

**ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA,
SHRI RAM NATH KOVIND
AT THE CONVOCATION CEREMONY OF NIT ROURKELA**

Rourkela, March 21, 2021

It gives me immense pleasure to be here in the 18th convocation of NIT Rourkela. I feel delighted to know that NIT Rourkela is celebrating its Diamond Jubilee this year.

This area of today's Odisha has been immensely rich in history and culture. It has been the cradle of scientific approach since early times. Built about 800 years ago, the Sun Temple at Konark is an example of perfect blend of art and science. I am looking forward to my visit to the temple tomorrow. It is listed among UNESCO's World Heritage Sites in India.

Odisha is associated with the rebuilding of our nation after independence. It was here in Rourkela that one of my illustrious predecessors, Dr Rajendra Prasad, the first President of India, dedicated to the nation the first blast furnace of a large Steel Plant in India. As one of the first industrial urban centres in India, the city has kept pace with modernization.

As the second-largest Government run Technology Institute in Eastern India, NIT Rourkela has made significant contribution to the field of engineering and technology. For over six decades, this engineering college has been enriching the pool of technical professionals in the country. In 2002, it was given the status of National Institute of Technology. I am told that the young students are being exposed to innovative methods of providing engineering solutions to the issues facing our society and the country.

I am pleased to know that NIT Rourkela has students from all over India and also from other countries. I am pleased to know that NIT Rourkela has students from 33 out of the total 36 states and union territories of India. I am told that students of 17 different countries are also enrolled in various academic disciplines. Thus the community of over 7000 students studying in this beautiful 700 acre campus represents rich diversity. It increases cross-pollination of learning and promotes understanding between different cultures. It also strengthens people-to-people ties between nations.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Its 25,000 plus strong alumni has a large number of corporate leaders, academic and research institutes in India and abroad. I am sure that the alumni of this prestigious institute will be a source of inspiration for the students here. I am sure that the students graduating today will strengthen the rich legacy of this institute.

Dear students,

Graduation is an important stepping stone in your life. I am sure all of you have worked hard to reach this stage today. I am sure you are eager and excited to contribute to the world and bring about change in the lives of the people. Today, you are taking countless memories with you. I have been told that your vibrant campus is full of extra-curricular activities. There are large number of clubs engaged in debating, dramatics, music and other cultural activities. I have been also told about some interesting names like Mavericks and Pantomime. I have also been informed about the Canteen which is interestingly named as HEXAGON. And the other canteen with a serious name “Homi Bhabha canteen” has been naturally abbreviated as ‘HB canteen’ for popular usage.

But beyond the little joys and sorrows you take away from here, there is a huge responsibility on each one of you to pay back to the society and country which have contributed to your education and success so far. Some of you would be joining job responsibilities while others may pursue higher studies. The stage of life in which you find yourself today is usually full of dreams and aspirations on the one hand, and uncertainties and apprehensions on the other. This is also the time to make major life decisions – starting a new job, pursuing your dreams, supporting your family, or starting a new one. While doing all this, I urge you all to introspect - what are the values and principles you stand for? What is the kind of career you want to pursue? By far the most important point of introspection is what kind of person you want to become? I am sure everyone wants to be a good citizen, a citizen who always keeps the interest of the country upper most in his mind.

I would suggest that throughout your life you should always look at the famous talisman of Mahatma Gandhi. “Recall the face of the poorest and the weakest man or woman whom you may have seen, and ask yourself, if the step you contemplate is going to be of any use to her. Will she gain anything by it? Will it restore her to a control over her own life and destiny?”

I advise you to never judge your success only in terms of material gains. You don't have to limit yourself by the pressures of conventional notions of success and societal pressures. You need to figure out what you really want to do in your life. Choose to do what gives you satisfaction and meaningfulness. Do what takes you closer to your aspirations. Do what makes your families proud of you. Plan for yourself a fruitful and productive path ahead.

Dear students,

This is also a moment of joy and satisfaction for your families and friends, guardians and mentors who have been of immense support in your journey. I congratulate all the degree recipients and medal winners present here today. I am told that out of 7116 students studying here about 1518 i.e. about 21 per cent are girl students. I noticed that out of seven gold medals today, three have gone to our girl students. As the President of India, I happen to be the Visitor of about 150 central institutions. In most of the convocations I attend across the country, I notice that our girls are outshining our boys and winning more gold medals in liberal arts, humanities, medical sciences, law and several other areas. This is indeed a heartening trend and reflect the potential of our daughters.

However, it has been observed that the enrolment of women in technical and scientific disciplines is low. According to a recent survey, enrollment of women in Engineering and Technical Institutes across India is only about 20 per cent. Our girls should be encouraged to pursue technical education and excel in the same manner as they do in other areas. The country needs more of our girls to pursue higher education, especially in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics. Growth and excellence of women in technical areas will add a new dimension to our national development. It will promote gender empowerment at the higher levels in the field of science and technology. It will help women break the

glass-ceiling in one of the most important spheres in the world of 21st century.

Ladies and Gentlemen and my dear students,

A university and institution must contribute towards empowering the community in its surroundings. I have been advocating for “Universities’ Social Responsibility” in line with “Corporate Social Responsibility”. I am happy to note that NIT Rourkela has adopted 5 villages, as part of ‘Unnat Bharat Abhiyan’. I am told that NIT Rourkela is upgrading science laboratories and providing computer education in these villages. I am also told that a Poverty Alleviation Research Center at this campus works for the less-privileged people of Kalahandi, Balangir and Koraput region of Odisha. I appreciate you all for these commendable initiatives.

I interacted with Vice Chancellors and Directors of various Central Universities and Institutions as part of the deliberations prior to implementation of the National Education Policy 2020. The policy envisions that engineering institutions should move towards more holistic and multi-disciplinary education with increased emphasis on arts and humanities. I am happy to learn that NIT Rourkela has already adopted this approach to a certain extent. I am sure that you will take the process further and will also work towards implementing other salient features of the National Education Policy. One of the objectives of the National Education Policy is to make India a global knowledge super power in 21st century. Institutions like NIT Rourkela have to play a major role in achieving these national aims.

I once again congratulate all of you and wish you a happy, successful and bright future. I also extend my best wishes to the faculty members, teaching and non-teaching staff, and the family members and guardians of the graduating students on this momentous day.

Thank you,
Jai Hind!