

**ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA,
SHRI RAM NATH KOVIND
ON THE OCCASION OF PRESENTATION OF NATIONAL
GEOSCIENCE AWARDS**

New Delhi, May 16, 2018

1. I am happy to be here to present the National Geoscience Awards for the year 2017. I extend my congratulations to the recipients of the Awards for their excellence in different fields of geoscience. You have truly helped us understand our country and map our resources better, and you have contributed to our socio-economic development and to the nation building process.
2. This set of Awards was originally instituted in 1966 by the Union Ministry of Mines as the National Mineral Awards. In 2009, the ambit was expanded to the National Geoscience Awards, in recognition of the larger role played by technologists and researchers in this domain. These Awards take forward a rich legacy of exploring and mining of resources in India. This is a legacy that goes back thousands of years, to the earliest days of our civilisation.
3. In the modern era, the Geological Survey of India, the leading geoscientific survey organisation in the country, was founded in 1851. It was the world's second such survey organisation. And its pioneering efforts have run in parallel with the march of science and technology in contemporary India.
4. There have been several landmarks on this march. In the 19th century, such efforts led to the discovery of oil in Assam. The conceptualisation of the ancient supercontinent of Gondwana land – to which the Indian land mass once belonged – owed much to geological studies in India. The discovery of new minerals in India as well as geotechnical studies carried out as

part of the preparation for large dams and multipurpose projects also added to our wealth of knowledge.

5. Today, the implications of geosciences are not limited to just prospecting mines. Whether it is to build railway lines or communication corridors; make assessments for river linking projects or investigate natural hazards such as earthquakes and landslides; manage our coasts and deserts in a time of climate change; or add value to agriculture and help develop new urban centres – the applications of geosciences are extremely diverse and extremely useful.
6. India is one of the fastest growing major economies in the world. Our GDP as well as our larger developmental process is set to accelerate over the coming decades. The mining and mineral sector is poised to grow as a result of this expansion of the economy. At the same time, it will also be a driver of economic expansion. As we build more cities and houses and commercial centres, and create state-of-the-art infrastructure, our use of key resources will rise. As is well known, India's per capita consumption of many resources and commodities is still very low by global standards and there is room to grow. This will require high-quality research initiatives for sustainable, ecologically-friendly resource generation – and meaningful investment in technological innovation in the mining sector.
7. That is why reforms in the mining sector have been pushed by the government over the past four years. These reforms, including amendments to existing laws and establishing a more equitable system of royalties, are starting to show results. A number of mineral blocks are being explored. Steps taken by the Ministry of Mines have led to identification of promising mineral blocks in states for auction. These measures will go a long way in enhancing the financial health of our states – and allow them to spread the benefits from mining of resources. Eventually, it is local communities that must benefit from the discovery, extraction and development of mineral resources.

8. We must be mindful of the human side of mining. Many of our mineral resources are found in regions that have been the home of tribal communities for generations. It is important that these communities are part of the prosperity that the mining economy creates. Rehabilitation and resettlement of our tribal brothers and sisters, where these may be necessary, must be done in a sensitive and satisfactory manner.
9. Similarly, the mining process itself must incorporate the best available safety and health mechanisms for mining workers as well as for their families, who often stay in close proximity to mining sites. The environmental impact of mining and resource extraction and processing should be minimised to the degree possible. If this requires using technologies that add to extraction costs, then we cannot shy away from that. India must mine more – but India must also mine better and in a sustainable manner.
10. In this context, I am glad that some of the Award winners today are being recognised for new discoveries of deposits that will add to the mineral resources of the country. We must also be alive to the potential of our offshore resource base. Exploration by our marine geoscientists must be encouraged and pursued with renewed vigour. We have a long coastline and a sizeable marine zone that holds many treasures. So far we have scratched the surface.

Ladies and Gentlemen

11. Social expectations from our geoscientific community have increased significantly in recent years. With their deep understanding of landform dynamics, geoscientists have an important role to play in enhancing agricultural productivity and farmer incomes; in providing a bedrock to the Smart Cities initiative; and in helping our fellow citizens fight the challenge of water scarcity, which has emerged as a pressing problem.
12. All this places a great responsibility on the shoulders of our talented and hardworking geoscientists. I am confident that the standards you have set yourselves – and the standards that have

been honoured today – will be a launch-pad for even greater accomplishments. I am optimistic that you will continue to deploy your knowledge and technical skills in the service of our country and our people.

13. I have been told that in March 2020, less than two years from now, India will host the 36th International Geological Congress. This is the biggest geological conference in the world and all relevant stakeholders and institutions will need to pool their resources to make it a memorable occasion. I wish you the very best as you make plans for this grand event. Please use it as a stage to showcase India's appreciable progress in geoscience. And please use the approach of that event as an inspiration to achieve even great glory for yourselves, for geoscience as a discipline – and for our nation.

Thank you
Jai Hind!