

**SPEECH BY THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA,
SHRI RAM NATH KOVIND
AT THE ROUND-TABLE DISCUSSION WITH SCIENTISTS**

October 24, 2017, IISc, Bengaluru

Thank you for welcoming me to Bengaluru in the best possible manner. I have learnt so much, and I can feel the excitement that only comes from exploring the frontiers of science. Having met and heard from all of you – among the country's leading intellectuals, scientists and technologists – and having been told of your plans for action for New India 2022, I am confident that our future is in safe hands. I need not remind you about the relevance of 2022 when we will be completing 75 years of our Independence. We have to generate the same fervour and patriotism to achieve the real goals of democracy by 2022.

The venue for this meeting is so appropriate. The Indian Institute of Science was conceived and has worked through the decades for the cause of science and for the cause of India. Nation building is written into its DNA. We can never forget that the very origins of the Indian Institute of Science lie in a request made by Swami Vivekananda to Jamsetji Tata to set up a world-class science research institution in our country. The dream of those two great Indians has come such a long way.

Friends

Knowledge, Discovery and Innovation are three of the four wheels that take a country forward. The fourth is our Society. Each wheel must move in co-ordination, in pace and in the right direction. The slightest misstep by one will take us in the wrong direction or stall us.

As scientists, you have an immense responsibility. You are directly in charge of three wheels. But unless you connect every day with the fourth, we have no future.

Today, India is in an unusual situation. We face enormous challenges. We are to lift our people out of poverty, ensure their health

and well-being and ensure our food and energy security. The size of the challenge is enormous.

Listening to you, I have heard how similar hurdles have been overcome by you - right from the inception of the Indian Institute of Science to the growth of the entire Bengaluru ecosystem of institutions. Bengaluru is known for its climate, for being the “Garden City” – and for being a power-house of Information Technology.

In nano-science and materials science, we are among the world’s best. This is due in no small measure to the leadership of Professor C.N.R. Rao, awarded the Bharat Ratna and truly one of the jewels of Bengaluru and of our country.

India is a leader in generic drugs and vaccines. And the biotech start-up ecosystem is extraordinarily vibrant here in this city.

We must never forget that these successes - and the older ones such as with the Indian Space Research Organisation, the Defence Research and Development Organisation, and the Department of Atomic Energy - all stem from an investment in research. This public investment was aimed at generating new knowledge and discovery. In time it was complemented by an energetic private sector that converted technology into products.

In its essence, science is about human fascination and curiosity. It is about that endless quest for new frontiers. For thousands of years, from the age of Aryabhatta and Charaka, India has embraced science and its sense of inquiry. Science has been our intellectual trigger as well as our force multiplier.

From eminent scientists such as C.V. Raman to S. Chandrashekar, G.N. Ramachandran to Obaid Siddiqi and C.N.R. Rao to my illustrious predecessor Dr A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, it is the investment in curiosity driven science that has paid off to society. The saga continues with younger scientists today.

Society rightly demands solutions to our day-to-day problems. On the other hand, scientists must not compromise their quest for knowledge – from atoms to galaxies. These two endeavours are not contradictory. We have seen how ISRO has succeeded through the efforts of the late Dr Satish Dhawan in combining cutting-edge science with helping farmers. And in linking ISRO's research, applications and innovation with the academic capacities of the Indian Institute of Science

The challenge is to replicate that partnership and that synergy, across institutions and across disciplines. Today you have the opportunity to pioneer a revolution where all the scientific institutes in Bengaluru work together. They can share their strengths and show by example how science and technology can take us to new heights.

The spark from your efforts in Bengaluru can light the flame of knowledge all over the country. It can help take that culture of innovation further and deeper – from lab to shop floor, right down to school classrooms.

I appreciate the commitment of scientists to the nation. They make India proud. I can say without doubt that you are true nation builders and have a major responsibility for 2022. And with the leadership and wisdom that I have encountered in this room, I have no doubt that we are on track to achieving these goals.

Thank you, and wishing you all the best.
Jai Hind!