. Today, we see a worrying trend where **arbitration is becoming as time-consuming and expensive as the litigation it sought to replace**. Multiple challenges, repeated objections, and layered proceedings have made arbitration, in many cases, slower and more expensive than it was intended to be. We, the “lawmen”, lawyers and arbitrators alike, must reflect on whether we are over-judicializing a process meant to be flexible.

20. With multiple **layers of interference**, from Section 34 challenges to Section 37 appeals, and eventually the Special Leave Petition (SLP) route, the “finality” of an arbitral award often feels like a distant mirage. This is not

merely a procedural issue; it is a failure of purpose. When the law's own guardians turn arbitration into another round of litigation, the message behind arbitration gets weakened. We, as lawyers, arbitrators, and institutions, must ask ourselves whether we are preserving the promise of arbitration or quietly undoing it.

21. Justice attains its highest meaning not merely when it is imposed through authority but when it is accepted through fairness. As it has been said, “न्यायो धर्मस्य मूलं” which means justice is the foundation of righteousness. Disputes are rarely about statutes alone; they are about people, relationships, expectations, and trust. The wisdom of Swami Tulsidas reminds us, “परहित सरिस धरम नहि भाई” that is there is no duty greater than the welfare of others. This reminds us that professional success must always be anchored in social purpose, and that legal practice, at its best, aligns technical mastery with the promotion of societal good.

22. I must also acknowledge the **invaluable role played by the faculty members and organisers** who have made this event possible. Institutions provide infrastructure, but it is the guidance, vision, and mentorship of teachers that truly shape future legal professionals. Their patience, dedication, and commitment instil in students not just knowledge, but character. A classroom becomes a laboratory where young lawyers cultivate discipline, intellectual

curiosity, and ethical sensibilities. The mentorship received here will stay with participants long after the moot has concluded.

23.To the participants, I would say that while recognition and awards are important, they are not the sole measure of success. Every question asked by the Bench, every critique, every moment of reflection is an opportunity to learn and grow. Mooting teaches resilience, preparation, adaptability, and, above all, humility - the qualities that distinguish good lawyers from great ones. **The law is a dynamic discipline**, and a good **lawyer must remain a lifelong student**, continuously learning from experience, precedent, and society.

24.As you step into your careers, remember that law is a vocation, not merely a profession. The courtroom is a space where rights meet power, where justice seeks articulation, and where the rule of law is both tested and preserved. Your training in moots, mediation, and arbitration equips you not only to argue persuasively, but to advocate responsibly, with fairness, integrity, and a commitment to human welfare. The world of law is no longer confined by borders, and neither should your thinking be confined by narrowness.

25.As I conclude, I leave you with a thought from our ancient wisdom, “**समाच्छध्वं सम्वदध्वं**”, meaning *let us walk together and let us speak together*. Let this spirit guide not only your engagement with the law, but your engagement with society at large. The future of legal practice lies in

harmonising technical skill with ethical reflection, advocacy with dialogue, and jurisprudence with humanity. May each one of you strive not only to become successful lawyers, but just lawyers, upholding fairness, dignity, and justice at every step. May your arguments be sharp, your conscience clear, and your practice always guided by principles that transcend personal gain.

26. The true success of law lies not in the number of disputes it resolves, but in the number of conflicts it prevents.

27. I once again thank Dr. Ram Manohar Lohiya National Law University for this opportunity and wish all of you the very best in your future endeavours. May the lessons, insights, and experiences of this moot remain with you as guiding lights throughout your professional journey.

Thank you.