We are well-connected but isolated in AI age: IISc dir

NITK CONVOCATION Tech Of Contemporary Times In Focus

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Mangaluru: With the advent of artificial intelligence, we are exceedingly well-connected with the world; nevertheless, paradoxically, we are experiencing profound isolation, said Govindan Rangarajan, director, Indian Institute of Science, Bengaluru. He was addressing the 22nd Convocation Ceremony (morning session) of the National Institute of Technology Karnataka Surathkal, on Saturday.

In his address, he focussed on artificial intelligence and its influence, which has gained paramount importance in contemporary times. After elaborating on the advantageous aspects of AI, he discussed how this technology is affecting the social dynamics of individuals.

"We all are connected to the world with smartphones but have forfeited our capability to interact with our friends and families offline. This is a substantial ramification of technology and AI. Social media and algorithms fabricate an illusion of connectivity, whilst research indicates escalating solitude. Families frequently gather yet engage with devices rather than each other," he said.

"Secondly, AI has influenced one's perception of truth. We may revert to believing solely what we personally witness. However, with the proliferation of deepfake, AI mi-

TECHNOLOGISTS: Govindan Rangarajan, director, IISc, addresses the 22nd Convocation Ceremony of NITK Surathkal on Saturday; Sindam Snikitha, one of the gold medalists, receives award from Bhujanga Rao, chairman, KIMS Foundation and Research Centre, Secunderabad

Prerit Sharma from the department of mechanical engineering secured four gold medals in MTech manufacturing engineering course

mic, and others, this notion is disputable now. AI mimic can deceive a person into believing they are conversing with their distressed child over the phone. But the actuality differs. Even empathy, traditionally a human characteristic, can be replicated by AI trained on human experiences. Rangarajan added that studies demonstrate AI-generated messages being perceived as more empathetic than doctors' empathetic messages to patients," he said.

"The counsel is to cherish human relationships, sustain direct family connections beyond social media, and cultivate creativity and critical thinking. These competencies will distinguish humans in an AI-dominant world," he told the young graduands.

Highlighting positive outcomes of AI, he said that it gained widespread attention after ChatGPT's introduction, approximately two years ago.

"Some experts consider it as revolutionary as the discovery of fire in human history. There is a tendency to overstate technology's immediate effects whilst underestimating its long-term influence. AI will significantly influence our activities. AI's influen-

ce extends to laboratory automation in Liverpool, potentially affecting chemistry students' traditional roles. Similarly, AI impacts coding, particularly entry-level programming, offering faster, more cost-effective solutions than human programmers," he said.

Hence, he asked the graduates to shift focus towards these abilities rather than basic coding. "Even chip design, with its countless configurations, now benefits from AI's superior capabilities in component placement and operational design," he added.