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Unfazed by Protests, Global Education Meet Begins in Thiruvananthapuram

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Former diplomat and vice-chairman of the Kerala State Higher Education Council greets William G Tierney, Professor of University of Southern California, who inaugurated the Global Education Meet in the absence of Chief Minister Oommen Chandy | B P Deepu

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THIRUVANANTHAPURAM: Though marred by violent protests by SFI activists, the two-day Global Education Meet (GEM) - aimed at expanding international cooperation in the state's higher education sector - began in the capital on Friday.

The meet, which was slated to begin at 9.30 am, could start only at 11.30 am when the protests outside the venue in Kovalam subsided. The formal inaugural session was scrapped as Chief Minister Oommen Chandy and Education Minister P K Abdu Rabb did not turn up, owing to the protests. Vice-chairman of Kerala State Higher Education Council (KSHEC), T P Sreenivasan, who was manhandled by SFI workers earlier in the day, remained unfazed during the meeting. The SFI workers were protesting against the alleged 'commercialisation of education' which they claimed would be facilitated through meetings such as GEM.

Stating that 'internationalisation of education' was not a new phenomenon,, Sreenivasan opined that India could not play its role in global affairs if it did not have an educational system that matched the best in the world.

William G Tierney, Professor of the University of Southern California, inaugurated the meeting in the absence of the chief minister. In his inaugural address, Tierney said that globalisation had greatly influenced education and research across the world.

He noted that public-private partnership in education projects was a time-consuming process. He also added that transparency and clarity should be ensured in regulations that governed educational projects.

The first session was on 'International Cooperation - The Global

Scenario and Prospects for Kerala'. Prof N R Madhava Menon, Chancellor of National University of Educational Planning and Administration, spoke during the session. The other sessions on the inaugural day were on 'International Cooperation - Models of Engagement in Higher Education' and 'FICCI Vision 2030 of Higher Education In Kerala'. The key speakers on day one of the meeting were: Utpal Ghosh, president, University of Petroleum and Energy Studies, Sabu S Padmadas, professor, University of Southampton, UK; Paul Fernandez S J, Vice-Chancellor, Xavier University of Hyderabad; Khadar Mangad, Vice-Chancellor, University of Kannur, and Muralee Thummarkkudy from the United Nations.

Rajan Saxena, Vice-Chancellor of NMIMS University, Suchindra Kumar, Director, Ernst and Young, C Raj Kumar, Vice-Chancellor, O P Jindal Global University, P Venkat Ragan, Vice-Chancellor, Amrita University, and Shobha Mishra Ghosh, Senior Director of FICCI, also participated in the sessions.

The meeting will end on Saturday. The concluding session is expected to discuss and adopt the 'Kovalam Declaration on Making Kerala a Hub for International Higher Education'.