

**SPEECH OF SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE, FORMER
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MANAGEMENT'S (NDIM) CONVOCATION**

I am happy to be here today for the 20th Convocation of MBA Graduates of the New Delhi Institute of Management (NDIM). I congratulate the degree holders on reaching a significant milestone of their lives.

2. I am told that New Delhi Institute of Management (NDIM) was founded in 1992 with the spirit to give back to the society. I am also told that within this short period, this Institute has acquired international accreditation from Association of Accreditation Service for International Colleges (ASIC). I am indeed happy to know that NDIM has gained reputation for its strong emphasis on Business Ethics and CSR, and for this I applaud them.

Dear Students,

3. Today, we are gathered here to celebrate the achievements of education. Convocation marks the end of an era – of the carefree student, but at the same time, it marks

the beginning of a new one. I am certain that you will step into this new phase of your life with confidence and enthusiasm. I hope that in this journey you are guided by the ideals espoused by the esteemed founders of this Institute. I would urge you to employ the skills and lessons attained here to ensure social, political and economic well-being of the nation as a whole and the common man in particular.

Dear Friends,

4. There is no contestation about Education being crucial to the growth and development of a nation. It is a powerful tool that warrants social transformation and has the ability to build the economic fortunes of a country. In the words of Benjamin Franklin, I quote, ***“An investment in knowledge pays the best interest”*** (unquote).

5. Our institutions of education – from primary to higher – play an instrumental role in shaping and defining our values. They are responsible for imparting the democratic values of equality and human dignity within us. For a complex and varied society like ours, distributive justice, as a higher goal, can be achieved only on the strength of a sound education system.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

6. It is a matter of deep concern that our institutes of higher education are not able to come at par with global institutes of excellence. It is a crisis that seems superficial but runs deep. Our quantitative efforts must therefore be matched with improvement in qualitative terms. I believe the private sector has a great role to play in assisting the government to achieve this task. However, there must be no compromise on the quality benchmarks or the social objectives.

7. Private sector derives its sustenance from the society and therefore, it must give back to that very society. The essence of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) lies in ensuring that the benefits of growth and development reach the lowest rungs of our nation. CSR initiatives must focus on capacity building programs to enhance the quality of our human resource. Only then can we nurture our youth into self-dependent, nationally and socially conscious, responsible citizens.

Friends,

8. I believe that our education policy must be founded on the three pillars of Quality, Affordability and Accessibility. I

emphasise on the urgent need to improve the quality of our human resources because of two factors. First of all, India has a vast human resource which can contribute immensely to the growth of our nation. Secondly and more importantly, the demography of our nation is relatively young. Coupled with this energy and enthusiasm of youth, India has immense potential to grow at a significant pace and make this coming decade a fruitful one. Our failure to harness this potential and channelize the energy of our youth will reflect negatively on our development. India faces the challenges of acute poverty and inability to meet the demands of the growing population. There are many remote and rural areas still unacquainted with college or university education.

9. It is imperative for the Government to promote inclusiveness in higher education through Student-aid programmes like self-help schemes and education loans. To my mind, deserving students must be encouraged through need-based scholarships along with merit-based aids. I also believe that we must take care of our 'inspired teachers' who in turn nurture students into free-thinking, self-sustaining individuals. Socrates had said truly, and I quote: ***"Education is the kindling of a flame, not the filling of a vessel"*** (unquote).

There is no quality education without qualified teachers. A good teacher can inspire the love of learning within students and ignite their imagination, beyond classroom teaching. This will result in a holistic development and qualitative improvement in the capacity to absorb knowledge.

Dear Teachers and Students,

10. Our Institutions of higher learning must foster an environment conducive to research and innovation. Promoting this atmosphere, the Institutions must emphasise on inter-disciplinary and inter-University research with substantial fellowships for the same. At the same time, it is important to establish links with the market through industry incubation parks and focus on skill development to ensure worthwhile employment for our qualified youth.

11. For developing countries like India, our innovations must target those at the bottom of the socio-economic pyramid to be the beneficiaries. Where most of our population is dependent on the primary sector, the researchers must find creative solutions to make the activities at the grassroots more economically viable. The industry

must form linkages with the educational institutions to support such innovations.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

12. Developing nations like India are caught in the whirlwind of rapidly changing global environment. We face a great challenge in coping up with this change since different regions of our country are changing at a different pace. It is our responsibility to ensure that the advancement in technology does not leave anyone behind. We must harness the power of technology to make education more accessible and affordable. Today we can reach people over thousands of kilometres away, through a Television or a Computer screen. Our institutions of higher education must democratize education, using modern technology to reach a wider and remotely located student population.

Friends,

13. Standing amongst this young and aspiring gathering, I am inspired and I believe that we have a prosperous future ahead. I once again congratulate the degree holders and wish them the very best for embarking on their life journey.

Thank You.

Jai Hind.