

Speech of Professor Ganeshi Lal, Hon'ble Governor of Odisha at the 50th Conference of Governors at Rashtrapati Bhavan, New Delhi

Hon'ble President of India,
Hon'ble Vice-President,
Hon'ble Prime Minister,
Hon'ble Home Minister,
Other Hon'ble Union Ministers,
My colleague Governors and Lt. Governors,
Deputy Chairperson of NITI Aayog,
Secretaries of different Ministries,
Officials of Rashtrapati Bhavan, Other dignitaries present here,

I am extremely happy and honoured to be here for the 50th Conference of Governors. I am grateful to Hon'ble President of India for the opportunity given to me to address this august gathering and share my thoughts. This conference has truly evolved since it began. Along the journey, the conference has brainstormed addressing a variety of important themes and giving enduring value to every discussion. The conference always leaves one with a feeling of being motivated, empowered, and ready to do things differently. Our aim is inclusive development that is “Sab ke Saath Sab ka Vikash”. We need to evolve both institutionally and spiritually and we have to work hard, almost everywhere in every sector making a Sarva Shrestha Bharat, a New India by 2022 regaining the elite position as ‘Vishwaguru’ which our country was once known as.

Since the last Conference in 2018, both the world and India, have changed a great deal. We, as a country have vastly expanded our efforts on a spectacular scale in many spheres. We take pride as a fastest growing big economy on the world map. But we can hardly rest on our laurels.

As Hon'ble Prime Minister always says, for a strong and evolving Republic, we need a Cooperative Federalism. I strongly believe when states keep growing, keep moving and keep rising, then our country will rise and become strong. My thoughts and impression will be primarily on my state Odisha and its growth and development and promise in contributing to the building of a New India. I would like to share my personal experiences and observation on a number of issues here for debate and discussion.

When we are here to build a Sarva Shrestha Bharat my State Odisha is perfectly positioned to set an example with its rich cultural heritage. Odisha is the holy land of Lord Jagannath, the Lord of the Universe. The Jagannath Culture believes in universal brotherhood but not in sectarianism. It stands for religious tolerance, co-existence of all religions and communal harmony. In the present day, we see that Lord Jagannath is being worshipped by all irrespective of caste, creed, colour and community. As a result, the entire universe and inhabitants of universe are part and parcel of culture of Lord Jagannath. It is a land where spiritualism finds deep roots with saints and seers who have propagated the great words of wisdom and divinity. Here a child begins his/her study making three circles presuming and

identifying them as Brahma, Vishnu and Maheswar. The breeze blowing here sings the glory of divinity. In that way Odisha is a great asset to the making of Sarva Shrestha Bharat.

Let me begin with the Governor's foremost responsibility towards tribal development and welfare and governance. Since Odisha is a Schedule V state, a strong mechanism and system that is effective, inclusive and participatory should be put in place. Role of Tribal Cell in Governor's office is a critical ingredient. In my state, the Tribal Cell was made operational only last year after a long delay and constant follow up. Today, the Cell operates with only two retired faculty members of Anthropology and has no full-fledged member as prescribed. We are taking steps to empower the Cell for evaluation of the progress on various tribal development schemes and programmes by a third party with experts in the field by going to the ground and take appropriate action for rectifying them.

The State is also handicapped with non formation of Tribal Advisory Council (TAC) even after nearly six months of the new Government formation in the State that is after general election in May 2019. It delays in submitting the Governor's report to Hon'ble President in time. New policies and programmes for STs are launched without the approval of TAC thereby defeating the very purpose of the Council. Therefore, I would like Hon'ble Prime Minister to convene a meeting of Chief Ministers of Schedule V States to settle this issue.

Education for the tribals remains the most critical element for their development. To take stock of ground situation, I visited ten Ekalavya Model Residential Schools (EMRS) in five tribal districts out of total 19 in the State during last two months and had interactions with students and teachers. However, the reality is that students are failing miserably (more than 60 percent) at Plus Two level even though their performance is better at Class X Board examination under CBSE. Such high failure rate is inflicting a psychological toll on the minds of students. Shortage of teachers in these schools is the main reason for such poor performance. To give a thought to this and sort out these matters, I have been taking meetings regularly with Secretary and other top officials of ST Department of the State and I have suggested for a central recruitment policy for timely posting of teachers of these schools by State Government.

Being the Chancellor of Universities, Governor has a specific role in making universities relevant and competitive. We have 19 government universities and a total 30 universities in the State including Central University and Deemed to be University. The process of selection of Vice Chancellor practised in Odisha has drawn appreciation and recognition from Ministry of HRD. I have instructed universities to explore international initiatives to stay competitive and enhance their reputation. I urge upon them to develop their own field of expertise and advantage and attract scholars from all over the country and even from foreign countries to do extensive study and research. I suggested for setting up of a common recruitment cell by State Government to fill up vacant teaching and non-teaching posts in universities to make it transparent and to improve efficiency as repetitive process at each University delays the recruitment.

As we are going to have a New Education Policy after three decades, we will be having detailed discussions on the Policy during the course of the Conference. What I feel is that our education system should be designed and revitalised as such where we can produce people who are imbued with a spirit of inquiry and remain open to new ideas and at the same time holding high our own culture and ethos. We need to foster a new mindset and adopt an analytical stance.

Reduction of maternal and child mortality is one of the developmental challenges of the State. Because of Odisha's consistent efforts under the Reproductive, Maternal, pre-birth, Child and Adolescent campaign Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR) and Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) shows a decline. As per the latest data, 2015-16, Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) in Odisha is 40 per 1,000 live births that is comparable to national average of 41. Odisha in fact, was the best performing state in reduction of IMR. The State targets to reach the goal of reduction of IMR under 30 by the year 2020 with its multi-pronged efforts. Institutionalised delivery rates have substantially improved and Odisha's flagship MAMATA scheme, a conditional cash transfer maternity benefit scheme has certainly helped in reducing the MMR. The scheme is doubly unique in that it is extended to two live births for the general population but covers all live births for the PVTGs (Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups).

Bhubaneswar, the Capital City of Odisha is becoming the 'Sports Capital' of India following successful hosting of a number of national and international sports events like FIH (International Hockey Federation) Men's World Cup Hockey, Olympic Qualifying event in Hockey, Asian Athletics Championship to cite a few. It is a great achievement that projected Odisha's potential internationally. Bhubaneswar becomes the first city to receive the provisional clearance to host the prestigious FIFA (International Federation of Association Football) Women's Under-17 World Cup. It will be the first global football tournament for women in the country and a big honour for the State. The State also supports and nurtures the national hockey teams both men and women. Odisha strongly believes that investment in sports is an investment in youth and investment in youth is an investment in future.

It is good news that Smart City Bhubaneswar comes close second to Mumbai in safe tap water among 21 cities in the country according to a recent report based on sample tests done by Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS). Similarly, the Capital Region Urban Transport, Bhubaneswar has been conferred with the award of Commendable Initiative in the category of Best Bus Service Project by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs very recently. This reinforces our commitment to make Odisha a quality State for living. Along with smart city, we are focusing on developing smart villages having all the facilities of growth and development.

Odisha prioritises vocational training and undertakes several programmes like the one 'Sudakshya' that improves girl's enrolment in Govt. ITIs. Further, Skill Development centres and ITIs are opened in Left Wing Extremism districts for engaging youth. Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Kendras are opened in districts with NSDC as the implementation agency for the project. Besides, Govt. ITIs and ITCs and Polytechnics are regularly upgraded to impart competency based skill development training.

Odisha works in tandem with the country in skilling its youth, making them employable and transforming India into the skill capital of the world.

Odisha shows the way in empowering women through schemes such as Mission Shakti, the Self Help Group (SHG) movement, Pradhan Mantri MUDRA Yojana, and Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana. The Mission Shakti is not only socially emancipating but also several interventions have led to a variety of remunerative economic activities lending financial boost to the women. The State has been a leading light in the country with over six lakh women SHGs covering more than seventy lakh women. The Ujjwala scheme has led to a phenomenal increase in LPG households and the number is almost 78 lakh in February 2019. My district visits have given me good impression and information on willingness of women to be beneficiaries, harvesting happiness. Barring few difficulties, they expressed deep satisfaction. I have instructed the concerned authorities to sort out their grievances immediately and on following up found that they have acted promptly.

Odisha is bound to be richer and gainer from Hon'ble Prime Minister's vision, focus and continuous efforts for the development of Odisha. He has shown special interest to Odisha as he dedicated a number of projects to the nation and laid foundation to some new projects. The Multi-Modal Logistics Park (MMLP) at Jharsuguda will make Jharsuguda the prime hub of logistics in the region. Garjanbahal coal mines and Jharsuguda-Baraipali-Subdega rail link will improve the coal transport. Jharsuguda airport is the second fully functional airport in the State. Similarly, 4.5 MT expansion of Rourkela Steel Plant. or commencement of work for the revival of Talcher Fertilizer Plant with latest technology will create new jobs. These projects in areas of connectivity, education and development will greatly benefit the people of Odisha and pave the way for prosperity of future generations and the State as a whole.

People are the real masters in a democracy and every institution exists to serve citizens in a professional and dignified manner. In a bid to make governance more people-centric, the Odisha Government has launched an initiative 'Mo Sarkar' or 'My Government'. It is a novel programme under the 5T model of governance that is Teamwork, Technology, Transparency, Transformation and Time limit. In order to work in cohesion, the government machinery is implementing 5T to herald a transformation in government offices.

In the present set up of governance and administration, there is no room for inefficiency and corruption. Odisha Government's initiative that follows compulsory retirement or dismissal of corrupt Central Government tax officials by Government of India is a step for building Shrestha Bharat. Henceforward, the State Government employees seen to be lacking integrity or with doubtful integrity will be prematurely retired in public interest, if needed.

Our country is unique in many ways. Understanding the country and taking pride of her rich culture and tradition is always exciting and full of joy. To further the spirit of unity and Indianness, I organised a conference of poets in Raj Bhavan attended by poets from all over the country. Similarly, the youth delegations from other States visiting Odisha as part of student and youth exchange programme were welcomed at Raj Bhavan. Besides, I interacted with a delegation of students from

South Korea in Raj Bhavan who were in Odisha on cultural and academic exchange programme. These all contribute to knowing the beautiful and incredible India

I have shared my thoughts on Odsiha's preparation for a Sarva Shrestha Bharat, a New India. I am hopeful that we can get into an active and fruitful discussion regarding future plans and programmes. I sincerely wish a memorable 50th conference and plenty of success to our endeavours.

Jai Hind