

**SPEECH BY THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA, SHRI PRANAB  
MUKHERJEE AT THE FIRST CONVOCATION OF  
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY, ARUNACHAL  
PRADESH**

**Arunachal Pradesh: Nov 21, 2014 (Friday)**

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1. It is my privilege to attend the First Convocation of the National Institute of Technology (NIT), Arunachal Pradesh, one of the ten NITs established after 2006-07.
2. I am also happy at the opportunity to once again visit this beautiful state, whose pristine beauty and sylvan surroundings make it the 'nature's treasure trove'. Its songs, dances and crafts only add to the magnificence of this place. Arunachal is a historical land finding mention in ancient scriptures like *Kalika Purana* and *Mahabharata*. It is an important centre of pilgrimage with the Tawang Monastery and Parasurakund located here.
3. Arunachal Pradesh is in the throes of socio-economic change, aided by development in sectors like hydro-electric power and tourism. A facilitator to this transformative process is education, which has received considerable impetus.
4. NIT Arunachal Pradesh was set up in 2010. It has since progressed swiftly, overcoming the difficulties that crop up in the nascent stage. With 35 faculty members and 400 students enrolled in programmes ranging from graduation to PhD levels, it offers mainstream engineering disciplines as well as emerging subjects. Despite operating from a temporary campus, this Institute has made best efforts to maintain the quality of instruction. I compliment the management and faculty of NIT Arunachal Pradesh for their energy, dynamism and commitment in steering this Institute most admirably in its formative years.

Friends, my dear students:

5. This Institute has reached a major milestone today as the first batch of students has been awarded their degrees. I congratulate the new graduates, who by their dint of labour and perseverance have reached this culminating stage. You are now ready to step into the

world outside your academic institution. I am sure you will make the best use of the knowledge you have gained here to attain professional success. Remember that you will have the occasion to learn at every stage of life. Never miss this opportunity. Mahatma Gandhi had said and I quote: “*Live as if you were to die tomorrow; learn as if you were to live forever*” (unquote).

6. You are going to be a part of the country’s scientific manpower, which is a crucial constituent of our developmental framework. It is incumbent on you to lend your hand in meeting the challenges of growth and industrial development. I am confident that you will more than fulfill the responsibilities entrusted upon you.
7. A great responsibility is also on our engineering institutions, most notably the IITs and NITs, to produce socially conscious and professionally competent personnel who can take an aspirational India to greater heights. They would do well to not only equip our budding engineers and scientists to address contemporary issues with innovative solutions, but also inculcate in them an understanding of our society.
8. Beyond the academic domain, our higher educational institutions including the NITs have a larger role to play in society; in the progress of the regions in which they are based. They have to establish connection with stakeholders, identify problems hindering the development of the regions, and use their academic and research expertise to find solutions. In the Conference of NIT Directors held in Rashtrapati Bhavan last month, I had called upon the NITs to adopt five villages each and convert them into model villages in line with the *Saansad Adarsh Gram Yojana* launched recently. I am confident that central institutions like NITs will spur the development of our nation through the collective development of her regions.

Friends:

9. A number of institutions have been started over the last few years to cater to the growing demand for engineering education in the country. Quality though has failed to keep pace with the expansion in quantity. While we have a few reputed engineering institutions, it is also a fact that they lag in international rankings. There is a need to provide greater impetus to the ratings process. At the same time, there is a need to arrest declining standards in a vast number of institutions. A sense of competition has to be developed amongst our higher level institutions including NITs. I am glad to learn that a

national rankings system is being developed. This will propel our institutions to do better.

10. Physical infrastructure is the *lever* of higher education and faculty is its *fulcrum*. A lot needs to be done to have quality faculty render world-class teaching to prepare students for a highly competitive and globalized world. Vacant faculty positions have to be filled up with talented scholars. Refresher courses, participation in international seminars and workshops, and publishing of papers in peer-reviewed journals have to be accorded priority. Many NITs have forged MOUs with foreign universities for faculty and student exchanges. They have to see to it that these institutional linkages confer the greatest possible benefit on our academic community.

Friends:

11. Research and innovation in NITs have to be given precedence in academic development. Some of the steps, I feel, that require renewed focus are inter-disciplinary approach in course curricula and research, identifying the areas of core competency and nurturing centres of excellence, strengthening under-graduate research, and making research an integral part of the teaching-learning process. MOUs for research collaboration executed with foreign institutions have to be tracked regularly to ensure their efficacy. A suggestion was made in the NIT Directors' Conference that an MOU for exchange of students and faculty, materials and publications, and joint education and research activities could be negotiated and signed on behalf of all NITs in the North-East with a consortium of institutions in Singapore. Such cooperation will provide fillip to our 'Look East' Policy as well.
12. Turning NITs into world-class engineering institutes call for developing multiple linkages. NITs have to actively engage with other institutes for research collaboration and sharing of best practices. They have to be more proactive in their interaction with the industry. Most NITs have an industry interface cell in place. The cell has to explore possibilities like sponsoring of chair positions by industry; drafting experts from industry in project guidance and curriculum design; and setting up incubation centres, laboratories and research parks. The 'Make in India' initiative aimed at making our country a manufacturing hub depends to a large extent on the deepening of this academia-industry alliance.

13. NITs have to also devise mechanisms to connect with their alumni, many of whom have excelled in their chosen field. They could be inducted in governance mechanisms, or utilized for business and project mentoring of students and in curriculum design. I hope the alumni of this Institute, with the first batch to graduate today, will retain their link and communicate frequently.

Friends:

14. Before concluding, I would like to emphasize that our educational institutions, particularly technical schools, should develop in their students a scientific temper. Dr. Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan had said and I quote: "*The scientific temperament is characterized by a passion for facts, careful observation and cautious statement of conclusions. It discourages reliance on vague impressions, second hand evidence and hasty generalization. It calls for a passionless and understanding contemplation of objective nature*" (unquote). Our institutions have to fire the power of imagination of their students. They have to prompt them to think beyond what is written in books; encourage them to accept a proposition only after thorough investigation; and persuade them to develop a grand vision which they can, through research and inquiry, translate into reality.
15. I once again complement this Institute for their endeavour so far and wish them good luck for the future. I also wish the graduating students a bright career and fulfilling life ahead.

Thank you.

Jai Hind.

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