

**ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA,
SHRI RAM NATH KOVIND
AT THE CLOSING SESSION OF THE MEET OF VICE-
CHANCELLORS AND DIRECTORS OF CENTRAL UNIVERSITIES,
IISERs AND IISC**

Rashtrapati Bhavan, December 17, 2019

1. In the two sessions today, we heard about the best practices from some of the top ranked institutes and universities and also saw the presentations of sub-groups on different issues faced by them. I thank all of you for your concise but very informative presentations. I am happy to note that we have been making progress particularly in holding convocations, updating syllabus and curriculum, filling faculty positions and speeding up infrastructure projects. But there is always more room for improvement and we must strive to do better each year in all these parameters.
2. Though there have been noteworthy achievements in several areas, however, as we have heard, there are areas in which you are facing challenges. We need to acknowledge those challenges and then address them through a conscious, clear and systematic approach.
3. In many cases, these challenges cannot be resolved by the universities alone and they need institutional and long term support of the Government. In this regard, I appreciate the presence of the Minister for Human Resource Development and other officers from the Ministry. They are the people who can ensure that the goals of your institutes are aligned with the aspirations and hopes of the people of this country. I am sure the heads of the institutes will seek their guidance as they chart their growth stories.
4. However, a lot of possible improvements lie fully within your own grasp. Simple steps like strictly adhering to your Academic Calendar for admissions, conduct of classes, examinations, declaration of results and awarding of degrees at convocations and so on, can be the starting point on the journey towards

excellence. Similarly, there are some steps that you can take to address the shortage of faculty in your universities. For instance, you can develop a robust visiting faculty program or use online teaching tools. You must also strengthen your existing faculty through leadership programs such as LEAP, that is now entering its second year.

5. I do not wish to dwell in detail on the themes on which you made presentations. It is imperative to fill up vacancies and attract top-quality faculty. At the same time, you must ensure adequate gender balance in your institutes, particularly of the faculty. I have been appointing more women as visitor nominees in various committees and I urge all of you to do everything you can to ensure adequate representation. Also, all of you must collaborate with the industry as well as your alumni in creative ways. IIT Delhi has made a presentation on their alumni endowment fund today. You must embrace your alumni and involve them closely in your activities. Your alumni are important stakeholders in your growth and they will always remain your most loyal and dedicated supporters. I hope to hear from more of you when we meet next year on your alumni initiatives.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

6. I had mentioned in the morning session that our universities and higher educational institutions should play a leading role in addressing the specific challenges faced by our nation and our society. Many of these challenges require creative and innovative solutions. It is your paramount duty to ensure that your campuses emerge as spaces that nurture free expression and ideas, where experimentation is encouraged and failure is not ridiculed but is seen as learning. In addition, universities should become the laboratories for exposing students to the problems that need to be addressed in the cause of nation-building.
7. Students should be encouraged to take up academic and extra-curricular work with a distinct community orientation. I am aware that universities are increasingly conscious of this and taking necessary steps too. But we need to introspect whether what we

are doing is enough or relevant. All of you should make a conscious effort to integrate community-oriented projects as part of your curriculum. University Social Responsibility, that is USR, has to become deeply ingrained into the DNA of our academic community.

8. Ease of living of the citizens of our country should be another focus area. This was a major theme of discussions in the Conference of Governors that was held last month in Rashtrapati Bhavan. While doing 'Basic Research' in science is important, so too is doing 'Applied Research' that can solve more imminent, real-life problems, say of our farmers. And while classroom learning is important for students, so too are field projects in nearby villages and towns.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

9. The deliberations today have been extremely fruitful. I am confident that all of you would have gained from sharing your experiences with each other. I am sure the Ministry of HRD, led by the Minister will make all efforts to resolve your key concerns in a time-bound manner. I propose that we review the progress made when we meet next.
10. With those words, I would like to thank you for participating in the discussions with full honesty. I am happy to see that all of you are so committed to your institutes and to take them to the next level of excellence. I wish you and your institutes – all the best for the future.

Thank you,

Jai Hind!