

**ADDRESS BY THE HON'BLE PRESIDENT OF INDIA
SHRI RAM NATH KOVIND
AT THE 16th CONVOCATION OF MIZORAM UNIVERSITY**

Aizawl, May 5, 2022

It is a pleasure for me to be among all of you today. I would like to congratulate all the students who have received degrees today as well as your parents and teachers. It is with the collective effort of all that you have reached this milestone today.

This convocation was planned earlier this year but due to unavoidable circumstances, I had to postpone my visit. Hence, I feel happy that I have been able to complete something which was left incomplete till now.

I feel very happy to be in this beautiful state of Mizoram. The beauty and serenity of this state has always been an attraction for people. The setting of this University in these beautiful surroundings would add to the environment so conducive for studies. The campus of Mizoram University reminds me of the educational institutions of the ancient times which were close to the nature providing an appropriate learning ambience to the students.

My dear friends,

Educational institutions are the incubators of the future. They not only provide training and education to students but mould them into good citizens. It is the unrelenting support of the teachers at the educational institutions and universities that plays the most prominent role in the lives of the students.

The natural beauty of the state is matched by human excellence shown by the people of Mizoram. With the second highest literacy levels in the country, Mizoram is a truly modern state ready to take off for higher achievements.

Today is a great day for not just the students but also the teachers who have worked hard on each one of you. I take this opportunity to congratulate 7832 students who have been awarded degrees today. I am told that out of these students, about 4700 are women students which is more than 50 percent. Also out of 38 gold medals awarded today, 23 of them have been won by girls. It is a shining example of women's excellence. I am glad that our daughters have achieved success and are ready to shape their destinies through their own efforts.

I am happy to know that the faculty of Mizoram University is not only well qualified but also engaged in qualitative research work. Some of the faculty appointed here, have pursued impressive research work and have also applied for patents in their individual capacity. Good researchers are often exceptional teachers too. Their experimental learning is better imbibed by the students. Such faculty also encourages the spirit of research and innovation.

The National Education Policy seeks to encourage research based activities. I have been told that Mizoram University has established bio-incubator for nurturing entrepreneurs. The entrepreneurship development activities and establishment of "Technology Incubation Centers" in the University extending support to the budding entrepreneurs to nurture their ideas with innovation and creativity is a step in the right direction. Such initiatives also establish a system of knowledge transfer and wealth creation.

I appreciate these initiatives of the university to promote innovation and transform it into enterprise. This is the key to bring about change in our society and economy. I will not be surprised if ideas germinating in the bright minds of young students of Mizoram may bring a revolution in the field of science and technology. I congratulate the department of Science and Technology, Government of India for initiating such collaborations with University of Mizoram.

Besides nurturing research and innovation, what is important is skill development that helps in employability. Introduction of courses on

handloom weaving and bee-keeping as a part of Bachelors in Vocation can be emulated by many other Institutes and Universities. Students who either have a background of such vocations or are eager to pursue them as a profession can take up such courses and gain expertise through such vocational courses. These courses impart skills and at the same time endeavour to safeguard the traditional knowledge of our country which gives us our unique and rich heritage. In the year 1937, Mahatma Gandhi had recommended a system of value education to be imparted to all the students in the country. The National Education Policy, with its specific focus on preserving traditional Indian values along with modern learning, tries to incorporate the Gandhian values. Being a value based person makes anyone a better professional in whatever area he chooses.

Mizoram is blessed with natural resources in abundance. The wide variety of flora and fauna gives us opportunities for immense range of studies. A region which is rich in bio-diversity also offers us vast opportunities for research and development. I see great opportunities for the youth in the areas of floriculture and bamboo based enterprises. The eco-system for start-ups was never as inspiring as it is today. I am sure the young students must be reading about unicorns making waves in the country and attracting investments. I can see the tendency of becoming job creators gaining ground among the young population.

However, it is our responsibility to strike the right balance between development and sustainability. The environment in this state as well as the other north-eastern states needs to be preserved with care. We must adopt practices which are beneficial not only to us but also to the nature. I must compliment the people of Mizoram along with the people of Sikkim and Tripura for generating the least plastic waste as per a study by NITI Aayog. This is a good example of responsible consumption and production which our young students will further strengthen. I have been told that despite busy traffic, the dutiful people of Aizawl refrain from honking. This practice is worth appreciating and may be adopted by people in other cities too.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The north-eastern region of our country popularly has immense potential for trade and development. Mizoram being a land-locked state does not have access to sea but shares its borders with both Bangladesh and Myanmar besides the Indian states of Assam, Tripura and Manipur. The agreement for development of international trade 'haats' at borders with Bangladesh which was recently signed by the two countries is a step which would lead to better connectivity and trade.

Of even greater importance is the Kaladan Multi Modal Transit Transport Project which seeks to create facilities for shipment of cargo from the eastern ports of India to Myanmar as well as to the North-Eastern part of India through Myanmar. It will connect Sittwe Port in Myanmar to the India-Myanmar border thereby contributing to the economic development of the North-Eastern States of India. I hope more of such projects are identified and encouraged for holistic development of the North-Eastern States and our neighbouring countries.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have always emphasized on promoting Universities' Social Responsibility or USR just as the Corporate Social Responsibility or CSR for the business enterprises. In my conferences with Governors, I have reiterated the need for adopting villages by the Universities and Institutes and encouraging the social and economic development of the neighbouring areas. But in case of Mizoram University, I was pleasantly surprised to know that it has already established Yunus Social Business Centre inspired by the ideals of Noble Laureate Mohammed Yunus who changed the lives of numerous people. He pulled them out of poverty by providing them micro-credit. I hope that this initiative of Mizoram University will also help the people of this state as well as other parts of the country in bringing a positive change in their lives. In the context of equitable development, I am happy to note that earlier this year the Governor

has laid down foundation stone for projects under EWS schemes. I am sure that the projects under the scheme will provide quality education in an inclusive manner.

There is one more thing which I would like to talk about. You all know about the UN Sustainable Development Goals or SDGs which are a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity. In this context, 17 Goals have been identified which are to be adopted and achieved by all signatories by 2030. To enable India meet its global commitments, the State governments should also adopt SDGs as their priorities.

According to Progress on Goal - 4 which pertains to providing Quality Education, NITI Aayog's SDG India Index 2020-21 shows that Mizoram with a score of 60 performed better than the national average of 57. An interesting point that figured in the analysis was that the score for Goal - 4 ranked Aizwal as the top performer among all districts of the north-eastern states. I urge the people of Aizwal to handhold and encourage people in the other districts of the state to improve their social indices and participate in the process of national development.

Once again, I congratulate the students, teachers and organizers of this convocation and wish them very best in life.

Thank you,
Jai Hind!