

**ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA,  
SHRI RAM NATH KOVIND AT THE 3RD FOUNDATION DAY OF  
NATIONAL LAW UNIVERISTY ODISHA**

**Cuttack, March 17, 2018**

1. I am glad to be here for the third Foundation Day Lecture of the National Law University, Odisha. This is one of 19 National Law Schools in our country, the first such institution having been founded in 1986 as the National Law School of India, Bangalore. Over the past three decades, this cohort of law universities has revolutionised legal education in India.
2. The National Law University, Odisha, is one of the younger and more dynamic members of this group. Set up a decade ago, in 2008, it builds on the legacy of several legal luminaries of this state, beginning with the pioneering advocate and nation builder Madhusudan Das and extending to the current Chief Justice of India, Justice Dipak Misra. This institution has become a major centre for legal education in not just Odisha but across our country. It is recognised as a centre of excellence, attracting students from, I have been told, 25 of India's 29 states. It can be said that today I have the privilege of addressing a mini-India.
3. The modernisation of the legal profession has kept pace with the rise in opportunities for law graduates and young lawyers. While litigation in the courtroom remains at the core of legal practice, a law graduate today finds many avenues open to him or her that were simply not available to previous generations.
4. As our economy has grown, the legal profession too has expanded. Commercial and business law have become more important, complex and intellectually stimulating. If this is true domestically, it is also true internationally. Trade and commerce, international agreements and even the craft of diplomacy increasingly turn to lawyers and legal minds for negotiations and skilled drafting of texts. Arbitration and the globalisation of legal

services, through mechanisms such as outsourcing, have also linked today's lawyers with the rest of our planet.

5. It is on legal professionals that we depend to not merely make sense of the world as it is – but also the world as it is becoming. This is especially true for technology law, often with technology out-pacing changes in the law. As a result, lawyers are called upon to develop regulatory frameworks for and in extremely dynamic and evolving technological environments. This has been true for cyberspace and for Internet law. In the years ahead, legal teaching institutions as well as practitioners will have to meet many more such challenges. They will have to create rules and legal frameworks for outer space, for the Fourth Industrial Revolution and for Artificial Intelligence. They will have to write laws for new equations between humans and machines, whether driverless cars or innovations in agriculture and medicine.
6. For the legal students of today – such as the bright boys and girls of this institution – this opens up almost limitless opportunities. Your training and skills can leave an impact on a wider variety of human endeavours and sectors than was possible in the case of your predecessors. It is for legal education institutions to enhance this multi-disciplinary as well as inter-disciplinary approach of law and of the legal profession.
7. Here I am happy to note that the National Law University, Odisha, is at the frontier of legal education and is equipping its students in new fields and introducing them to new possibilities. Using the Government of India's Global Initiative for Academic Networks or GIAN programme, this University has offered, over the past year, courses in international e-commerce law and in corporate governance in India. These have involved guest faculty from the United States and Singapore.
8. I am also glad to note the curriculum of the University is socially relevant, with a focus on development of an entrepreneurial and innovative mindset. The Clinical Course on Legal Aid and PIL as well as Law and Entrepreneurship course stand testimony to this. Set up in 2015, the Distance Education Centre of the National Law

University, Odisha, is, I understand, developing distance education and Massive Open Online Courses under SWAYAM. This is an initiative of the Government of India to provide opportunities for lifelong learning.

9. I have been told that from July this year, a distance education and online course on Child Rights – developed with the support of UNICEF – will be introduced. I commend this effort. For all its advances, at its root the legal profession has a simple aspiration – for the lawyer to be a voice for the voiceless and to bring justice to the most deprived. To secure the universal and inalienable rights of every child is an aspiration that makes the legal profession just so meaningful.

Ladies and Gentlemen

10. Over the years, our understanding of law and its applications has become larger as well as more sophisticated. The nuances of privacy and of individual choice; the deeper interrogation of the concept of rights and responsibilities; and the search for the happy mean between space and autonomy for innovation and regulation for the greater common good in fields such as bio-technology and communication technology are all examples.
11. Yet, in all this, are we paying enough attention to issues of legal infrastructure and access to justice, especially for ordinary citizens? I have spoken earlier of the need to enhance legal literacy and simplify legal rules – as well as for the quick availability of certified translated copies of High Court judgements in the local language of the state or region. All these will take justice closer to the people. I am happy to learn that some High Courts have responded to this positively.
12. But while the judicial system has its responsibilities, so does the lawyer community – a community to which students of this institution will soon belong. An advocate is a law officer of the court. He or she has a responsibility to the client, but also a duty to assist the court in delivery of justice. Our legal system has a reputation for being expensive and for being prone to delays. The

use and abuse of the instrument of adjournments is often done by advocates who see adjournment as a tactic to slow down proceedings, rather than a response to a genuine emergency. This adds to the cost of obtaining justice for the litigant. It would be a travesty of our republican ethic if a poor person did not get the same access to the law as a rich person. Unfortunately, in practice this is happening.

13. These are issues for the emerging generation of lawyers – including those studying at this institution – to ponder and to rectify in the course of their careers. The opportunities and rewards of this profession – both intellectual and financial – are enormous. And this is welcome. But a good legal professional is not just somebody with a mind – he or she is also somebody with a heart.
14. May the National Law University, Odisha, shape fine minds – and may it nurture warm hearts.

Thank you  
Jai Hind!