

**ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA,
SHRI RAM NATH KOVIND
AT THE ANNUAL CONVOCATION OF IIT ROORKEE**

Roorkee, October 4, 2019

1. It gives me pleasure to be delivering the Convocation Address at one of India's oldest and pioneering engineering institute. For the graduating students, this occasion represents a major milestone. I congratulate you on this seminal occasion. You are leaving this historic campus for the excitement of a career in a world full of opportunities.
2. Today is also a proud day for your parents and families. They have sacrificed a lot to make your future brighter and provided you emotional and financial support in all your endeavours. I congratulate them on your success.
3. The success of the graduating students is also a tribute to the faculty of IIT Roorkee, which is among the best and the brightest in our country. You have nurtured malleable minds into mature professionals. My good wishes to all of you.

Ladies and gentlemen,

4. This institute possesses a rich history and heritage. Founded in the year 1847 as the Roorkee College, this institute has made immense contribution to our nation's scientific progress. In 1949, it became independent India's first Engineering University. In 2001, it was declared as an 'institute of national importance' and brought into the fold of the IIT system.
5. After independence, several iconic engineering projects were executed by the engineers and professionals coming from this institute. Prof. A.N. Khosla, who was conferred with a Padma Bhushan and later on Padma Vibhushan, was a student of this great institute. He was responsible for the

designs of Bhakra and Hirakud dam projects. He also contributed to public life as a Parliamentarian and later on as Governor of Odisha.

6. Another former student, Prof. Jai Krishna set up the country's first inter-disciplinary school on Earthquake Engineering and developed the Indian Standards for Earthquake Resistant Design. He was also conferred with the Padma Bhushan. The list of your illustrious alumni is a long one. They have distinguished themselves as corporate leaders, entrepreneurs, civil servants, technocrats, researchers and so on. Many of the alumni of IIT-Roorkee have been nation-builders in true sense.
7. I believe that the alumni of this great institute can and should contribute to their alma mater. They were fortunate to receive world-class education which was substantially funded by the tax-payer, that is, by the nation. There is a moral obligation to pay back, and to help those less privileged – in whichever manner the individual prefers. It would be best of course if this process of paying back enriches education and scholarship at the grassroots of our society.
8. The obligation is on IIT Roorkee authorities to involve and invite alumni, many of whom are well placed in other universities or in industry, to come back and teach here - even if for short periods or for specific courses. If procedures need to be simplified to achieve this, then efforts must be made.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

9. Institutions such as IIT Roorkee are not just centres of education. They are also hubs of innovation and creative ideas. And it is research, innovation and creative ideas that will help us achieve our national goals as well as address the larger concerns confronting humanity today. We have set ourselves a goal of becoming a 5-trillion dollar economy by 2025. We are committed to achieving Sustainable

Development Goals adopted by the United Nations. We also wish to play our role in addressing global concerns such as climate change.

10. In the long-term, our success lies in developing a culture of enterprise and ideas. We must nurture innovation and creativity. And I am happy to note that IIT Roorkee is doing just that. The TIDES Business Incubator here supports start-ups and early-stage companies working on emerging technologies. Creative thinking on campus has been encouraged by doing away with hierarchy among academics and by giving students a representation in academic bodies and decision-making.

Dear Students,

11. Today, more than two thousand of you will graduate. I have been informed that over 1700 undergraduate and post-graduate degrees as well as 309 doctoral degrees will be conferred. Apart from those graduating in engineering, there are students who will graduate in fields such as Management, Economics and Psychology. I am told that the number of PhDs being awarded today is the highest ever for the institute. Such a thrust on research is indeed a healthy sign.

12. Researchers here are working on technologies and products that contribute to the well being of their fellow citizens. These include working in cutting edge fields such as nanotechnology, Artificial Intelligence, Computer Vision and Bio-materials. Some of your recent achievements include development of:

- I. Inter-linked block masonry technology for rapid construction of earthquake-proof houses. I am told that NITI Ayog has recommended construction of a model house in Uttarakhand using this technology.

- II. Low cost solar cells that use different materials and rechargeable batteries for storing renewable energy. This is consistent with our national goal of using more renewable and clean energy.
- III. Smart-grid technology that leverages advances made in ICT to facilitate flow of Energy and Information. This will help us achieve reliable and stable power supply and reduce energy losses.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

- 13. I have referred to the technological and economic contribution of IIT Roorkee in our national development. I would also like to mention some of its other initiatives.
- 14. Earlier, I am told, that different hostel timings applied to boys and girls. But recently these have been made same. This is allowing girl students to work in their departments, labs, library in the same manner as boy students. This is an example of giving girl students an equal opportunity to excel. I am sure this will positively impact the contributions made by girl students and boost their self-confidence.
- 15. Such steps will encourage girl students to take up scientific and technical education. Presently, the proportion of girl students in our scientific and technical institutes is lower than desirable. In my capacity as President of India, I get an opportunity to attend convocations of many universities. And often I find that girl students outshine the boys. We have to take necessary steps to improve the enrolment of our girl students in scientific and technical institutes of higher learning. When this happens, our scientific achievements will become even more wholesome and desirable.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

16. During the Governors' Conference in June 2018, I had suggested that Universities could consider adopting 'Universities Social Responsibility' or USR on the lines of Corporate Social Responsibility that is CSR. I am happy to know that students here actively participate in community work. I have been informed that you had identified five villages in Uttarakhand and work with the villagers to address their problems related to water management, sanitation, skill development and so on. Also, as part of 'Swachhta Hee Seva' campaign, students from here participated in a 'Ganga Cleaning Drive' at Ganga Ghat in Haridwar and Roorkee. With such initiatives you are putting USR into action.
17. I am confident that IIT Roorkee, its faculty, alumni, students and graduates, will continue to make notable contributions for the development and well-being of our nation. I once again commend all the students graduating today and wish each one of you a happy, challenging and rewarding future. In particular, I offer my congratulations to the award winners at this convocation.

Thank you,
Jai Hind!