

SPEECH BY THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA, SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE, AT THE 15TH ANNUAL CONVOCATION OF THE BENGAL ENGINEERING AND SCIENCE UNIVERSITY, SHIBPUR

SHIBPUR, JANUARY 19, 2013

1. I am very happy to be here with you on the occasion of the 15th Annual Convocation of the Bengal Engineering and Science University, Shibpur.
2. This University has come a long way since it was established, in 1856, with ten students and three faculty members as the Calcutta Engineering College. Over the last 157 years, the University has evolved into a leading Institution whose alumni have proven themselves in different fields in India and abroad, bringing laurels not only to themselves but also to this institution.
3. I recall with pleasure my last visit here in 2011 when I had inaugurated the ‘Students’ Centre for Creative Expressions’ at Slater Hall, one of the heritage buildings in this campus. I had noted then the progress made by this University in education and research, particularly, in the areas of green energy, medical sciences and water technology. It is commendable that the University has now taken a lead in initiating undergraduate and postgraduate programmes in strategic areas like

Aerospace Technology, Remote Sensing and Material Science & Technology. You have equally focused on providing your students the infrastructure and facilities required for excellence and research in these key areas. Your work of exploration and discovery in these fields is of great importance for developing advanced technology in our country to meet the priority needs of our people. From the Vice Chancellor's report, I find that the faculty and students of BESU have done well in renewable energy, healthcare, steel technology, transportation, planning and architecture, electronics, mining, water, telecommunication and similar key areas of importance for our nation-building and progress as a knowledge society. I note that students of this university have also enthusiastically pursued their interest in diverse areas of creative expressions, such as in dramatics, photography and music – which are so important for a balanced personality.

4. Government of India, in recognition of the distinguished service provided by this University in the advancement of education, has decided to convert it to an Indian Institute of Engineering Science and Technology (IEST),

and recognize it as an 'Institution of National Importance'. It is a well earned honour which should motivate all of you to excel in both academics and research.

5. Quite often, I have observed that there is a deficiency of research manpower in strategic areas like space technology, atomic energy, defence, as well as in basic engineering research in medical technology, and environmental science & technology. I would stress that BESU, Shibpur which had once contributed significantly to the development of IIT system in India should now assume the responsibility of ensuring continuous revitalisation of its various Departments and Centres through research and innovation.
6. The Ph.D. programme of this University, I understand, has had a fresh enrolment of 235 candidates in 2012. The number of sponsored projects have also multiplied manifold during the last three years and have benefited from increased funding. I am told , over 92 research projects have been sponsored and are currently under way having received a financial assistance of over 62 crores. I am particularly glad that the subjects of

research include safe water and sanitation, development of semi-conductor nano materials, preparation of a Ganga-basin environmental management plan, development of a smart prognostic system of an early indication of cardiac disease. These are key areas where the University's contribution to the development of science and medicine will be invaluable.

7. It is apparent that the university has been duly modernising its facilities - but I would emphasise that this process of updating and modernizing must be a continuous one. Similarly, students and faculty members must ensure regular interaction and collaboration with counterparts in India and abroad . This would, in every way, be an enriching experience- of great benefit not only to yourselves and your institution but it will also be an opportunity to showcase your capacities and talents – even while you take the opportunity to learn from the achievements and best practices of others. Similarly, a symbiotic relationship with the industry – wherever there is focus on developing technology and making it consumer friendly would always benefit our people. I would like to remind you, as

you break the frontiers of science and discover new technology, your efforts would be truly valuable if they bring efficiency to our industry, comfort in the daily lives of our people and wipe the tears of the most challenged of our countrymen.

8. Distinguished Guests and dear students, it is always a pleasure to be among young people who are ready to step into their most creative years. Your energy, your determination and your aspirations at this stage must be channelised to address the problems and challenges that our nation is facing in a result oriented manner. I take this opportunity to call upon you all to be proactive in building our society but without forgetting our heritage and tradition of tolerance, mutual respect and an inclusive approach in achieving our developmental goals.
9. Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen - and young students present here, it is entirely appropriate that the University will , in recognition of the achievements of distinguished physician and medical researcher Dr. M. S. Valiathan, and distinguished academician Dr. B. K. Bose, confer on them the degree of D.Sc (Honoris Causa). I am also happy to note that the University will

honour eminent classical singer of the Benaras Gharana, Smt. Girija Devi with D.Litt. (Honoris Causa).

10. I am reminded on this day of the engineering geniuses that hailed from the State of Bengal, Sir Jagdish Chandra Bose, Mani Lal Bhaumik, Satyendranath Bose, Megh Nad Saha and Prafulla Chandra Roy to name a few. I take this opportunity to pay tribute to their legacy and hope that their efforts, achievements and contribution to humanity will inspire you, also, to aspire towards the highest goals.
11. I congratulate the Chancellor, Vice Chancellor, faculty members of the BESU University and wish them continued success in developing this University as an institution of excellence.
12. With these few words, I offer my felicitations and congratulations to those who have received their degrees and awards today and wish you all every success in your future endeavours.

Thank you.