



Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, one of the chief guests at IIT Kharagpur's 75th Foundation Day celebrations, with director Suman Chakraborty on Tuesday

Ravi Shankar's wisdom call at IIT

SUBHANKAR CHOWDHURY

Kharagpur: Mental health and building resilient minds, rather than merely the pursuit of outstanding marks, took centre stage at IIT Kharagpur's 75th Foundation Day celebrations.

One of the chief guests, spiritual leader Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, said it was far more important to build a "personality that is resilient" and capable of standing up to life's challenges.

The chairman of the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), V. Narayanan, was also present as a chief guest.

IIT Kharagpur director Suman Chakraborty, in his address, said the institute planned to upgrade the physical and research infrastructure of the country's oldest IIT.

"If depression has overtaken the planet despite all this connectivity, and loneliness has increased by almost 50 per cent in many countries, it in-

dicates that technology alone is not enough. We need something more. And what is that something more? It is turning knowledge into wisdom," Ravi Shankar said at the Netaji Auditorium.

"What is the difference between knowledge and wisdom? Knowledge is information that you can have. Wisdom is integrating it into your life. How are we building a personality that is resilient, that can stand up to the challenges of the world?" he asked a gathering of students, teachers and IIT officials.

Ravi Shankar also spoke about the importance of dealing with failure.

"How do you handle failure? Ask the ISRO scientists. They did not lose heart after the setbacks to the Gaganyaan mission. They kept moving towards their goal, with inspiration.... We need to balance the energy within ourselves," he said.

He urged IIT Kharagpur students to spend at least half an hour on music and painting.

"I would urge all of you to spend half an hour on *lalit kala* — music and painting. These are areas that can nurture your mind and make you strong and well-balanced. The body is a precious instrument. We often forget to attend to it," Ravi Shankar told the students.

An IIT official said that on a campus where nine student deaths had been reported and an increasing number of students were encountering mental health issues, it was vital for someone to speak to students about ways of calming their minds and handling pressure.

A student died on campus on August 13.

Chakraborty said IIT Kharagpur had undertaken several initiatives to transform the campus with modern hostels, academic blocks, a wellness centre and recreational spaces to redefine the student experience.

The institute plans to set up the Setu — Support, Empathy, Transformation and Upliftment — wellness cen-

tre, spread over 5,000sqm and estimated to cost around ₹44 crore, he said.

"It will have 25 counselor rooms, therapy spaces, meditation spaces and mood rooms. It will be backed by the Setu app and existing facilities such as wellness buddies and 24x7 psychiatric care," Chakraborty said.

The institute also plans to build five modern hostels that will accommodate more than 4,000 students as intake continues to rise, he said.

A housing complex for research scholars will also be developed.

"We will no longer measure our stature merely by how high IIT Kharagpur rises, but by how many millions rise because IIT Kharagpur exists. We are moving from a centre of excellence to an ecosystem of impact — transitioning from knowledge to wisdom, from research that publishes to research that builds, and from the laboratory to the living world," the director said.