

**ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA,
SHRI RAM NATH KOVIND
AT THE MEETING OF DIRECTORS
OF IISc, IITs AND IISERs**

Rashtrapati Bhavan, March 6, 2018

1. Today, we have heard from the Directors of 31 Institutes of national importance, and may I also say 'institutes of national pride'. Forming the bedrock of research and education in the field of science and technology, these institutes are the dream institutions of learning for millions of our young students. While some institutes have a stellar record spread over decades, some others have been set up as recently as 2016. Common to all your institutes though, is the quest for excellence and the quest for knowledge.
2. By virtue of being the President of India, I am the Visitor of all your institutes. Education, especially higher education, is a subject I am personally passionate about. This led me to ask for this meeting to be convened – to understand, discuss and, where possible, to find quick solutions to the problems faced by your institutes.
3. Some common issues that emerged in the discussions today related to selection and recruitment of faculty, training and updating skills of academic staff, infrastructure, augmentation of internal revenues, strengthening of research facilities, and other such matters. Solving these issues is a process and I am happy that steps are being taken to resolve these issues both at the level of the institutes and the government.

4. I appreciate that the Minister for HRD, the Minister of State for HRD as well as Officers from the Ministry of HRD, Ministry of Finance, Department of Science and Technology and the All India Council for Technical Education were present here today. Your presence made the discussions more meaningful, and reflects a strong motivation to resolve the issues that were discussed in a time-bound manner.
5. Your institutes have an important responsibility, that is, to marry the research and developments in the field of science and technology to the needs of our country and its people. At the heart of a scientific endeavour is often a problem that the scientist wants to solve. It is important that challenges that confront our nation and our society become the prime instigator of your quest for Knowledge, Discovery and Innovation.
6. We face enormous challenges. Be it lifting our people out of poverty, ensuring their health and well-being or attaining food and energy security, your institutes can play an important role. Your incubation centres can also help to develop solutions to the problems we experience on a daily basis – from pollution of our natural resources to the traffic jams in our rapidly expanding cities. In this regard, you could collaborate with each other in order to share ideas and pool resources. Such a synergy would help you to better address some of the problems we face.
7. I am happy to know that IITs are taking some steps to improve the gender ratio in the enrolment for its B. Tech programmes and have set a goal of ensuring that by year 2020, 20% of B.Tech students are women. This is huge task given that presently less than 10% of B. Tech students in IITs are women. We must remember that

none of our developmental goals has any meaning without gender parity – and without equal opportunities for our daughters and girl-children.

8. The participation of women in science must be encouraged in every way possible. We have to promote the participation of girl students and of women in science and technology. If this disparity is not addressed, our scientific achievements will always be less than perfect and less than desirable. Two days from now, we shall be celebrating the International Women's Day. Let us re-dedicate ourselves to ensuring a higher participation of women in science.
9. It is for all of you, as Directors of these eminent institutes, to make these institutes more and more stronger. Given that your current standards are already high, improving further will be a challenge that you must accept. You must benchmark your performance in research and education against the best of global standards. There is no dearth of talent, nor that of resources, and I am sure that even for your institutes which are the best, the best is yet to come. All that is needed is that you set your standards even higher and solve each and every problem that you encounter in a systematic manner.
10. We all remember the stalwarts of scientific research in India such as Vikram Sarabhai, Homi Jehangir Bhabha, Satish Dhawan, and many more. What made them different from the rest was their ability to develop institutions as well as to groom the next generation of scientific administrators and leaders. You as the heads of our best scientific institutes must discharge your key role as leadership mentors for the next generation of scientists. This would ensure that we have a ready talent

pool of scientist-administrators who can conceive, establish and administer our scientific institutes.

11. Today, we have discussed some challenges and also made some progress in identifying the way forward. I am sure the Ministry of HRD, led by the Minister, Shri Prakash Javadekar, will continue to work with you to resolve any issues in a focused and time-bound manner. I propose that we may meet again in approximately six months time, perhaps in October, to review the progress.
12. With these words, I would like to thank you for coming to Rashtrapati Bhavan for this very educative meeting and participating in the discussions. I am happy to see that all of you are so committed to your institutes and to take them to the next level of excellence. I wish you and your institutes – all the best for the future.

Thank you
Jai Hind!