

**ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA,  
SHRI RAM NATH KOVIND  
AT THE 64<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL CONVOCATION OF IIT KHARAGPUR**

**Kharagpur, July 20, 2018**

1. It gives me great pleasure to be here for the 64<sup>th</sup> annual convocation of the Indian Institute of Technology, Kharagpur. This is a pioneering institute. It was the first of the IITs in our country and in a sense marked the beginning of technical and engineering education after Independence.
2. A convocation ceremony is a landmark for any academic institution. This is a day of reward for years of hard work by the approximately 2,500 students who are graduating today. I must also mention the efforts and sacrifices of their professors and teachers, and their family members. I congratulate all of you and wish you the very best as you step into a world that is defined, driven and developed by technology. I have no doubt that you will contribute to making this world a better place, both professionally and personally, with your education and with your empathy for fellow human beings.
3. IIT Kharagpur has its origins in a committee that was set up by the government shortly after Independence to take stock of technical education. The committee was headed by the British Nobel laureate Dr A.V. Hill. Dr Hill recommended the setting up of an institution modelled on the pattern of MIT in the United States. The result is the Institute we are in today. The use of global experts to conceive this Institute was appropriate. Over the years, IIT Kharagpur and in fact the IIT network and community has become an important window to the world.
4. This is in keeping with our country's and our civilisation's character. Exchange of ideas, of expertise, of knowledge – across fields, from engineering to economics, from medicine to

management – has contributed to our policy choices and our people’s development. We must continue to celebrate this.

5. The IIT Kharagpur community is a prized resource for India and for the world. As graduating students will soon realise, the IIT Kharagpur brand name and the reputation built by the achievements of generations of illustrious alumni will accompany you wherever you go. You are now part of a transcontinental talent pool that has added value to technology and wealth creation and, above all, to human lives. Your Institute took a major step towards strengthening India’s global academic linkages when it started the International Summer Winter Term Programme. Later the Ministry of Human Resource Development expanded this in the form of the Global Initiative of Academic Networks or GIAN.
6. IIT Kharagpur is the largest member of the IIT family. It has the maximum number of academic units, students and faculty members. It was also the first to diversify and enlarge the ambit of the IIT system from just pure sciences and engineering. IIT Kharagpur was the first to establish a business school, a law school and a medical school. The campus today boasts a Science and Technology Entrepreneurship Park, a Petroleum Engineering Centre, and even a Centre for the Science of Happiness. One day I would like to visit it.
7. Many of these schools and centres were established due to endowments and efforts of alumni. The alumni community’s affection for and continued association with IIT Kharagpur is a role model for other educational institutions.
8. पश्चिम बंगाल में पहला आई. आई. टी. खोले जाने का निर्णय बहुत सोच-समझ कर लिया गया था। पारंपरिक रूप से, बंगाल की इस धरती और समाज में शिक्षा को महत्व और सम्मान हमेशा मिलता रहा है। विज्ञान और प्रौद्योगिकी के क्षेत्र में बंगाल में जे. सी. बोस और एस. एन. बोस से लेकर मेघनाद साहा आदि जैसी अनेक मशहूर हस्तियों ने जन्म लिया है। यह बहुत महत्वपूर्ण है कि आई. आई. टी. खड़गपुर, पूरे राज्य के लिए नवाचार और विकास का केन्द्र बने। इसे पश्चिम बंगाल की अर्थव्यवस्था को

और मजबूत बनाने तथा राज्य के प्रतिभावान बेटे-बेटियों के लिए अवसर बढ़ाने में योगदान देना चाहिए। पश्चिम बंगाल ने आई. आई. टी. खड़गपुर को अपना पूरा सहयोग दिया है। आपके संस्थान को भी पश्चिम बंगाल की तरक्की में योगदान करना चाहिए। यहां पर मौजूद राज्यपाल श्री केशरी नाथ त्रिपाठी जी शिक्षा क्षेत्र से जुड़े रहे हैं और राज्य विश्वविद्यालयों के कुलाधिपति भी हैं। वह इस प्रक्रिया में अपना मार्गदर्शन प्रदान कर सकते हैं। [The location of the first IIT in West Bengal was a well-considered decision. Traditionally, this soil and this society have valued and respected education. In science and technology, Bengal has produced some remarkable names – from J.C. Bose to S.N. Bose to Meghnad Saha to so many others. It is important that IIT Kharagpur becomes a hub of innovation and development for the entire state. It must contribute to revitalising the economy of West Bengal and to increasing opportunities for the talented young boys and girls of the state. West Bengal has been a hospitable host to IIT Kharagpur. Your Institute must give back. The Governor, Shri Keshari Nath Tripathi, has been associated with education and happens to be the Chancellor of State Universities. He can provide valuable counsel.]

9. IIT Kharagpur's diverse and trans-disciplinary academic portfolio has led to joint research programmes with several institutions. These include the Indian Statistical Institute, the Indian Association for the Cultivation of Science, and Tata Medical Centre, all located in Kolkata. With your wealth of knowledge, it is for you to continue to guide the nation by helping find solutions to the pressing problems of our age – whether agricultural productivity or emerging infectious diseases, whether renewable energy or low-cost housing and sustainable cities.
10. I have been told that your Institute has signed an MoU with the Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India, to set up a Centre for Excellence in Big Data Analytics for Rural Development. This holds great potential for the well-being of so many of our fellow citizens.

Ladies and Gentlemen and Dear Students

11. The IIT system has given every Indian many moments of happiness and pride. Yet there is one issue that continues to puzzle and concern me. When one considers board examinations at the secondary level, girls do very well. They often outscore boys. In colleges and universities that I visit across the country, in my capacity as President of India, I find that girl students tend to win more medals and awards than their male counterparts. Yet, when it comes to IITs, the intake of girl students is distressingly low.
12. In 2017, about 160,000 candidates appeared for the IIT Joint Entrance Examination (Advanced). Only some 30,000 were girls. In 2017, 10,878 students got admission into the undergraduate class of the IITs. Only 995 were girls. I have been told that 11,653 students are enrolled here at IIT Kharagpur. Only 1,925 are girls – a little over 16 per cent.
13. This cannot go on. We need to do something about these numbers. The participation of women in higher education, in science and technology and in the workforce of our country has to rise to fair and acceptable levels within the coming decade. This should be a national priority, and the IIT community must take the lead. Without meeting this challenge and without providing the necessary opportunities for our girl children and our young women the development of Indian society can never be complete. This is as critical for social equality as it is for economic growth. In particular, IIT Kharagpur must act because it is located in a state that has historically produced illustrious women achievers who have contributed a great deal to nation building and to our society. We are fortunate that one of them, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, is with us today. It is always a pleasure to meet her.
14. Of all the IITs, I understand IIT Kharagpur has the largest percentage of women in leadership roles. This must translate into more girl students as well. Your Institute has created 113 supernumerary seats for girl candidates in the undergraduate programme. I have also been told about a special initiative, with

support from the Infosys Foundation, to fund women researchers who wish to attend major international conferences. These are good steps but a long road lies ahead of us.

15. In this context, I am confident that the Savitribai Phule Girls' Hostel – which, along with the A.P.J. Abdul Kalam International Visitors' Guest House, is one of the two buildings for which work has formally begun today – will help draw more girl students to IIT Kharagpur.
16. These names are well chosen. Much before many others, Savitribai Phule understood the revolutionary nature of education and particularly of girls education. President Kalam symbolised the excitement of science and technology in nation building. Both these personalities, in their own ways, represent and inspire the IIT spirit. As young IIT graduates, you must draw motivation from such selfless personalities as Dr Kalam, the Missile Man, and Shri E. Sreedharan, the Metro Man. They demonstrate that technologists and engineers can truly transform our society.
17. In conclusion, let me congratulate IIT Kharagpur and its administration for organising this convocation. And let me again congratulate the graduating students. I am sure you will continue to aim high and make your families and Institute, and the entire IIT community, proud as you move ahead in life.

Thank you  
Jai Hind!