

# EXTRACTS FROM ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA, SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE AT THE INAUGURATION OF THE DIAMOND JUBILEE CELEBRATIONS AND THE TWENTY SIXTH CONVOCATION OF BIRLA INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY MESRA

Ranchi, Jharkhand: January 10, 2016

1. I am happy to present amidst you this morning particularly when you are celebrating the 26<sup>th</sup> Convocation of your alma mater and also Diamond Jubilee Celebrations of the Birla Institute of Technology (BIT) Mesra, established in 1955 by the philanthropist industrialist B.M. Birla and subsequently ably taken forward by his son G.P. Birla and now by Shri C.K. Birla to lead this institute.

2. Let me congratulate you - the degree recipients - whose years of sincere effort, hard work and dedication have culminated in your achievement today. I also compliment the parents and teachers who have contributed in leading you towards this feat. The intellectual, social and other skills that you have acquired here would stand you in good stead in your life ahead. You will have many professional accomplishments in your career. However, I want to remind you that you must also use your knowledge and technical expertise for the welfare of the common man. I am sure you will succeed on all fronts.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

3. BIT Mesra from a humble beginning has made rapid strides to become one of the frontline engineering institutions of our country today. The seventeen departments of this institute offer programmes at all levels in traditional disciplines such as mechanical, civil, chemical and electrical engineering, computer science, pharmaceutical sciences, and architecture, and also in contemporary fields like bio-engineering, space engineering, and remote sensing. Since its inception, BIT Mesra has shown exemplary commitment towards furthering the cause of higher education in the country and harnessing the potential of young men in the cause of national development.

4. When India became independent in 1947, we embarked upon a programme of sustained economic development comprising rapid industrialization, improved agriculture, balanced regional development, and reduction in import dependence. We can be proud of our achievements so far. A few facts speak for it. From barely one million ton of steel production at the time of independence, we now produce over 90 million ton annually making us the fourth largest steel producing country in the world. From less than one lakh automobiles per year in 1947, we are now the sixth largest producer of automobiles at 3.8 million. At 612 million ton in 2014-15, we are the world's

third largest producer of coal. At 270 million ton last year, we are only behind China in terms of cement production. We are the fastest growing market for electronic goods. We are the ninth largest economy in the world in dollar terms with a GDP of over 2 trillion US dollars. In terms of purchase power parity, we are the third largest economy. Among the large economies of the world, we are the fastest growing.

5. This impressive growth of our nation is a cause for genuine pride for all of us. Engineering institutions like BIT Mesra have contributed to this advancement through well-trained technologists at all levels of leadership. It is a matter of great satisfaction for this institute that it counts amongst its alumni several corporate leaders, scientists, engineers and public figures. Apart from technocrats manning industrial firms, it has provided a large pool of entrepreneurs in diverse areas ranging from computer software, networking hardware, efficient mining machinery, gas and power.

Friends:

6. We cannot lose sight of the fact that over 250 million people in our country languish at subsistence level of poverty. The task of taking them out of poverty may be daunting but possible. Our socio-economic progress has to be tempered with a commitment to equitable distribution of its fruits to all sections of our society, particularly the backward, less-privileged and the disadvantaged. BIT Mesra has created many pioneers for social uplift in cities and villages. It is heartening to learn that the alumni of this institute by designing affordable water purification plants for hand pumps and other village water bodies, and by re-designing hospital bed servicing, has provided the critical fruits of technology to the poorest of the poor. Mahatma Gandhi had said and I quote: "*Man becomes great exactly in the degree in which he works for the welfare of his fellow men*" (unquote). I urge upon you all to continue the thrust on socially responsive projects through the medium of research and technology. Let research in academic institutions become relevant for those at the bottom of the socio-economic pyramid!

Friends:

7. The higher education sector in India has seen enormous growth over the last few decades. A healthy feature of this expansion is the increasing participation of the private sector in the delivery of higher education. The percentage of students enrolled for higher education in private institutions has risen from 54 percent at the beginning of the Eleventh Plan period to 59 percent at the commencement of the Twelfth Plan period. This trend of private higher educational bodies accounting for greater student enrolment will continue. Proliferation has resulted in greater access but has led to an alarming distress in quality at the same time.

8. Creating inter-linkages with other higher educational institutions can deliver benefits in terms of resource sharing like academic experts and course material, exchange of students and faculty, scope for research collaboration, and sharing of new ideas and best practices. Towards this end, it will be worthwhile to properly harness the existing information and communication technology networks like the National Knowledge Network. Institutes can also pursue establishment of partnerships with foreign and domestic institutions through the signing of memoranda of understanding.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

9. To realize the productive potential of our economy, it is necessary to provide a head start to various innovation activities. For, it is innovation, over and above capital and labour, that is the deciding factor for enhanced production in an economy. The youngsters of today are brimming with innovative ideas. They require a platform to give wings to their novel thoughts. The concept of innovators' clubs started in several central institutes of higher learning can be replicated in many other institutions. These clubs can tie up with innovation incubators existing in technical institutions to mentor and develop innovations into viable products. It is necessary to strengthen the chain between innovators, technical institutions and financiers.

10. Due to the facilitative environment that has evolved, the youth today has a greater flair for entrepreneurship. Many start-ups in India have become successful and shown the path of progress to others. In fact, India with over 4,200 start-ups has the third largest start-up eco-system in the world, behind US and UK. The higher academic institutions have a clear role to play in refining the entrepreneurial abilities of their students. Entrepreneurial studies can be taught as a course in our institutions. Other support measures like the small industries entrepreneurs' park of BIT Mesra are needed to prepare students to become job-creators rather than job-seekers.

11. With these words, I conclude. I am confident that BIT Mesra will continue to work towards building the nation's capabilities in advanced technology, high quality education, and research in areas aligned to our industrial, social and academic needs. I once again extend my best wishes to the graduating students. I wish you all good luck.

Thank you.

Jai Hind.