

**ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA,
SHRI RAM NATH KOVIND
AT THE MEETING OF DIRECTORS OF NITs, IEST, SPAs and
IITs**

Rashtrapati Bhavan, July 19, 2018

1. I am glad to be here for this meeting with Directors of 59 Institutes of Higher Learning in the fields of Information Technology, Engineering Science & Technology and Planning & Architecture. This completes my engagements, in the capacity of Visitor, with all 146 Institutes of Higher Learning in the first year of my Presidency.
2. On assuming office as the President of India, I was told that there was a tradition of a once-a-year conference of all the vice-chancellors, directors and other heads of Institutes of Higher Learning. However, I felt that it was essential for me to hear from each of the institutes directly, in smaller groups of related institutes and universities. That would help me understand the challenges they face and the dreams they nurture. This meeting is part of that process.
3. The 59 Central Institutes that are gathered here today are special. Most of them have been established by upgrading regional engineering colleges. All of them have been given the status of Institutes of National Importance by their respective Acts of Parliament.
4. The augmentation of Regional Engineering Colleges to National Institutes of Technology started with 17 institutes. Today, it has reached the number of 31 – one in each of our 29 States as well as in the Union Territories of Delhi and Puducherry. The NIT system has been able to provide high quality technical education to talented students across the country. Your network of institutes has taken the opportunity

of engineering education to remote corners. NITs form a very important segment among our premier technical institutes. They are critical to promoting technical education and research.

5. The Indian Institute of Engineering Science and Technology is also part of this meeting. Its origins are in the Bengal Engineering and Science University. The Anandkrishnan Committee, constituted by the Ministry of Human Resource Development, was asked to assess the potential of select institutions for upgrade to Institutes of National Importance. It chose the institute that we now know as IEST. And today the institute is playing a pivotal role in imparting technical education.
6. Schools of Planning and Architecture promote world-class education in architecture, urban and civic planning and allied fields. I am happy that in order to meet the increasing demand for skilled architects and planners in the country, the government has decided to establish more such schools. This will provide much-needed expertise for flagship national programmes such as Smart Cities and Housing for All.
7. Information Technology has a pivotal role in today's world. Our Institutes of Information Technology strive to create a unique meeting ground for the two fields of Information Technology and of Management. They contribute significantly to research, teaching and extension work for the integrated application of Information Technology and Management. In an age when IT is critical to almost all our endeavours, this is extremely valuable.
8. The human resource challenges of the Indian IT industry are rising, especially as the domestic market is growing. Given this, I am happy to note that the government has decided to supplement the five existing IIITs by establishing 20 more such institutes on a not-for-profit, public-private partnership basis.

9. One concern I would like to flag is the need to ensure proper infrastructure and filling of all faculty positions in your institutes. These problems should be addressed with the highest priority. If we do not have adequate faculty and infrastructure, we will not be doing justice to the young people who enrol in your institutes. I am sure you will take concrete steps before our next meeting.
10. The award of a degree is an important milestone in the life of a student. As such convocations should be held regularly. It is not important that I should attend the convocation. It is not possible for the President of India to be there for all convocations of your institutes in the same year or perhaps even in a five-year period. But it is imperative that the graduating students are awarded degrees on time. By delaying convocations, we deprive students and their families of a cherished moment of celebration and achievement. Please do ensure that you continue holding convocations on time.
11. There should also be a specific focus on your part to improve the NIRF rankings of your institution. But you must not rest with that. I hope to see some of these institutions in the list of 'Institutions of Eminence' of the country.
12. In the end, I would urge you to take pride in the work that you do. You have been gifted with the opportunity to shape the future of the youth of this country. Your work directly affects not only the future of your graduates and their families but also the future of India. The young graduates from your institutes will be the torch-bearers of their generation. By giving them the right knowledge, the right values and the right ethics, you are doing a service to our society. Please keep it up.

Thank you

Jai Hind!