

**ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA,
SHRI RAM NATH KOVIND
AT THE 30TH ANNUAL CONVOCATION OF GOA UNIVERSITY**

Goa, July 7, 2018

1. This is my first visit to Goa since taking office as President of India and I am extremely happy that it has coincided with the 30th annual convocation of Goa University. Higher education is a theme that obsesses me and is an area of priority for my Presidency. It is appropriate then that my visit to Goa, one of our country's most beautiful and enlightened states, has begun at this leading University.
2. I understand it is the fourth time that the President of India is attending this convocation. My illustrious predecessors, Dr A.P.J. Abdul Kalam in 2001, and Smt Pratibha Patil in 2009, had come here before me. In 2017, Shri Pranab Mukherjee had graced the event. This year it is my turn. You will accept that it is very unusual for the President of India to be the chief guest at the convocation of a university two years in a row. In the normal course, a gap of a few years is maintained.
3. Yet, when the invitation reached Rashtrapati Bhavan, I made it a point to accept. This reflects my personal affection for the University and of course for Goa itself. I must also acknowledge the personal request of the Governor of Goa and Chancellor of this University, Smt Mridula Sinha. She has been very keen for me to be here.
4. A convocation is a culmination of a journey as well as a moment of renewal for a university, its students, professors and teachers, administrators, parent body and others who are part of the university community. This year close to 9,000 students of Goa University are being awarded degrees, ranging from undergraduate degrees to PhDs. The graduates come from faculties as diverse as literature, medicine, environmental studies and fine arts.

5. I offer my congratulations to all those graduating today. This success is a result of your efforts, and also a tribute to the hard work and sacrifices of your professors and your parents and family members. I would also like to congratulate the winner of the Swachhtam Mahavidyalaya Samman, awarded to the college with the cleanest campus. The initiative for such an award is very creditable and true to the ideals of the Swachh Bharat mission.
6. Travelling across the country, I have been struck by the tenacity and academic outcomes of girl students. This is a game changer for our society, and Goa's promotion of girls' education is a model for other states. The performance of girl students at Goa University is an example. Sixty per cent of students here are girls, and 63 per cent of the toppers and medallists at today's ceremony are girls. I am told that of the 67 gold medals being awarded today, 41 have been won by girl students. This is an outstanding achievement for not just your university and for Goa, but for the entire country.
7. I would request the young women as well as the young men graduating today to bear in mind that access to higher education is still a privilege in India. It is the contributions of countless citizens, many of whom will not even know you personally, that sustain institutions such as Goa University. As you go into the world and build your careers do remember that – and do try and give back to society, in whatever manner you can or wish to. Education is empowerment. It not only helps us to know our world better, but also enables us to think of ways of changing the world for the better.

Ladies and Gentlemen, and Dear Students

8. If we consider the higher education scenario in the country, there are three indicators to note. First, there is a greater emphasis by the government and by other stakeholders on making higher education inclusive and expansive.

9. India has the world's third-largest education system – but this also serves the world's largest youth population. India has made impressive gains in widening the higher education ecosystem. The very fact that many new institutions, including Central Universities and IITs, are being established in hitherto underserved locations illustrates the national commitment to taking higher education to the masses.
10. Second, expanding quantity has to be complemented by quality. This is where the greatest challenge exists. As technology advances and societies grapple with the implications of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, higher education has to adapt to new expectations. It has to be sensitive to inter-disciplinary and cross-disciplinary pathways without losing sight of the core of disciplinary knowledge.
11. Quality has to be visible not just in the content of what is being taught and learnt, but also in how it is being taught and learnt. Institutions and initiatives such as NAAC and NIRF are crucial in this regard and help us benchmark universities. However, in the end a university has to compete not so much against others but against itself. The pursuit of excellence requires individuals and institutions to be self-starters.
12. The third factor is that of resources and their mobilisation. While there has been a traditional dependence on the government, one must be alive to fiscal constraints as well as to the ever-growing needs of universities. An emphasis on self-mobilisation is called for. Here, to the extent possible and without in any manner compromising on the integrity of academic endeavours, I would nudge you towards focused partnerships with industry and other external institutions. It is necessary to promote a culture of entrepreneurship among students and researchers. There are ample case studies from university campuses across the world, and I am confident Goa University too can march down this road.

13. Every faculty, every discipline and every subject in a university has its own stature. Even so, for reasons of geography, cultural familiarity or scholarly legacy, universities do specialise. They offer expertise that is not easily available elsewhere.
14. At Goa University, there are two areas of knowledge where you can guide the nation, and must build on the foundations you have already laid. My first reference is to the Department of Portuguese and Lusophone Studies. I am told this Department is the only such in the subcontinent. It offers us an opportunity to gain insight into and build networks with Lusophone countries that extend from Africa to South America. And of course it offers us an opportunity to strengthen relations with Portugal and the European Union, which is a very valuable partner.
15. My second reference is to the Department of Marine Sciences. It has several branches of study, including physical oceanography, marine geology and marine biology, among others. The potential for this Department is near limitless. India is surrounded by the ocean. It has a long coastline and a substantial marine zone. Nevertheless we have been slow in realising the wealth of the ocean, and in developing our blue economy. From marine biodiversity and its uses to energy sources and minerals in the sea, there is so much we can work on. India can be a leader in this field and I see Goa University as a fulcrum of our blue economy knowledge enterprise. I would urge you to think and strategise in this direction.

Ladies and Gentlemen, and Dear Students

16. Though relatively young, your University has already made a mark in the country. Goa University has a liberal and cosmopolitan character, in keeping with the ethos of the state. This is a major strength and it should not get diluted. I must make special mention of the Visiting Research Professorship Programme that is now in its sixth year. This is fairly unique in

our country. It has facilitated a number of scholars, practitioners and artistes of international repute to come to Goa University and share their knowledge and experience. Other universities can learn from this open-door approach.

17. With those words, I once more congratulate students graduating today. I wish you and your University the very best for the future.

Thank you
Jai Hind!