

Following is the full text of the speech –

“It gives me immense pleasure to participate virtually in the 13th Convocation of NIT, Agartala being held at Agartala today. I am sure, the students when they began their course would not have anticipated that they would be receiving their degrees in this manner. But the COVID-19 pandemic has changed our lives like never before and the education sector was one of the most severely impacted with online classes and virtual Convocations like this one becoming the new normal.

I must appreciate NIT for taking the initiative to hold e-Convocation and bring us together through a virtual platform for such a momentous occasion.

At the outset, I would like to congratulate the outgoing students for completing their degrees from this prestigious institute. I would also like to convey my appreciation to the educators and the administration in guiding and hand-holding students in their academic journey.

I am happy to note that for the academic year 2019-20 this Institute is awarding B. Tech. degree to a total number of 534 students, M. Tech Degree to a total of 181 students, BS & BT Degree to 29 students, BS MS & BT MT Degree to 31 students, M. Sc Degree to 24 students, MCA Degree to 20 students, MBA Degree to 14 students in this convocation. This year, 24 scholars will be awarded with a Ph.D.

It has been 15 years since this institute has been upgraded as NIT Agartala in 2006 from Tripura Engineering College. I am glad to note that over this period, NIT Agartala has been providing excellent instructional and research facilities and has emerged as an institute of national excellence. For the last three years, the institute is being ranked within the 100 best engineering institutes of the country under the National Institute Ranking Framework (NIRF).

I am pleased to know that NIT Agartala also acts as an ISRO Space Technology Incubation Center to cater to the country’s space technology needs and has been carrying out research and development activities. This is a welcome initiative.

My dear friends,

NIT Agartala and other premier institutes in our country have glorious examples from our ancient education systems to emulate. India was known as ‘Vishwa Guru’ and the world’s best learning centres like Takshashila, Nalanda used to attract thousands of students and scholars from all the corners of the globe.

India had produced numerous scholars like Charaka, Susruta, Aryabhata, Bhaskaracharya, Chanakya, Patanjali, and others, who had made seminal contribution in various fields.

Our ancient education system used to focus on developing holistic and well-rounded personalities. We were always taught to live in harmony with nature and respect all beings and non-beings. Our education was practical, wholesome, and complementary to life. In fact, education was seen as a continuous process of learning.

Friends,

The New Education Policy is underpinned by the same vision. It aims at making “India a global knowledge super-power” and seeks to bring a paradigm shift in the entire education system. Drawing inspiration from our ancient system, it seeks to make Indian education holistic, multi-disciplinary, and practical.

Introducing flexibility in higher education, rigid separation of disciplines has become a thing of the past. Instead, graduate programmes will be multi-disciplinary. There will be a renewed

focus on research with a single regulator to oversee the functioning of all institutions, barring medical and law colleges.

All these policy reforms are long overdue and will greatly transform the education landscape in our country. Translating the reforms into effective, dream-fulfilling vision now rests on the shoulders of our gurus, the teachers. The time has come for all universities, IITs, NITs and other higher education institutes to fully reorient their teaching methods and equip the teachers with new pedagogical skills in tune with 21st century requirements.

At the same time, there is a need for our institutions to take up cutting edge research in various fields, establish synergy with industries and other similar institutions and turn our campuses into exciting centres of creativity and research. I call upon every institution to rise to the occasion and make India a thriving hub of knowledge and innovation. We should aspire to become Vishwa Guru once again.

Dear young friends,

This is a very important day in your careers and will remain etched in your memories for the rest of your lives. Your hard work through your life has given you this badge of recognition today-- a degree.

Friends, each one of you has this very powerful tool in your pocket now. While the degree you are getting today is important and will add to your credentials, what is more important is your ability and capacity to use the knowledge, skills and aptitude that you have acquired all these years in building a bright, fulfilling and successful career. Every step you take from here will be crucial in realizing your dreams and goals.

Former President, Shri A P J Abdul Kalam used to always advise the youth to not aim for small things but to dream big. That should be your goal. Dream big, set a goal and strive hard to achieve it. You will succeed if you work with dedication, discipline and sincerity without wavering from your chosen path.

As you step out of the portals of your alma mater, a new exciting world awaits you. Everything will not be rosy... there will be challenges and pitfalls. But you have to continue your quest. "Stop not till you reach the goal", as swami Vivekananda had said.

One who learns and adapts better will thrive.

Institutions and degrees cannot remain as mere artifacts in the new paradigm. There has to be a utility in what we are delivering. There has to be agility in our approach to learning. Acquiring knowledge will be purposeless if it remains in narrow silos. There is a need to adopt an inter-disciplinary approach to address challenges facing the mankind from ending poverty to improving agricultural productivity to combating pollution and diseases.

Enhancing public and private investments in research is of vital importance for creating a knowledge-driven society. I urge the corporate sector to identify key research projects in various sectors and fund them under CSR initiatives.

Technology has been changing very fast too in recent years. The fourth industrial revolution, as the World Economic Forum defines it, denotes innovations based on a combination of technologies like AI, robotics and 3D printing. This is not a vision of the future, young friends! This is the present!

Students, researchers and academicians, therefore, cannot afford to remain in a world of status quo. They have to constantly learn, update themselves, and innovate every day! They need to be agile.

Dear sisters and brothers,

India is uniquely blessed because it is young. About 65 per cent of the country's population comprises youth. We need to fully channelize the energies of the youth and create the right ecosystem for promoting entrepreneurship among them. This is the time to tap their talents and skill for giving a fillip to 'Vocal for Local' campaign. Institutions like NIT-Agartala have to be at the forefront in turning youth into job creators and not just job seekers.

I am sure NIT Agartala is adapting to the new demands of society and industry. I am very pleased to know that nearby villages have been adopted by the Institute and that the institute is aiming to make these villages 'Model Villages'.

I also congratulate the parents of these youngsters and all their gurus who have nurtured and contributed to their learning and development.

Once again, I am very glad to be virtually present with you all today. I hope this initiative of e-convocation has given some motivational boost to my young friends and will propel them to excel in their endeavours!

I convey my best wishes to all the students, their parents, faculty and all others associated with NIT Agartala.

I would like to conclude with a quote from Brihadaranyaka Upanishad which the students may reflect upon:

"You are what your deep, driving desire is.

As your desire is, so is your will.

As your will is, so is your deed.

As your deed is, so is your destiny."

Thank you."

MS/DP