

**ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA,  
SHRI RAM NATH KOVIND  
AT THE CONVOCATION CEREMONY OF IIT-DELHI**

**New Delhi, November 4, 2017**

1. It is a matter of great pleasure for me to be delivering the Convocation Address on the occasion of the 48th convocation of the Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi. As the Visitor to this institution of national importance, I am happy to be in your midst. For the graduating class of 2017, this occasion represents a major milestone in your careers. I congratulate all of you. You are leaving this landmark campus for the excitement of a career in a world full of opportunities.
2. There is another group in the audience that needs to be congratulated today: your families. They have sacrificed for your success. They have provided you emotional and financial support in all your endeavours. Your presence in this convocation ceremony is a product of both your effort and your parents' *tapasya*. Today, they will not only be present at this convocation but also visit the campus where their children studied, and will meet the professors. This must be a special moment for them.
3. The success of the graduating students is also a tribute to the faculty of IIT Delhi, which is among the best our country has to offer. They have nurtured raw youngsters into mature professionals. My good wishes to all of them.

**Friends**

4. The IIT system in general – and IIT Delhi specifically – has been the gold standard of technical education in our country. IIT alumni have been the bedrock of India's engineering capabilities, its IT industry and our start-up culture. They have been brand ambassadors of India's intellectual and technological strength across the globe, from Singapore to Silicon Valley.

5. The IITs were founded in the 1950s and early 1960s in a resource-starved country, coming out of colonialism. At that stage, we desperately needed to consolidate our technical and intellectual resources. As India grew, the IIT system grew with it. The early focus was on producing well-educated engineers, primarily at the undergraduate level. I am happy that today these institutions have a strong focus on research and development as well.
  
6. I understand that IIT Delhi now has more post-graduate students than at the undergraduate level. This is a healthy sign. We are moving towards research-based learning and churning out products and technologies for nation building. I am happy to note that researchers at IIT Delhi have invented and developed products that have contributed to the well-being of fellow citizens. For example:
  - I. **Nanofilters** developed by IIT Delhi protect us from ever-growing air pollution, and cost only Rs 10
  
  - II. The **TrueHb Hemometer** is a haemoglobin measurement device that is low-cost, convenient and portable. It has 99 per cent accuracy and has been validated by the All-India Institute of Medical Sciences
  
  - III. The **SmartCane** is a smart version of the normal cane for visually impaired people. Using ultrasonic technology, it helps them move about with comfort and safety
  
  - IV. **Clensta** is a device for a waterless body bath. It helps us maintain hygiene and clean ourselves even in the absence of water
  
7. Aside from these, I am told IIT Delhi has major innovations in data science in the pipeline. This is an emerging area of technology. Institutions like yours are well-poised to apply this new knowledge for the benefit of less-well-off sections of our people, and for those in rural areas.

8. In addition, the Fourth Industrial Revolution and advances in robotics and Artificial Intelligence are changing our society and workplace. They are challenging the many disciplines of engineering. This is pushing institutions such as the IITs towards upgrading and updating themselves. And it is re-emphasising the role of IITs as our society's navigators as we explore new technologies, and come to understand their implications for our economy, sociology and ethics.

## **Friends**

9. I have referred to the technological and economic impact of the IITs. But there is also the social role of IITs and the place they have in the Indian imagination. For many young Indians, studying at an IIT remains the ultimate dream. I am happy to note that in the audience we have over 50 students from Navodaya Schools across the country, chosen on the basis of their academic record and merit. They will interact with the graduating class, meet the faculty and visit laboratories. I am confident some of them will return in the coming years as IIT freshers.
10. I am happy to know that in the run-up to the convocation, the IIT Delhi community has organised four blood donation camps. As I have said earlier, all of us must strive to give back to society in our own little way – and to donate blood is the simplest and easiest way. I would urge the IIT Delhi authorities and community to adopt and partner a school for underprivileged children and see how they can contribute to its development and to the capacity building of its pupils.
11. Institutions such as IIT Delhi are not just centres of education. They are hubs of communities. A central component of the IIT Delhi community is its alumni body. I congratulate the four alumni of IIT Delhi who are being honoured today for their achievements in different walks of life. Like their classmates, they have contributed to the nation and to the world in various areas – in academics and research; in business and the corporate sector; and in government and public service. Each of them is a subject of pride for not only IIT Delhi but for all of us.

## Friends

12. All great universities of the world have a deep and thriving engagement between old students and the institution. They invite alumni to contribute, not merely in terms of financial assistance but more in terms of knowledge sharing and time.
13. In the case of the IIT Delhi alumni group, this can be done in several ways. Many of those who studied here in the past were fortunate to have their world-class education heavily subsidised by the tax payer. There is a moral obligation to pay back, and to help those less privileged – in whichever manner the individual prefers. It would be best of course if this process of paying back enriches education and scholarship at the grassroots of our society.
14. The obligation is on the IIT Delhi authorities to involve and invite alumni, many of whom are well placed in other universities or in industry, to come back and teach here – even if for short periods or for specific courses. If procedures need to be simplified to achieve this, then efforts must be made in that direction.
15. In conclusion, I once again commend the graduating class of 2017 and wish every one of you a happy, challenging and rewarding future. In particular, I offer my congratulations to the award winners at this convocation.
16. With these words, I call upon IIT Delhi, its faculty and alumni, and its students and graduates, to continue relentlessly on the path of nation building and the development and well-being of our society.

Thank you  
Jai Hind!