



Press Release

**Hon'ble Education Minister Shri Dharmendra Pradhan pays
tribute to local martyrs and freedom fighters**

- **'Meri Maati Mera Desh' Campaign organized at IIT Bhubaneswar**
 - **Families of freedom fighters from Khordha felicitated**

Bhubaneswar, 28th August 2023: Shri Dharmendra Pradhan ji, Union Minister of Education and Minister of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship paid tribute to the martyrs and freedom fighters from Khordha at Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Bhubaneswar campus at Argul, Jatni on 28th August, as part of the nationwide 'Meri Maati Mera Desh' campaign, on the call of the Prime Minister of the country to pay homage to the heroes who have given supreme sacrifice for the motherland. To commemorate the campaign as the culminating event of 'Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav', a series of events were organized.

In the beginning of this programme, Shri Dharmendra Pradhan ji paid floral tribute to the 'Shahid Smruti Stambh' at Barunei Hill and collected Sacred Soil of Barunei in the 'Amrut Kalas', which will be used to create an 'Amrit Vatika' in Delhi. A Cycle Rally bearing the Message of 'Meri Maati Mera Desh' campaign was organized from the Barunei Hill to IIT Bhubaneswar campus. Around 500 students and para-military personnel, led by Hon'ble Minister participated in this cycle rally.

Under the 'Dedication of Shilaphalakam' and 'Vasudha Vandan' initiatives of 'Meri Maati Mera Desh' campaign, Hon'ble Minister Shri Dharmendra Pradhan ji, installed a 'Memorial Plaque' in memory of Martyrs of Khordha and planted saplings in the Institute premises in the presence of other dignitaries and students.

On this occasion, Prof. Shreepad Karmalkar, Director, IIT Bhubaneswar welcomed the Chief Guest, dignitaries, families of the freedom fighters and martyrs and the students, faculty and staff present in this programme.

The Amrut Kalas with the Sacred Soil was handed over to IIT Bhubaneswar. The IIT residents will add soil from the campus and hand the Kalas over to Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan.

He also honoured families of 6 martyrs and freedom fighters from Khordha. The names of the freedom fighters are : Shri Hemanta Kumar Panda, Shri Balaji Mangaraj, Shri K.M Praharaj, Rahmatullah Khan, Shri Rabindra Kumar Behera and Shri Dibakar Mahapatra.

Shri Dharmendra Pradhan ji administered the Panch Pran pledge to a gathering during the programme at the Institute.

Speaking on the occasion, Shri Dharmendra Pradhan ji said that though India now has its footsteps on the moon and achieved many more accolades, this is the time to remember the contribution of the freedom fighters who fought for the independence of the country. Khordha and especially, Barunei Hill, is a testament to Odisha's rich cultural and historical heritage. The soil of Khordha has witnessed the heroism and sacrifices of many martyrs and freedom fighters, which give more relevance to the 'Meri Maati Mera Desh' campaign. He informed that the Sacred Soil, collected from this place will be taken to the Amrut Vatika at the Saheed Memorial in New Delhi, to remember the great martyrs and freedom fighters of the country. He also asked the representatives of various institutions and organizations present to organize such event and take part in this campaign. He remembered the sacrifice of the freedom fighters like Buxi Jagabandhu and Jayee Rajguru and urged all to take the legacy ahead and work towards the making India developed and self-reliant.

The event was graced by dignitaries from various organisations and institutions including UCO Bank, India Post, AIIMS Bhubaneswar, Siksha O Anusandhan University, KIIT University, CV Raman University, Centurion University, KVS, BSF, NDRF, ITBP, SDI, ICT, Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangthan, Income Tax, 41 Battalion etc. More than 4000 participants including students participated in this event and paid homage to the martyrs and freedom fighters of the region.

From IIT Bhubaneswar, the programme was coordinated by Prof. R.R. Dash, Dean (SA) and Shri Bamadev Acharya, Registrar.
