



President of India in Karnataka;

Addresses 22nd Convocation of Nimhans, Bengaluru; says meeting Mental Health Challenge must be a National Mission

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The President of India, Shri Ram Nath Kovind, graced and addressed the 22nd convocation of NIMHANS, Bengaluru, today (December 30, 2017).

Speaking on the occasion, the President said that NIMHANS is a national asset. It has integrated education and research in medical sciences with clinical services and treatment. Each year it treats about 700,000 patients, including many from abroad. Two of every three patients belong to the poorer sections. They obtain free or highly subsidised care. This is a very commendable record.

The President said that the biggest obstacle that patients of mental and neurological problems face is stigma and denial. This leads to the issue being ignored or simply not discussed. In some cases it leads to self-diagnosis that could worsen the situation. Our society has to fight this culture of stigma. We need to talk about mental health issues and treat ailments such as depression and stress as diseases that can be cured – not as guilty secrets to be pushed under the carpet.

The President said that in 2022, India will be celebrating the 75th anniversary of Independence. We need to ensure that by then at least those who are suffering from severe mental disorders have been diagnosed and have access to treatment facilities. He called for taking this up as a national mission. He stated that the government and the non-government sector – and all related public and private institutions – will need to contribute to this effort. It is for NIMHANS, as India's premier mental health institute, to draw a road map and to be the navigator. He added that other than conventional treatment, the role of counselling services and of practices such as yoga and vipassana meditation in helping those with mental health problems should also be explored with greater vigour.

In Bengaluru, the President also inaugurated Seva Utsav 2018, organised by the Adama Chetana Foundation, and the 100th anniversary of the National Education Society of Karnataka as well as of the National High School that the Society runs.

Speaking on the occasion, the President praised the Adama Chetana Foundation for performing a very noble task in providing fresh and nutritious food to school children through its Annapurna project. He stated that the Foundation's initiative is in keeping with its philosophy of Seva – and its focus on Anna-Akshara-Arogya or food, education and health.

Later in the day, the President travelled to Bidadi (Ramanagara district) where he visited the new campus of the Amruta Institute of Engineering and Management Sciences as well as inaugurated the 111th year celebrations of Basaveshwar Veerashaiva Vidyavardhaka (BVV) Sangha.

Speaking on the occasion, the President congratulated the BVV Sangha for its commendable work in the field of education. He noted that Sangha today runs over 150 educational institutions in Karnataka and Maharashtra. Over 50,000 students study in these institutions, and that half of them are women. He stated that this emphasis on girl's education – which is so vital for our society and our country – and on the poor is in keeping with the idealism of the Sangha's founders.

Texts of speeches of the President on these three occasions are attached.

- **Nimhans Speech**
- **Speech-Admaya Chetna**
- **Speech-Amruta Institute**

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