

**SPEECH BY THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA, SHRI PRANAB  
MUKHERJEE AT THE FIRST CONVOCATION CEREMONY OF  
INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY,**

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It is a privilege and honour for me to deliver the first Convocation Address of the Indian Institute of Technology, Jodhpur. I congratulate the Chairman, the Director, distinguished members of the board, faculty, staff and students on having built a good reputation for IIT Jodhpur as a premier technology institute, both nationally and internationally, within a very short period of time.

Convocation is an important occasion marking the end of a vital phase in the life of a student. My heartiest congratulation goes to all graduating students of IIT Jodhpur. I am sure you would agree that your success would not have been possible without the support and contribution of your family members and faculty.

Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru, in his convocation address at IIT Kharagpur in 1956 said - and I quote, "You will find in a country technologically developed, how Engineers and Scientists play a far more important role even outside their sphere of Engineering and Science. That is right and that is bound to happen in India." The IIT system is a symbol of the progress and success of India in the field of technology. I am happy to know that IIT Jodhpur has introduced under graduation programs such as Systems Science and Bio inspired System Science, where existing frontiers of science are challenged through interaction between various disciplines ranging from art, humanities, engineering, Biotechnology, Quantum Physics, econometrics, systems thinking and systems dynamics.

India today stands at the cusp of greatness. While there are challenges ahead, there are enormous opportunities as well. Science and technology is duly recognized as the vehicle to take India into the front ranks of the nations of the world. We have to build a large pool of scientific and technical manpower to aid our progress. We have a growing young population. Within a decade, we are likely to have the largest workforce in the world. This demographic transformation must be leveraged by us by expanding technical education in the country. An important initiative taken in this direction during the Eleventh Plan period was to extend the famed IIT system by opening eight new IITs. As the youngest of IITs, IIT Jodhpur has the important task of not only maintaining the high standards that IITs are known for but also carving out a special position for itself in the engineering education sector.

Friends, education has great power for social rejuvenation. The recent increase in cases of brutal assault on women and children has shaken the collective conscience of our nation. These unfortunate incidents call for effective measures to ensure their safety and security. It also highlights the need for us to bring such degradation of values to an immediate halt. More so, it calls for all of us to engage in self introspection and reset our moral compass. Our institutes of learning beginning from schools must act as guides in meeting the contemporary moral challenges and ensure that our civilizational values of love for motherland; performance of duty; compassion for all; tolerance for pluralism; respect for women and elderly; truth and honesty in life; discipline and self-restraint in conduct, and responsibility in action are fully entrenched in the young minds.

Our higher education sector today does not have enough good quality institutions to meet the growing aspirations of our youth. Along with measures to increase quantity, the drive to enhance the quality of education should engage the attention of our policy makers. It is a matter of concern that the list of top two hundred universities in the world does not contain a single Indian institution. The past has not been like this for us. Ancient Indian universities like Takshashila, Nalanda, Vikramashila, Valabhi, Somapura and Odantapuri had dominated the world higher education system for about eighteen hundred years beginning Sixth Century BC. The colossal Indian education system was marked by a high degree of efficiency before it declined in the Thirteenth Century AD with the collapse of Nalanda.

We have the capability to regain our lost position. It is possible for at least a few of our universities to enter the global top league. But for that, necessary changes are required in the way our institutes are managed and education in them delivered. There must be flexibility in academic management. A culture of excellence must be inculcated in them. Every university should nurture one or two departments that can be converted into a Centre of Excellence.

Friends, technology can enable refinement in teaching methodology. It can address the challenges of quantity, quality, accessibility, affordability and faculty shortage. E-classrooms permit information and knowledge sharing by wider dispersal of lectures overcoming distance. As expertise in a particular field is usually scattered, experts should be encouraged to interact for significant gains to accrue to the discipline. The National Mission on Education

through Information and Communication Technology is an important initiative in this direction.

Higher education should not be a product accessible to only the privileged few. This calls for growth of quality educational institutions across the length and breadth of our country. It also highlights the need to institutionalize various student aid schemes to make education affordable for meritorious students from economically difficult backgrounds. Increasing accessibility of higher education will bring a greater section of youth into the system resulting in a larger pool of trained and competent manpower to fuel the growth centres of our economy.

Friends, innovation is increasingly recognized as the currency of the future. It lends a competitive edge to business, and provides solution for effective governance. It is, therefore, hardly surprising that governments around the world are making a concerted effort to encourage innovation. Our institutes of higher learning, especially IITs, should be the breeders of innovation activity. An encouraging eco-system comprising research fellowship, and inter-disciplinary and inter-university research cooperation is required for that.

The decade 2010-20 has been declared in India as the decade of innovation. We have formulated the Science, Technology and Innovation Policy this year, aimed at an innovation-led development. This policy highlights the need to encourage and recognize innovators, including grass root innovators, who by their sheer brilliance have added value to processes for the benefit of the common man. Centres of higher learning and IITs have a crucial role to play in these efforts. I congratulate IIT Jodhpur for the initiative it

has taken to set up an innovation and incubation centre in association with the Rajasthan Government. I hope this example will be emulated by others.

I congratulate the students who have become graduates today. You are not only a valuable asset for your profession but also the intellectual wealth of our nation. You are the product of an education system of a new nation born out of an old civilization. You must fully understand the democratic ideals of our country. You must not only embrace the rights that are provided in our polity but also accept whole-heartedly your responsibilities towards the nation.

In the words of Aristotle “Excellence is never an accident. It is always the result of high intention, sincere effort, and intelligent execution; it represents the wise choice of many alternatives - choice, not chance, determines your destiny.” All of you students chose to be a part of this esteemed institute and as you leave the portals of this Institute today, please remember that you are amongst the brightest young minds of our country. The governance of our country and issues of national importance should excite you. Read, learn and formulate views on them. A healthy democracy is marked by informed participation. Inform yourself and inform others. Choose to engage with our beautiful, complex, often difficult and sometimes noisy democracy. Help the nation create better citizens who understand their rights and responsibilities.

I am confident that the education imparted here in IIT Jodhpur would produce skilled professionals who would enhance the intellectual capital of the nation as well as pave the way for their own self-advancement. My best wishes to all the students graduating

today. I would like to end by quoting Mahatma Gandhi. He once said  
“Be the change that you wish to see in this world.” So I say to you all,  
lead the world, be the change and make India proud.

Thank you.

Jai Hind.