

**SPEECH BY THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA, SHRI PRANAB
MUKHERJEE AT THE 7TH CONVOCATION OF THE DEFENCE
INSTITUTE OF ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY**

Pune, Mumbai: 31-05-2013

1. I am indeed happy to have this opportunity today for the Seventh Convocation of the Defence Institute of Advanced Technology (DIAT), a premier Institute of higher learning in defence related engineering and technology. I fondly remember my visit to DIAT in 2006 as Raksha Mantri. Established in 1952, DIAT became a deemed university in 2000. Today, it is a unique academic institution for research-oriented education and for carrying out fundamental and exploratory research in advanced defence technologies.

2. Convocation day is always interesting to all concerned. It is the culmination of a very important phase in the life of an individual. I congratulate all the students and researchers who have received their degrees today. Today's youth has great capability as they have had the benefit of being educated in a free nation. Along with the rights they enjoy in a democracy, they also have great responsibilities towards the nation.

3. Friends, the contribution of our armed forces in strengthening our democratic polity and pluralistic society is unique. Our country desires a stable and rule-based international system. It is a matter of deep concern that the international security environment continues to decline. This calls for a constant review of the risk scenario so that our security establishment is ready with dynamic responses to any threat.

4. It is imperative for any modern armed force to be a knowledge-based entity. An increased use of science and technology in defence preparedness is a necessity today. There is need for domain knowledge, and to develop capabilities and strengthen systems through innovation. Policy making should be proactive to identify problems, highlight trends, develop scenarios, and recommend policy options, so as to avert any crisis. We must, therefore, have a pool of institutions in our country dedicated to raising the technological capabilities of our defence systems and expanding the knowledge frontier on issues of defence and security. DIAT, as a specialized defence research and technology university, has a crucial role to generate state-of-art knowledge to fulfill the needs of our defence establishment.

5. Friends, we have adopted a strategy of high economic growth to overcome poverty and ensure equitable development. Our future growth will depend increasingly on the knowledge economy. Our higher education sector must be equipped to face this challenge. Despite a credible infrastructure in our country – over six hundred fifty degree awarding institutions and over thirty three thousand colleges – we are confronted by lack of quantity and quality. We are short of good quality institutions to meet the increasing demand. As per a survey, none of our academic institutions finds a place amongst the top two hundred universities in the world. When I look at this scenario, my mind goes back to the earlier time for about eighteen hundred years beginning 6th Century BC, Indian universities like Takshashila, Nalanda, Vikramashila, etc had dominated the world education system. They became the colossus of the renowned Indian higher education system before they petered out by the

beginning of the 13th Century AD. Today, our universities are nowhere in the top global rankings. This situation must be improved and I urge all academicians and those concerned to explore the possibilities how fast we can achieve this.

6. We have the potential to restore our leadership position in higher education. We must effect innovative changes to develop our universities into world class institutions. A culture of excellence should be ushered in by allowing adequate flexibility in different aspects of academic management. Our universities should make greater use of e-education to address the problems of accessibility, quality and faculty shortage. Through e-classrooms, it is possible to transmit important lectures to students in different locations. We need a critical mass of experts in every field whose efforts could be networked to deliver greater benefits. The National Mission on Education through Information and Communication Technology is an important initiative in this direction.

7. We must seek not only academic proficiency in our graduates but also holistic development. For that, it is important to provide training in life skills such as self-awareness, empathy, creative thinking, problem-solving, effective communication, interpersonal relationship, and stress and emotion management. These skills should find due place in our academic curriculum and our institutes must have the requisite expertise to impart them.

8. Friends, our country's progress will depend on our ability to operate on the frontiers of science and technology. A sound knowledge base will determine our economic strength, energy security and defence preparedness. A culture of innovation is required for that, which is sadly lacking in our country. Only forty two thousand patent applications were filed in India in 2011. This number is twelve times more in China and US. We have the capability to innovate but we lack the systems that can encourage us to do so. To develop research expertise in key areas, we must have a flexible system to attract Indian scientists and technologists working abroad to work on short-term projects in our country. We must strengthen measures such as interdisciplinary and inter-university research partnerships, research fellowships and industry incubation parks. I am happy to note that DIAT has academic and research collaboration with a number of institutions in our country and abroad.

9. The decade 2010-20 has been declared the decade of innovation. This should have meaning for the common man. There are grass root innovations that can be developed into viable products. For that, our universities and research institutions in collaboration with the corporate sector should provide technological mentoring. In a Conference of the Vice Chancellors of Central Universities held this year, a recommendation was made to set up Innovators Clubs in the Central Universities to facilitate interaction between the teaching and student communities and grassroots innovators. Recently, I had the occasion to open such clubs at two Central Universities in Uttar Pradesh and Assam. In innovation exhibitions organized by these universities and the Nagaland University, I was happy

to witness the ingenuity of our young innovators. I invite all to join this festival of innovations in our country.

10. DIAT has pursued a harmonious approach to achieve a healthy synergy between fundamental and applied sciences. It has complemented the efforts of the Defence Research and Development Organization by carrying out research leading to development of new technology. I compliment Raksha Mantri for supporting this initiative wholeheartedly keeping in view the long term benefits to our country. I am confident that this University will rank high in its class globally and contribute in a big way to our self reliance in defence science and technology.

11. I once again congratulate the degree awardees. Mahatma Gandhi once said and I quote: *“Live as if you were to die tomorrow. Learn as if you were to live forever”* (unquote). Please remember that education and knowledge is infinite. You will have the opportunity to learn at every stage of your life. You must have an open mind for that. You must overcome challenges with sincerity, poise, dedication and hard work. I wish you all the best in life and career. I also wish the management and faculty of DIAT all success in their future endeavours.

Thank you.

Jai Hind.
