

**ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA,
SHRI RAM NATH KOVIND
AT THE CONVOCATION OF THE RAJIV GANDHI UNIVERSITY
OF HEALTH SCIENCES, KARNATAKA**

Bengaluru, February 7, 2021

I am happy to be here to deliver the convocation address on the occasion of the silver jubilee year of the Rajiv Gandhi University of Health Sciences.

I extend my heartiest congratulations to all the students receiving their degrees. Some of you have received special awards and medals, and therefore, deserve special appreciation. I noticed that out of the 12 gold medals I gave just now, eight were won by our daughters. I am told that out of the 111 gold medal winners of this convocation, 87 are our daughters. This is almost 80 per cent and is a tremendous achievement. I am happy that women are leading our country into the future in all fields including medical sciences. I specially congratulate parents, faculty members and administrative staff for making this possible.

What you teach, learn and practise as students of Health Sciences are among the most important branches of knowledge. At any rate, they are the noblest of sciences that help alleviate pain and save lives. As you know, ancient India generated a highly developed knowledge base for health-care. They called it Ayurveda, which means science of life, or science of longevity.

Your subject has been arguably the most important branch of knowledge during the past one year. Covid-19 has inflicted agony and misery of unprecedented levels around the globe. We are proud of our doctors and paramedics who rose to the challenge, even if it meant a great risk to their own lives. Truly, India's measured response to the pandemic has saved countless lives. It is in this context that the role of your institution becomes eminently important. I am glad to learn that this university trained over two lakh health-care professionals, from doctors and nurses to administrators and hospital facility providers, to better respond to the outbreak. This

campaign, I am sure, contributed immensely in creating a uniform response to provide quality care to Covid-19 patients.

Of late, health scientists like you have gained the upper hand on the Novel Coronavirus. Several vaccines have been produced in record time. Responding to the call of 'Atma-Nirbhar Bharat', a self-reliant India, our nation has not only manufactured the vaccine but has also reached out to other nations to provide the same. The largest vaccination drive in history is underway in India.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am happy to note that this esteemed university, with one of the largest networks of affiliated institutions in the world, has led many innovations in the field of health-care education. It has emerged as a globally credible brand due to the sustained efforts made by the leaders of this university since its inception.

I am told that this large health sciences university in India has more than 800 affiliated institutions, covering a wide range of courses in health sciences including Ayurveda, Unani, Naturopathy and Yogic Sciences, Homeopathy as well as Pharmacy. This is indeed a holistic vision of health-care.

The university is also at the fore-front of advancing knowledge and skills through research and development, and extension activities. For this purpose, it has joined hands with select institutes of excellence in India and abroad.

In today's convocation, about 28,000 under-graduates, 6,000 post-graduates and 200 candidates of super-specialty, fellowship, certificate courses and PhD are being awarded their degrees. The numbers are very impressive indeed. It is heartening to note that today, the total pool of health-care professionals in India goes up substantially.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Health-care delivery in India is poised to undergo a change at all stages – prevention, diagnosis and treatment. No single entity in the health-care sector can deliver results and achieve outcomes. The evolution of the sector calls for active involvement and participation

of all stakeholders and the use of innovation to bridge intent and execution.

Moreover, the first major pandemic in over a century has taught us to be better prepared for unforeseen public health crises. Though Covid-19 seems to be one-of-a-kind health-crisis that happens rarely, a section of scientists has warned us to be prepared for similar challenges ahead. The world has, let us hope, learnt the right lessons. In the post-Covid phase, the world will have to pay more attention to public health-care. While the priority there has to be the needs of the under-privileged, we have seen a crisis that cut across class and geography. But the pandemic has taught the world that one cannot be safe if others are at risk. It is a lesson in universal brotherhood.

That spirit, incidentally, finds beautiful expression in what is called the Universal Prayer. As a part of it, we pray:

सर्वे भवन्तु सुखिनः, सर्वे सन्तु निरामयाः।

[Sarve Bhavantu Sukhinah, Sarve Santu Niraamaayah]

May all be happy, May all be free from illness.

It is in striving to make 'all free from illness' that your will find your true calling.

Dear Students,

Today is a momentous day in your life. May God bless you all in your career as healers. I also pray that God gives you the wisdom to always realise that you are in a very noble profession that deals with human life and requires the highest degree of personal integrity.

Today, however, is not the day when your education ends; only a phase of it ends today, and real education begins now. Medical science is growing by leaps and bounds, at ever increasing pace. The rapid growth of research and technological innovations in medical sciences has enhanced the quantum of knowledge manifold. The understanding of human health and behaviour of a virulent pathogen was de-coded in a matter of days, thanks to incredible advancement in medical sciences. That is, of course, a

welcome development, and during about 13 months of the pandemic, we have witnessed how quickly scientists were able to understand the virus and devise ways to control its spread.

You are a student for the rest of your life which demands genuine humility from you. From today, you are also a practitioner. Your knowledge and skills are going to provide people relief from disease and even save life. That is why people consider doctors and allied professionals as angels on earth. You will learn to honour their trust and respect. You will strive to reach out to all those people you can help.

Your entry into this noble profession opens up for you, unforeseen and unprecedented opportunities to serve humanity. It depends on you as to how you make the best use of these opportunities. In the Union Budget announced this week on the 1st February, the area of 'health and well-being' has been recognised as one of the six crucial pillars of Atma-Nirbhar Bharat. Boosting health-care infrastructure in the country is being given strong emphasis. Effective utilisation of this national resource will be possible only with your active support and contribution.

The demand for health-care services in our country will undoubtedly keep growing and the range of health-care issues you will be addressing in India will be among the broadest in the entire world. If you can keep updating your knowledge and skills by learning from the latest advances across the globe, you can certainly emerge as the leaders in your profession. I also expect you to become knowledge-creators for the global medical fraternity.

I commend the Chancellor of the university as well as the state government headed by Shri B.S. Yediyurappa for guiding this outstanding institution. I wish the university a great future ahead. I once again wish you all the very best in the future.

Thank you,
Jai Hind!