

# **SPEECH BY THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA, SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE AT THE SECOND CONVOCATION OF THE INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY, MANDI**

**Mandi : March 15, 2015**

1. I am happy to join you for this Second Convocation of the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Mandi, one of eight IITs established during the Eleventh Plan period. It is a sheer delight to visit your institution situated in the Kamand valley, which beckons with its pristine and natural beauty. The simple lifestyle of the local agrarian people; their traditional songs, dances and crafts, enhance the innate grandeur and magnificence of this place.

2. Established in 2009, IIT Mandi is the first among the new IITs to shift to its permanent campus, Kamand. The tranquility of this place provides the perfect setting for a seat of higher learning. IIT Mandi has gradually expanded its academic programme. It offers B-Tech in the streams of computer, electrical and mechanical engineering. It has plans to introduce B-Tech in Civil Engineering from August, this year. This Institute has more than 650 students, including 148 research scholars. Undeterred by the relative remoteness of the location and paucity of physical infrastructure, this Institute has made best efforts to maintain the quality of education. I compliment the management, faculty and staff of IIT Mandi for their energy, dynamism and commitment in nurturing this Institute most admirably in its formative years.

3. IIT is a global brand today. It stands for excellence in scientific and technical education. The alumni of IITs have made them and our nation proud, irrespective of the profession they have pursued – be it science or engineering, teaching or research, entrepreneurship or corporate sector, or public service. They have earned respect for their intellect, diligence and professionalism. I am sure that with hard work and determination, IIT Mandi will keep up the good name of the IIT brand, and its students will shine wherever they go.

My dear students:

4. I congratulate all of you who have been awarded degrees today. A lot of effort has gone into your success, especially of your teachers, family, friends and well-wishers. The nation at large has invested in your well-being in terms of academic infrastructure and physical amenities that you availed of during your stay here. As you leave the portals of your alma mater today enriched and fulfilled by your training, remember that you have a duty to respond to the needs of your society. A Vedic verse says and I quote: “Vidya dadati vinayam; vinayat yaati patratam; Patratva dhanamapnoti; dhanaddharmaha tataha sukham”, that is, “knowledge creates humility; from humility comes good fortune; with good fortune one performs dharma; in

performing dharma, one becomes happy” (unquote). I am sure that you all will take the path of sincerity, industry and conviction to be a winner in life.

5. Our technical institutions must usher in social consciousness amongst our budding engineers and scientists. Developing professional competence apart, these centres of scientific learning must induce social orientation in their students. They must help create a pool of bright and motivated youth who will use their knowledge and ingenuity to find solutions to socio-economic problems. I am glad to learn that IIT Mandi has established an Inter-disciplinary Socio-technical Practicum in collaboration with the Worcester Polytechnic Institute of USA. It engages students in projects aimed at deriving solutions to problems like traffic, cleanliness and drinking water.

6. Our higher educational institutions are an integral part of the local eco-system. They must assume greater responsibility for overall development of their region. The Government has taken important initiatives, aimed at financial inclusion, creation of model villages, Clean India and digital infrastructure. I have urged our institutions of higher learning to adopt five villages each and convert them into model villages in line with the Saansad Adarsh Gram Yojana. I am confident that IIT Mandi will take active part in this drive. I also call upon you to play a key role in realizing the objectives of the ‘Digital India’ programme in this region.

Friends:

7. The growing demand for engineering education has resulted in the establishment of a number of technical institutions. Yet in this proliferation drive, quality of instruction and physical infrastructure has taken a backseat. The educational standard of our country at the tertiary level has been starkly brought out by two reputed international surveys. They have graded not a single Indian institution amongst the top two hundred universities in the world. We do have a few institutions that can do much better in the rankings with a more proactive and methodological approach. A higher rank can open fresh avenues of growth and placement for students. It can also encourage a greater flow of faculty and students from abroad, opening new vistas of frontier technology. Newly-created institutions will take some time to be in the reckoning. Nevertheless, you must take keen interest in the process not only with the objective of securing a rank but also to achieve all-round academic development.

8. Rejuvenating our higher education sector calls for greater dynamism amongst our institutions. They must identify one or two departments, in which they have core competence, and nurture them into centres of excellence. The quality of faculty must be of a high order to provide students world-class instruction. With fast occurring changes in various disciplines, the faculty must keep themselves abreast with the latest developments.

9. To bring about qualitative changes in teaching, the newly-established IITs must leverage the expertise available in the older IITs. The National Knowledge

Network offers a platform for academic institutions to collaborate peer group learning in emerging areas. Additionally, this network can compensate for shortages in faculty, infrastructure and resources.

10. Our educational institutions must make an effort to develop linkages with international academic institutions. In this context, it is heartening to note that IIT Mandi had signed an MOU in 2011 with TU9, the nine leading technical universities of Germany. You must make full use of these inter-linkages to provide global exposure to your faculty and students.

Friends:

11. Knowledge and innovation are the keystones of progress. Competitive advantage can be derived from an eco-system conducive to new learning, research and innovation. Inter-disciplinary approach in course curricula and research, strengthening under-graduate research and making research integral to the teaching-learning process must garner focused attention.

12. You must build strong linkages with the industry. An industry-interface cell must be in place. The cell must engage itself in sponsoring of chair positions by industry; drafting of experts from industry in project guidance and curriculum design; and setting up of incubation centres, laboratories and research parks. Success of initiatives like 'Make in India' hinges on manufacturing quality industrial products where academia-industry interface would play a critical role.

13. The older IITs have a strong alumni network. They leverage the expertise of many of their alumni who have done well in their chosen fields. The newer ones must make every effort to connect with their alumni. They could be made a part of governance structures, or engaged in business and project mentoring and curriculum design. I am certain that the alumni of IIT Mandi will involve themselves, in due course, in the affairs of this Institution in a meaningful manner.

Friends:

14. Before concluding, let me say that higher educational institutions, particularly engineering institutes, must promote a scientific temperament and a spirit of inquiry in their students. They must encourage their students to follow their curiosity and explore their creativity. They must equip their students to think beyond their textbooks. They must spur ingenious ideas in them.

15. I wish all the students the very best for the future. I also wish the management and faculty good luck for their endeavours.

Thank you.

Jai Hind.

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