

Convocation Address

of

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at

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of

Indian Institute of Technology Guwahati

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Esteemed Dr. Rajiv I. Modi, Chairman of the Board of Governors; distinguished members of the Board of Governors of IIT Guwahati; Prof. Gautam Biswas, Director, IIT Guwahati; honourable members of the Academic Senate; Faculty members; Staff members; esteemed invitees and my dear graduating students and their parents and other well-wishers present on this special occasion, to applaud the sterling performance of a young brigade, the graduating class of 2016 of IIT Guwahati.

I deem it a great pleasure and honour to address this Eighteenth Convocation of IIT Guwahati.

I congratulate all the graduating students on this day that marked the culmination of a journey for each one of them. All the hard work you did in last few years, leading to this moment of joy, not only for you, but for your proud parents and all those who helped you to reach this goal, teachers, friends and well-wishers, will be etched in your memory for life.

From today, all of you will be proud alumni of IIT Guwahati, which has grown remarkably to distinguish itself as a premier destination for scientific and technological studies and cutting-edge research in a short span of a few decades. It has a vibrant academic atmosphere with eleven academic departments and four inter-disciplinary academic centers that host more than 5000 students pursuing undergraduate, post-graduate and doctoral studies

The remarkable growth of IIT Guwahati can be noted from the fact that it is placed among the top 100 world universities – under 50 years of age – in 2014, the only institute from India, and ranked 5th among a total of 700 engineering institutes in the national ranking in 2015. IIT Guwahati is placed 14th among the twenty top “Small Universities” globally in 2015; the first being California Institute of Technology. These are very encouraging index and all of you should feel proud as everybody, Faculty, Students and Staff members have to contribute to reach such milestones. I would like IIT Guwahati to

aim even higher to get rid of the adjectives like “under-50”, “small university”, etc. within the next decade or two.

I congratulate the students and more than 400 faculty members of IIT Guwahati for these achievements and am confident that IIT Guwahati will continue to further excel in its academic programme in the coming years.

I would also like to request IIT Guwahati, and the Faculty in particular, to initiate consolidated research projects that are pertinent to the multifarious needs of the North-East, so that one can have scientific rather than ad-hoc solutions for problems in many sectors that continue to plague all the North Eastern states. Being an Assamese by birth and educated in School, College and University in this state, I wish to see the University System in the seven states in the north-east contributing significantly in tackling some of the local problems, starting with tackling the perennial floods to conservation of eco-systems, which unfortunately is not happening, even though some small and notable steps have been initiated. I feel IIT Guwahati, and the two Central Universities at Tezpur and Silchar should take a lead and co-ordinate along with the other Universities in the North-east in chalking out a holistic and workable plan of action to tackle at least some, if not all the problems, faced in this region of the country. I am sure quite a few of the Central Agencies, including Indian Space Research Organisation, that has a centre in Shillong, will be happy to contribute in such effort.

IIT Guwahati has already taken some steps in this direction by being a part of programmes like the ISHAN VIKAS, that provide opportunity for school children from north east to have exposure to premier institutions like IIT Guwahati, the Rāshtriya Avishkāṛ Abhiyān, that involves adopting schools in its neighbourhood to develop infrastructure and experimental facilities, and Unnat Bharat Abhiyan by adopting model villages for unified development through sustainable technologies. Participation in these programmes provide a very significant exposure to the students,

who can move out of their ivory tower, the Class room, Hostel and the Campus, and see and experience problems faced by people at various social/economic strata, that they will remember for life. Enriching the life of the local people and maintaining their cultural heritage are a great challenge. In this respect, IIT Guwahati's drive in implementing Unnat Bharat is indeed praiseworthy. It is heartening that the "logo" of Unnat Bharat Abhiyan, is designed by a student from IIT Guwahati. The challenge for IIT Guwahati now is to realise the expected deliverables and broaden the scope by bringing others to the fold. Given the current background and activities, I am confident that IIT Guwahati will be up to it.

IIT Guwahati is a home of learning, a place where the true spirit of learning is preserved, and, where, the encouragement for learning is fructified into knowledge. Young students get the rare opportunity of being educated while staying in the close proximity of the finest academicians of the country and also visiting faculty from abroad. The IIT Guwahati students are brought up in a culture, which differentiates education with the training for a profession. Culmination of your studies at IIT is a moment of pride for you as much as it is for your teachers, parents and those who had helped in shaping your life. The journey will not end here. It is only the beginning; and it is good to remember the lines written by Robert Frost:

"The woods are lovely, dark and deep,
But I have promises to keep,
And miles to go before I sleep,
And miles to go before I sleep"

There will be obstacles and challenges and you should be able to deal with successes and failures with an equal and undisturbed attitude. You should have dreams, set yardsticks to achieve the same and never give up your aspirations. You should also try your best to never put self before others who needs help and support; remember, you will also need help from others to realise your dreams.

You have to apply your knowledge, your intelligence, your passion, and your bravery to bring about the changes you dream about. Innovate, create, implement, accomplish, and forge ahead. Pursue ideas that will create wealth for the benefit of the society and pledge to break the chain of poverty in the country.

As a society, we traditionally valued and nurtured the knowledge building activity and the society as a whole seeks and rewards ideas, irrespective of where they originate and reside. “Knowledge economy” is a buzzword today. Thanks to the academic environment in the country, India is now going through a new phase and capturing world attention and respect. We must ensure that we keep this intact and the only way is to be in the forefront of all areas, Academic, Technical and Entrepreneurship Excellence coupled with societal uplift, and, each one of you have to contribute to make this happen. This was unthinkable in the last century. Now is the time and all of you are in the driver’s seat. The future of India is in your hands. I wish each one of you success in your future endeavors, each of which should mark an incremental step in making India a vibrant democracy with minimal social, cultural and economic imbalances.

Dear graduates of 2016, I admire you, for your accomplishments at IIT Guwahati. You are among the few fortunate persons who had access to educational experience at this renowned institution. This experience will reward you throughout your life. The path forward may have pitfalls. The easy days are a welcome relief. It is the hard days – the times that challenge you – will determine your caliber. I sincerely believe that with your experience at IIT Guwahati for last few years, all of you will be able to face challenges, overcome them and try your best in ushering the way to create a more caring world where everybody can live with dignity and also inspire others to contribute to this effort.

Thanking you all and wishing you a joyous and fruitful journey ahead.

