

**ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA,  
SHRI RAM NATH KOVIND  
AT THE 7TH CONVOCATION OF IISER**

**Mohali, May 20, 2018**

1. I am happy to be here today for the seventh convocation of the Indian Institute of Science Education and Research, Mohali. Though a young institution, IISER, as it is popularly known, is an extremely important centre of higher education and research in our country. This Institute has quickly become one of northern India's foremost destinations for students and faculty interested in the pursuit of scientific advance. It is well on its way to fulfilling its mandate of promoting and providing facilities for basic science research and integrating these with the needs of India and of our wider society.
2. Your location in Mohali is itself telling. It allows you to serve the talented young people of, as well become part of, the Chandigarh-Mohali-Panchkula metropolitan area. This is one of the most exciting and promising urban agglomerations in our country. In parallel, IISER Mohali is also drawing inspiration from the rich tradition of basic and applied scientific research in Punjab. This legacy goes back to the period before Independence, when Punjab was one of India's earliest centres of scientific knowledge production and training.
3. This legacy also provides us some excellent examples of how collaboration between scientific researchers and technologists on the one side, and the larger developmental process on the other, contributed to nation building. We cannot forget the technologists who did the groundwork for large projects such as the Bhakra Nangal Project. Again, it was agricultural scientists and universities in Punjab that provided the basis for enhanced food productivity and for the Green Revolution. And today Mohali is a hub for the knowledge economy, for Information Technology, biotechnology and bioinformatics and related fields. It is critical

therefore that we see IISER as not just a standalone institution but as the fulcrum of an entire ecosystem. That is how this institution must grow and develop.

4. A convocation ceremony is a milestone and a moment of renewal for any educational institution. For the students who are graduating today, it is especially memorable. You are leaving IISER and entering a world buzzing with opportunities. I congratulate all of you and I also congratulate your professors – who have equipped you for this occasion. This is a day to cherish and show gratitude to your parents and families, who have helped you through this process. And you must not forget the rest of society – fellow citizens, hardworking taxpayers, government agencies, and so many other stakeholders – who have supported your alma mater and contributed to your education.
5. As you leave this Institute and build your professional careers, do remember all those who have, whether directly or indirectly, stood by you. And in your own way, in whichever manner you choose, please do give back to society, especially to those who are less privileged.
6. Going through the list of the 152 students who are graduating today – getting undergraduate and master's degrees or PhDs, as the case may be – I find that 66 are girl students. That is a little over 40 per cent. However both the gold medals for academic performance have gone to girl students. And three of the four awards for academic excellence have been won by girl students. It is my privilege to travel to convocations across the country. I find this commendable performance of our young women, of our society's daughters, to be something of a national trend. They are consistently outscoring their male counterparts. This is a step forward in the cause of gender equity and in making India a developed society. I congratulate the girl students here as well as the broader IISER Mohali community for this achievement.

Ladies and Gentlemen, and dear students

7. The purpose of scientific research is threefold. First, science and technology must continue to play a role in nation building. As our nation evolves and as our society changes, our needs too are transformed. Yet, science and technology will always be required to find answers to developmental questions. Today, the questions before us range from battling climate change to provide low-cost but effective healthcare solutions. And from helping our farmers overcome productivity and water-scarcity challenges to building sustainable cities and houses that are socially inclusive and provide a life of dignity to the last family in the last mohalla. The IISER network must immerse itself in these tasks.
8. Second, science and technology have a symbiotic relationship with business and industry. Product invention and process innovation; converting the learning of the lab into commercially viable products; using technology to promote efficiency, enterprise and employment – there is so much science and commerce can do together. The combination of research institutions, technology start-ups incubated in campuses, and a knowledge-based business culture can be transformational. Silicon Valley in California and Bengaluru in India are two examples of this. IISER must strive to play a similar role in Mohali and the neighbouring cities.
9. Punjab has a long history of technocrats who ventured into successful businesses. Those who are graduating today too should consider the path of entrepreneurship – and of becoming job and wealth creators as so many great scientists and technologists have done.
10. Third, institutions of scientific education and research are important in themselves for blue-sky innovation and for expanding the frontiers of knowledge. This is the fundamental and to my mind most critical value of scientific research. It is to keep alive the instinct of curiosity that is at the root of our civilisation. As the history of science tells us, this route requires

patience. But it can lead to unexpected and dramatic leaps in human imagination.

11. I would urge those graduating today, as well as others studying at IISER Mohali, to keep these three motivations in mind as they climb higher. In their own way, these three motivations of science and research will help you to serve our fellow citizens, to serve our society and country, and to serve the larger cause of humanity. As you go forth to explore new avenues and new worlds, I wish you the very best.

Thank you  
Jai Hind!