

**SPEECH OF SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE, FORMER
PRESIDENT OF INDIA AT THE 4th ANNUAL CONVOCATION
OF THE INDIAN INSTITUTE OF ENGINEERING SCIENCE &
TECHNOLOGY (IEST)**

It is indeed a matter of privilege for me to have been considered for presenting of the D. Litt. (*Honoris Causa*) on the occasion of the 4th Annual Convocation of the Indian Institute of Engineering, Science and Technology (IEST), Shibpur. I served as the ex-officio Visitor of this institution as the President of the Republic till July 25th last year and this recognition, after having become an ordinary Indian citizen, makes it all the more special for me. I accept it with all humility. I also take the opportunity to congratulate all degree recipients today and extend my congratulations to Dr Sekhar Basu, Chairman, Atomic Energy Commission and Dr Lazar Mathew, eminent Medical Researcher of India who will be receiving Doctorate degrees (*Honoris Causa*) in this year's Convocation. Furthermore, I extend my good wishes to the Alumni and Former Teachers who will be honoured by IEST, Shibpur today.

2. As we know, IEST, Shibpur was earlier the Bengal Engineering College. The history of this great institution goes back to the 19th century when the council of Education, Bengal

felt the need of trained engineering personnel for the Public Works Department. It was then decided that Civil Engineering classes and a Professorship in Civil Engineering be started at Hindu College, Calcutta. Slowly, in 1856, a College of Engineering was started by the name of Civil Engineering College in the premises of the Writers Building, Calcutta. In 1865 the college merged with the Presidency College, Calcutta and from 1865 to 1869 the college functioned as the Civil Engineering Department of Presidency College. In 1880, the college was shifted to its present campus at Shibpur, Howrah, and was christened the 'Government College, Howrah'. In the year 1921, it was changed to Bengal Engineering College. In lieu of its contributions, it was elevated to the position of a 'Deemed University' in the year 1992 by the HRD Ministry. The growth of this institution did not stop at that. In 2004, it got the status of a University, thus being called Bengal Engineering and Science University, Shibpur. And finally in March 2014, through an Act of Parliament, this prestigious institution became an "Institution of National Importance".

3. It would indeed be amiss if I did not underline that the institution's progress from one milestone to another and its recognition thereof has been more than deserving. Its continued focus on research have led to extremely significant innovation

that include areas of solar sponge for water-splitting, suitable slime waste management systems for sustainable iron mining in India, early cancer detection and various areas of mining, technology and healthcare.

4. Despite perception, on the contrary, science has held a central place in our civilizational ethos. While the evolution of modern science and technology as a result of western influences started gaining ground in the 19th Century, our scientific traditions of Banabhatta, Aryabhatta, Charaka, and numerous others formed the bedrock of our scientific culture. After independence, starting with Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru, every Prime Minister stressed on the need for developing a scientific temper and emphasized on the use of technology to bring about positive socio-economic changes. Be it collaborations with various countries to set up steel plants in early days after independence, constructing dams on rivers for irrigation and power generation, the Green Revolution, atomic research or advances in space sciences. Technology and technical education have always been perceived and utilized as instruments of transformation for economic, social and political development of the country. We have always

emphasized the role of science and technology in solving the problems of society.

I am reminded of what Dr. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan had said in 1966 in his Message to the Nation on the occasion of Independence Day, and I quote, ***“Science and technology will help us to solve the problems of hunger and poverty, of disease and illiteracy, of superstition and deadening custom, of vast resources running to waste of a rich country inhabited by a poor people.”*** (unquote)

5. Dear students, as you graduate out of this premier institution, you have the responsibility of ushering in societal transformation using the knowledge that you have acquired. In today’s world, technology is disruptive. It brings in fast paced changes making it difficult, many a times, to keep pace with the evolving technological environment. The pace of change in technology makes the continuous learning process even more challenging. Today, after passing out from the hallowed portals of this Institute, I would urge all of you to continuously keep updating your knowledge and skills to deliver substantive outcomes for your organization, society and country. I am sure the faculty members of this Institute have empowered you to overcome myriad challenges and become successful leaders in whatever field of work you may decide.

Dear Students,

6. Technologists are problem solvers who search for quicker, better and less expensive ways to meet tough challenges. Thus, technology graduates like you will play a pivotal role in understanding and furthering the relationship between science, technology and society for a better tomorrow. On this momentous day when you set out on your journey into the real world, I call upon each one of you to take a pledge to make the full use of technology for the benefit of mankind and to see that the use of technology spreads happiness, prosperity and general well-being amongst the people of this country.

7. Educational Institutions like yours have a very critical role to play in nurturing innovations, research and technological developments in society. IEST, Shibpur is doing extremely well and I hope that it will do even better since it has bright minds like you. The education and research in our universities needs to be in synchronization with the first world countries. This is a challenging task in front of the institutes and universities of national importance, like yours. IEST Shibpur, along with other premier institutes of the country has the onus of providing the best research outcomes to the nation. With these few

words, I conclude and I once again reiterate my gratitude for having endowed upon me the degree of D. Litt (*Honoris Causa*) which I accept with pride and humility.

Thank You

Jai Hind