

**SPEECH BY THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA, SHRI PRANAB  
MUKHERJEE AT THE RAJYOTSAVA FUNCTION**

**RAIPUR, CHHATTISGARH: 06-11-2012**

**It** is a matter of great pleasure for me to be here in Naya Raipur, the new Capital city of Chhattisgarh on the occasion of the 12th formation Day of the State.

This is my first visit to Chhattisgarh after assuming the office of President. I am extremely happy that this occasion affords me the opportunity to meet a cross section of the vibrant literary and academic communities of this new and fast growing State.

I extend my warm greetings to you all - and through you, to more than 25 million people of this young State on this auspicious occasion.

Chhattisgarh is a new state with rich ancient history and a glorious cultural heritage. It is believed to be the land of Kausalya, the mother of Lord Rama and the Tapo-bhumi of Saint-Poet Valmiki.

It is gifted by Nature with a green umbrella spread over almost 45% of the territory. In addition to rich deposits of minerals such as iron-ore, aluminium, bauxite, tin, coal and even diamonds, the State is also blessed by mighty rivers such as Mahanadi, Sheonath, Sone, Hasdeo etc.

The demographic canvas of Chhattisgarh presents a unique kaleidoscope from Sarguja in the north to Bastar in the south. Almost 32% of its population is comprised of the tribals including

some primitive tribes. It has been the center of attraction for anthropologists of various countries including the famous Varrier Alvin whom Mahatma Gandhi used to regard as his fourth son. Alvin spent several fruitful years of his life in Bastar and authored many important books on the life and culture of Bastar tribals. In order to apprise myself about the rich culture of this area, I shall also be visiting Narayanpur, the gateway to Abujmarh.

Distinguished guests,

Chhattisgarh is the State where the famous Kalchuri dynasty ruled for almost 800 years and it has a rich legacy of one of the oldest Panchayati-raj systems in the country. After its formation, Chhattisgarh has emerged as one of the fastest developing States in the country. This young state has registered all round development on many fronts and made its presence felt at the national level.

It is heartening to know that Chhattisgarh is attracting tourists from different parts. It has beautiful waterfalls such as 'Chitrakote' and 'Tirathgarh'. It also has ancient religious and spiritual centers of pilgrimage like Shivrinarayan, Rajivlochan and Champaran, the birthplace of Mahaprabhu Vallabhacharya. I am informed that a 7th century AD Buddhist Township has been unearthed in an archaeological excavation at 'Sirpur' which speaks to the rich cultural heritage of the State.

Swami Vivekananda spent several years of his childhood in Raipur. The largest period of his life after Kolkata was spent in Raipur. The great poet Rabindra Nath Tagore stayed in Pendra

with his wife Smt. Mrinalini for few months. While waiting for the train, he wrote a beautiful poem at Bilaspur railway station which is proudly displayed there.

Mahatma Gandhiji visited Chhattisgarh thrice during the freedom struggle and had amply acknowledged its contribution to the national Freedom Struggle. I salute the great freedom fighters of this land on this occasion.

Chhattisgarh has large number of followers of two great saints, namely Sant Kabir and Guru Baba Ghasidas who have enlightened us with their profound spiritual wisdom. 'Kabir-Chaura' on the foothills of Amarkantak is believed to be the meeting place of Guru Nanak and Sant Kabir. Chhattisgarh is thus not only located at the heart of India geographically but also embodies the best of Indian culture, heritage and traditions as well as its natural beauty.

I take this opportunity to congratulate all the prominent persons from different walks of life who have been felicitated for their important contributions in their respective fields. It shows that talent is abundant in Chhattisgarh which reflects its vibrant and dynamic society.

I am delighted to know that Naya Raipur is the first planned capital city of 21st century in India and is being developed as a modern and green city. Special features such as rain water harvesting and harvesting of solar energy has been included to make it eco-friendly. Comfort and security to the citizens is being ensured through dedicated bus lanes, cycle tracks, pedestrian pathways and barrier free movement. A bus rapid

transit system (BRTS) is also being developed from the initial stage to provide green and clean public transport system.

I compliment the leadership of the State for developing the city of Raipur with vision and a commitment to sustainable urban development.

I congratulate the people of this State on the occasion of Rajyotsava and dedicate the new Mantralaya building to the service of the people. I hope that Chhattisgarh will continue to live up to the expectations of the Nation and march ahead by attending to the needs of all sections of its people especially the poorest of the poor.

In this festive season, let me conclude by wishing everybody a very Happy Diwali. May this State and you all be blessed with peace, prosperity and happiness.

Jai hind