

## **Rev. Dr. Jose Joseph Pulavelil Memorial Lecture Series — Second Edition**

The second edition of the Rev. Dr. Jose Joseph Pulavelil Memorial Lecture Series was held on 9 October 2025 at Alphonsa College, Pala. The series, established in memory of Rev. Dr. Jose Joseph Pulavelil, former Head of the Department of English and Bursar of the college, has quickly grown into one of the institution's most anticipated annual events, offering a space where public intellectuals and activists engage directly with students and faculty on questions that matter beyond the classroom.

This year, the college was honoured to welcome Medha Patkar as the chief guest. One of India's most recognised voices in the struggle for democratic rights and environmental justice, Patkar has spent decades standing alongside communities displaced by large development projects, most notably through the Narmada Bachao Andolan.

Her address, titled "Challenges Before the New Generation for Democratic Development," was not a lecture in the conventional sense. It was closer to a conversation. She spoke about the growing distance between the idea of democracy and its practice, and what it means for young people today to inherit institutions that are under considerable strain. She drew on her own years of grassroots work to argue that democratic development cannot be measured by economic indicators alone; it must be judged by how a society treats its most vulnerable, and whether ordinary people have a genuine say in decisions that affect their lives.

The programme reinforced what the first edition inaugurated by Dr. Shashi Tharoor in September 2024 had begun: a lecture series that takes seriously the idea that a college is not separate from the world outside its gates, but is in fact one of the places where that world gets examined and questioned. It was a fitting tribute to the memory of Rev. Dr. Jose Joseph Pulavelil, who believed, through his years of service to the institution, that education and engagement with society are not two different things but one continuing effort.

