

**SPEECH BY THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA,
SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE AT THE 13TH CONVOCATION
OF VISVESVARAYA NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
TECHNOLOGY**

15 September, 2015: NAGPUR

I am happy to be amidst you to share this significant moment in your life. At the outset, I would like to congratulate those who have completed their degree programme from this prestigious Institute. I would also like to thank the management for inviting me to this Institute named after Sir M. Visvesvaraya, an eminent engineer, planner and statesman of our country.

2. Today, while remembering this great son of India on his birth anniversary, I would like to quote his philosophy on technical education. He had said, (quote)

“No great improvement can be affected without definite ideals and organizations. “Investigate, educate, organize” should be our watchwords if we are to quicken the life pulse of the people and train them for a larger and fuller life.”

(Unquote)

I am happy that this Institute has taken steps to realize his philosophy and to sensitize the students to technology enhancement and social causes. I am confident that all the students passing out from this Institute will imbibe the ideals, vision, philosophy and professional qualities of Sir Visvesvaraya. I am also glad to know that the Convocation of this Institute is usually conducted on the birth anniversary of Sir Visvesvaraya, which is also celebrated as Engineers’ Day in India, to pay tribute to this visionary leader.

Dear students,

3. The convocation today marks the completion of a vital phase in your life. You all have worked hard to acquire knowledge, technology and skills through the programme of the Institute. While achieving this, you might have undergone pressures, ups and downs and anxious moments. On this significant day in your life, you would be experiencing a certain joy and happiness to see your perseverance, hard work and commitment being translated into achievement of your goals and objectives. I am happy that all of you will now enter the professional field to become part of an active and skilled work force and will also add to the technical prowess of our nation.

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Ladies and Gentlemen,

4. Education in general, and technical education in particular, has always been seen as an instrument 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)

We have to effectively utilize the power of education, the strength of science and technology in the right direction to bring positive transformation in society. You, as graduates of this Institute, have the responsibility for ushering in societal transformation using the knowledge of science and technology which you have acquired.

5. 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 to work in.

Friends,

6. Technologists are professional practitioners of engineering with special emphasis on applying scientific knowledge, mathematics and ingenuity to develop solutions for technological problems. Technologists integrate their knowledge of the physical sciences with more abstract realms beyond the boundaries of current technology in all areas of life. They have many different types of jobs to choose from, including research, design, analysis, development, testing, and sales positions. 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.

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7. The government has initiated the "Start-up India, Stand up India" campaign to promote financing for start-ups and offer incentives to boost entrepreneurship and job creation. The success of this initiative will depend on how innovatively we can use the technology as well as human resources available in our country. I call upon you, the young technologists, that instead of looking for job opportunities, you may aim to become entrepreneurs, who create job opportunities for people. Through your start-ups and entrepreneurships you can create enterprises, which will create wealth for the nation, society and people. This will be your biggest contribution to inclusive and sustainable development of our country.

8. For the past three years, almost like a parrot, I have been repeating at the Conferences in Rashtrapati Bhavan and at Convocations that no single Indian institution is in the list of top 200 institutions of the world. As a result of several pro-active steps taken in the last three years, the ranking scene is beginning to change. It is a proud moment for Indian academic community and the institutes of higher learning that in the QS World University Rankings of 2015-16 released today, we have **two** Indian institutes in top 200 of the world. Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore is ranked at no. **147** and Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi is ranked at no. **179**. Apart from this, IIT-Bombay is ranked at no. 202. Indian institutions have done remarkably well and I will like to take this opportunity to congratulate the faculty members and staff of these institutions. I will also like to appreciate these institutions for responding to my repeated calls to take the ranking process seriously and to present the credentials of our institutions by providing data at the appropriate time.

9. A high rank can boost the morale of the academic community and open greater avenues of growth and placement for students. It can help attract the best faculty from India and abroad and provide a benchmark for continuous quality enhancement. I was reading a report that IITs rank at 61st position globally, when rated as a system. Similarly, the IITs as a unit together, are among the world's top entrepreneurial under graduate universities at no. 4, after Stanford, UC Berkeley and MIT. I am sharing this information to highlight the entrepreneurial capacity of our institutions and their potential to transform India through innovation and indigenization. The NITs, as institutes of national importance, have to take a lead in creating the capacity for innovation and entrepreneurship and align it with the national development goals. I would like to call upon your institute to take a lead in this direction.

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10. Knowledge and innovation are the keystones of progress. Competitive advantage can be derived from an eco-system conducive to new learning, research and innovation. I am sure that VNIT, Nagpur which is following the footprints of the technology visionary, Sir M. Visvesvaraya, will take a lead in creating an eco-system for entrepreneurship and innovation amongst the NITs.

Friends,

11. On this 13th Convocation of VNIT, 1117 students have received their degrees. I congratulate all the students who have become graduates today. You are a valuable asset to your profession and to the intellectual wealth of our nation. India is a country full of opportunities as well as challenges. Each one of us aspires for change. I would like to conclude by quoting Mahatma Gandhi who had said, "Be the change that you wish to see in this world." I once again wish all of you the very best in your chosen fields of activity. I am sure you will make all of us proud of your achievements in the years to come.

Thank you.

Jai Hind.
