

**ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA,
SHRI RAM NATH KOVIND
ON THE OCCASION OF THE PLATINUM JUBILEE
CELEBRATION OF KARNATAK LAW SOCIETY AND
RAJALAKAHAMGOUDA LAW COLLEGE**

Belagavi, September 15, 2018

1. This is my first visit to Belagavi after assuming office as the President of India and I am glad it has coincided with the platinum jubilee commemoration of the Karnatak Law Society and Raja Lakhamgouda Law College. Higher education is a subject very close to my heart and a priority for my Presidency. My own background has been in the legal fraternity – and for me, law has been not just a profession but a passion.
2. The event today is blessed with eminent legal and public minds. The Governor of the state, Shri Vajubhai Vala, is himself a lawyer by training. I must also acknowledge the efforts of the Chief Minister, Shri H. D. Kumaraswamy. He came personally to invite me for this event and was very keen that I make it.
3. It is fitting that the Karnatak Law Society and this College are located in Belagavi. This is a city with a rich history of learning and wisdom. Thousands of years ago, it was home to Jain monks who brought with them spiritualism and scholarship. In 1892, Swami Vivekananda visited Belagavi. I am told that the idea of his participation at the World Parliament of Religions in Chicago occurred to him here. As is well known, Swamiji made a big impact in Chicago – and we recently celebrated the 125th anniversary of his address there. At the Parliament of Religions, Swamiji had said: “Man is not travelling from error to truth, but from truth to truth, from lower to higher truth.” This is so meaningful in the context of education.

4. Two days ago, we observed Ganesh Chaturthi, a festival cherished across the country. During our struggle for Independence, it came to be associated with the venerable Bal Gangadhar Tilak. I am happy to learn that Lokmanya Tilak inaugurated the Home Rule League here in 1916. Over the years, Belagavi has emerged as a symbol of our nation and a notable home for our military community, our economic assets and, of course, for our cultural and classical music traditions.
5. The founding of the Karnatak Law Society in 1939 was a part of this illustrious legacy. The Society was the brainchild of nationalist and socially committed lawyers who thought for the country. They created this Society and the Law College with the noble intention of training young minds and budding lawyers – and of promoting the rule of law and governance by laws. As has been mentioned, the founders were skilled lawyers themselves, with lucrative practices. Yet, they selflessly devoted time to the cause of education and even taught in the Law College free of charge. I must also pay my tribute to Shrimant Raja Lakhamgouda Sirdesai of Vantmuri. He donated a then sizeable sum of one lakh rupees to the Karnatak Law Society and allowed its dreams to be realised. The Law College was named in his honour.
6. The law of nature teaches us discipline and orderliness. The law that humans write is the basis of civilisation. Law is not a career, it is a calling. Much, much more than a means to earn a livelihood, it is a mechanism to assist the cause of justice, to help the poorest and most unfortunate among us, and to build a society and nation defined by adherence to rules, norms and fairness. Advocates and judges are, in the ultimate analysis, seekers of truth. That is why so many lawyers were part of the national movement. As we all remember, the Father of the Nation, Mahatma Gandhi, and the Chief Architect of our Constitution, Babasaheb B.R. Ambedkar, were both lawyers with a spirit of public service. And the Constitution Babasaheb Ambedkar gave us continues to be the modern scripture of our national identity.

7. Today, the Karnatak Law Society has come a long way. It runs 14 institutions, ranging from an institute of technology to a management college to many others, and has a total student strength of 14000. Its alumni base is both impressive and expansive. 50000 old students are engaged in professions and activities across the world. The Law College itself has thrown up a galaxy of legal minds. These include two former Chief Justices of the Supreme Court of India - Justice E.S. Venkataramiah and Justice S. Rajendra Babu – as well as the Attorney General of India, Shri K.K. Venugopal. Any law college would be proud of such renowned students – and any student would be proud of such a renowned law college.

Ladies and Gentlemen

8. Our country is in the midst of dramatic change. Decisions we take today will influence not just our immediate future – but perhaps the rest of the century. We have a young and talented population and an exciting economy, brimming with opportunities. In the previous quarter, our GDP grew at 8.2 per cent and this gives an indication of our pace as well as our potential. We live in an age of technology and of entrepreneurship. The Fourth Industrial Revolution is upon us. It is changing how we live and work. It is also changing aspirations of our young people. Our educational institutions have to become compatible with this quest for innovation and excellence. They have to become compatible with the 21st century.
9. The government is taking steps to facilitate this. The process of overhauling the regulatory framework for higher education, and upgrading it to meet contemporary needs, is underway. I am confident it will bear fruit soon. Graded autonomy has been granted to 60 top universities. A decision has also been taken to promote 20 institutions of higher education as “institutes of eminence” – to grant them recruitment and curricula flexibility in order to reach best-in-class global

standards. After a competitive process, the first few of these institutes of eminence were announced recently.

10. These are avenues that the institutions of the Karnatak Law Society must exploit. Belagavi is a well-known industrial hub. A hundred years ago, it became famous for making vaccines. In the mid-20th century, its foundries and metal industry contributed to building our national economy. Today, an emerging aerospace industry promises jobs and prosperity. The educational institutions here have to merge into this economic environment – and create a conducive knowledge eco-system.
11. Speaking at a law college and in the presence of such illustrious legal and judicial figures, it is appropriate that I touch upon the subject of legal education. The teaching of law, the very evolution of law, amid rapid technological development is critical. The time span for an innovation to take place, and for its mass application in society, is shortening very sharply. This will throw up numerous challenges for law – in areas such as genetic engineering, bioethics and artificial intelligence, among others. The legal profession has to respond quickly. I trust our leading legal minds will put their thoughts into such matters. The Chief Justice of India, Shri Dipak Misra, will be retiring shortly after a distinguished career. While I wish him a happy retirement, I do hope that he will continue to guide public thinking on such emerging matters.
12. With those words, I once again congratulate the Karnatak Law Society and all its stakeholders, especially the student community here, both past and present, on reaching the platinum milestone. I hope – in fact I am certain – that the best lies ahead of you!

Thank you
Jai Hind!