

**SPEECH OF SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE, FORMER
PRESIDENT OF INDIA ON THE OCCASION OF
TECHNO INDIA UNIVERSITY'S SPECIAL
CONVOCATION**

I am happy to be with you on the occasion of this Special Convocation Ceremony of Techno India University, West Bengal.

2. I have been informed that Techno India University is the first self-financed university which was constructed after Biswa-Kobi Rabindranath Tagore established the Bishwa Bharati University 91 years ago. I would like to congratulate the Chancellor, The Vice Chancellor, Members of faculty and staff and the students who have been a part of this endeavour.

3. At the outset, I wish to congratulate all the awardees of the prestigious D.Litt Degree (*Honoris Causa*). They are all eminent members of society who

have contributed to their respective fields throughout their careers and are well deserving of the honour being bestowed upon them today.

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

4. Right after independence, when we started our journey of socio-economic transformation, education was reorganized as the first step towards emancipation, apart from focusing at school education we laid a deliberate stress upon the importance of science and technology to bring about a total regeneration. To this end, many regional engineering colleges, private/self-financial institutes of technology, and centers for researches in science came into existence all over the

country to provide technical education. This role, envisaged for educational institutions, made it necessary for them to redefine their goals in terms of the quality of that education they imparted. These institutions – the IITs, IISc and AIIMS were supposed to be the crucibles that produced life fuel for the sacred fires of the temples of Modern India- its industries and farms.

5. After a long journey since then, today, we are truly witnessing the age of science and technology. There is a huge demand for professional/technical education. In every sphere of our life, the influence of science and technology is becoming so pervasive that human existence is simply inconceivable in its absence. In order to train our students and upcoming professionals in response to the need of the times, our education system again needs to reorient itself so as to give the students, in terms of skilling, the necessary practical and technical

boost. However, we must understand that science can only provide the requisite information & technology can give us the means to achieve effectively and efficiently what is considered valuable & worthwhile. They will only at the end, be as good as the human being who is using them. It is only worthwhile if it is used for the greatest good of the greatest numbers.

6. What we are witnessing in today's scenario is, creation of mediocre technical work force, and to my mind the system as well as the selection process is largely to be blamed for this. Our entrance exam patterns are encouraging rote learning. It cannot be denied that we yet have unequal resources and therefore tough selection processes, that aim mostly at gauging a student's learning abilities, is imperative. However, what we end up gauging is not learning capabilities but memorizing and mugging abilities. The

most important tools that technical professional should possess are **critical** and **creative thinking** and analytical skills with mental tenacity. Selection based on these criteria and later fostering through academic courses is what will enable them carve a niche for themselves.

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

7. Science and technology is about taking risks and failing. One must take enough time to think, experiment, fail, rework, re-calculate and try again until one achieves a breakthrough. You all know, Thomas Edison failed 1000 times before inventing the light bulb. Same is with entrepreneurship. You cannot expect to achieve profits in your first start up project. You have to keep applying yourself, keep improvising your models, keep accounting for the dynamic environment that you are all

in and then eventually break even and finally make profits. Therefore, my dear students, achieving education from good institutions like yours should enable you to be risk takers and innovation makers.

8. On IIT Kharagpur's first Convocation Address on 21st April, 1956, Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru had said and I quote, "***This fine monument of India [IIT Kharagpur] to-day representing India's urges, India's future in the making. This picture seems to me symbolical of the changes that are coming to India.***" Unquote.

These words still hold true. Changes are coming to India. You are India's future in the making. Each one of you today is a symbol of India's progress and success in the field of technology. And while there are challenges ahead, there are enormous opportunities as well. As I

said before, Science and technology is duly recognized as the vehicle to take India into the front ranks of the nations of the world.

9. We have to together build a large pool of scientific and technical manpower to aid our progress. Technology can enable refinement in teaching methodology. It can address the challenges of quantity, quality, accessibility, affordability and faculty shortage. E-classrooms permit information and knowledge sharing by wider dispersal of lectures overcoming distance. As expertise in a particular field is usually scattered, experts should be encouraged to interact for significant gains to accrue to the discipline. Furthermore, Innovation is increasingly recognized as the currency of the future. It lends a competitive edge to business, and provides

solution for effective governance. Therefore, our institutes of higher learning like yours should be the breeders of technological innovation activities.

10. I am told that from its inception, Techno India University has proved itself in areas of collaboration with leading industries to facilitate an industry-centric learning environment for the students and other stakeholders. New age universities like yours are said to be about experiential learning and I am happy that with your industry linkages and collaborations, you are leaving your mark. I have been informed that this university also offers many Entrepreneurship and Skill Developments programmes, which is the nation's need of the hour. It is good that the students are exposed to regular activities through hackathons, boot-camps and other innovative programs. There is a dedicated incubation center for startups which promotes self-employment opportunities for students after they pass out. Besides this, Techno India University has planned

to develop a highly scalable program over the next 10 years with an objective to achieve skill based higher education from grass root level, upliftment of healthcare and health education and encourage talent. I wish to congratulate the University for this endeavour.

Dear students,

11. Towards the end, I wish to speak to you in my capacity as a teacher. I exhort you to remember the following mantras:

- You are not defined by your failure, rather you are empowered by them.
- Learning is a lifelong process. It does not stop with you getting your degrees. Rather, it starts now since strong foundations have been laid.
- There is nothing you cannot do, if you really want to. **Too often, many of us live with more awareness of our limitations than our potential.**

That has to change. You need to know that you are

capable of anything you set your mind to. The only limitations are the ones that you choose to place on yourself.

- One of the world's greatest humanitarians Mother Teresa had cautioned us, "***We can do no great things, only small things with great love.***"

Tackling too much at one time is a recipe for disaster. So start small; begin at the beginning and make a great change one step at a time.

- Last but not the least, you are not alone. Sometimes, students carry the weight of the world on themselves. It's easy for them to feel like no one has ever felt the way they do, and never can. Nevertheless, I wish to tell you on behalf of your teachers and parents that empathy and understanding are within arm's reach. All you have to do is communicate. Do not isolate yourself when

you are in any kind of problem. We are always going to be around you, extending our help.

12. Before I conclude, I wish to thank Techno India University once again for launching a scholarship program for 2 underprivileged academically brilliant students every year in my name.

Thank You.

Jai Hind.