

**SPEECH BY THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA, SHRI PRANAB
MUKHERJEE AT THE AT THE FOURTEENTH
CONVOCATION OF MANIPUR UNIVERSITY**

Canchipur, Imphal, Manipur. : 29-04-2014

1. I am happy to join you for this fourteenth convocation of Manipur University, which is a premier centre of higher learning in North-East India.

2. Manipur University, since establishment in 1980 has rendered yeoman service in promoting education in the North-Eastern region. Through its curriculum, it has fostered the composite culture of India. Its programmes and policies have always aimed at encouraging the spirit of humanism, tolerance and enquiry. I call upon its torchbearers to continue developing this University with conviction, industry and determination.

Dear Students:

3. I congratulate all those who are receiving degrees today. I also congratulate Shri Rishang Keishing, who has been conferred the Doctor of Law; and Shri L. Birendrakumar Singh, who has been conferred the Doctor of Literature.

4. Convocation is a red-letter event for any academic institution. It holds great significance and underlines a genuine milestone in the life of its students and even teachers. It is a day when the fruit of years of hard work and perseverance is acknowledged. You will leave the hallowed precincts of this university with the armoury of knowledge and strength of character. Go to the

world outside; make a difference; touch and transform the lives of people around you, and create a happier universe.

Friends:

5. Education separates light and darkness; advancement from backwardness; excellence from mediocrity. If one investment can truly define a subtle linkage to future progress, it is education. Countries built on the strength of education and knowledge have achieved development over longer periods of time. Such countries have exhibited greater adaptive powers to changes in resource endowments. Education has afforded them the ability to overcome resource constraints and build an economy on a high technological base. If India has to be one of the front ranking nations in the world, the way ahead is only through a robust education system.

6. India has a sizeable number of young people, with two-third of the population below 35 years of age. Their grooming is essential as they are our future. Enrolment in higher education is below 20 per cent in India. Recognizing that this is not enough and may drag down the potential of our future generation, rapid strides have been made to expand the higher education infrastructure. A decisive step was the creation of several central universities during the last decade, including Manipur University which was made a Central University in 2005. These universities along with the existing ones are envisaged as trail blazers for ushering in a high quality knowledge society. These bastions of higher education are seen as capable of attaining the repute of ancient India's citadels of higher learning like Nalanda and Takshashila.

7. Yet, if we undertake an honest analysis of the state of higher education in our country today, it is easy to decipher that many higher academic institutions lack the quality to produce graduates for the global market. Not a single Indian university figures in the list of top 200 universities in the world. I have been sharing my concerns about the performance of Indian institutions in world university rankings during my visits to the universities. This issue was also discussed in the Annual Conference of Vice Chancellors of Central Universities held in the Rashtrapati Bhavan.

8. I am happy to find that our institutions have started to accord due seriousness to the rankings process. In September last year, the Finance module of IIM, Calcutta was adjudged by a reputed agency as the best amongst business schools offering the Master of Management programme. In the World University Ranking done subject-wise by another reputed agency, two IITs - Madras and Bombay - are amongst the top 50 institutions in civil engineering, while IITs - Delhi and Bombay - are in the top 50 in electrical engineering. I want our institutions to build up on these micro-level successes and achieve a much higher overall ranking. We have to rise from our slumber and beat the inertia that defines our current state of functioning.

Friends:

9. Faculty is the bedrock of education. The quality of teachers is a portrayal of the educational standards. Several measures are required for faculty development. The vacant teacher positions

have to be filled up on priority. Talented faculty from abroad have to be hired to inject new thinking and diversity in academic approach. The Scholar-in-Residence 'ENCORE' programme and Faculty Recharge Programme of the UGC have to be utilized better.

10. Many ills that afflict efficient functioning of our universities stem from the lack of good governance practices. Governance structures have to promote faster and transparent decision-making. In this context, the induction of reputed alumni into the governance mechanism could provide the dynamism that our institutions are often in short supply of. Alumni expertise can also be drafted to review existing courses and introduce new ones.
11. A concerted effort has to be made to develop a wide-ranging partnership with the industry. An institutional arrangement for industry-academia interface is essential to explore the contours of collaboration like sponsorship of research endowments and chairs, and conduct of internship programmes.
12. Technology is a knowledge carrier and information disseminator *par excellence*. Knowledge networks facilitate intellectual collaboration. They mitigate physical constraints as well. Effective use of technology-based media for greater academic exchange is the need of the hour.

Friends:

13. The research neglect in our universities has to be reversed. We have to adopt a multi-disciplinary approach in our academic system as most research activity requires the meeting of minds from diverse disciplines. We have to concentrate on the unique features of the region in which a university is located. Manipur University can prioritize its research expertise keeping in mind that this State is a bio-diversity hotspot.
14. Our universities have a duty to create inquisitiveness and promote scientific temper amongst their students. A way forward could be to give wings to the ingenuous ideas of students and grassroots innovators. Novel ideas that can be nurtured into viable products deserve mentoring by the universities. An initiative taken in several central universities is the setting up of Innovation Clubs. To refine this further, activities of such clubs have to be dovetailed with innovation incubators located in IITs and NITs in the region. The engagement of clubs with incubators will help create an 'innovation web', to provide linkage between advanced centres of research and the common man. I am hopeful of Manipur University spearheading many innovations in a few years' time and am glad to know that some steps have already been taken by the University in this regard.
15. Friends, Manipur is a beautiful state that has excelled nationally and internationally in the fields of art, culture and sports. India is proud of the achievements made by the young men and women of Manipur and looks forward to them bringing more glory to our country in the future. It is important that all

people, especially, the youth of this state recognize that economy and society can flourish only in an atmosphere free from violence. No problem is ever resolved by violence. Violence only aggravates the pain and the hurt on every side.

16. I call upon the youth of Manipur to join hands with the youth of the rest of the country in forging the future of our nation. India is today a nation on the move. In every field of activity – be it business, industry, trade, education or culture, our billion plus people are marching vigorously forward led by the ideas, enterprise and energy of our predominantly young population.

17. The emerging India offers enormous opportunities for the youth of Manipur. My appeal to the youth of Manipur is therefore ‘Let the dark days of violence and conflict be left behind. Let a new dawn emerge. Let us move ahead with faith in our collective future’. Let me assure you that the Government of India and the State Government of Manipur are determined and duty bound to ensure that every Manipuri lives with dignity and has equal rights and opportunities. It is for this reason that several major economic development and infrastructure projects are being taken up in the State.

18. I congratulate the people of Manipur for the successful and peaceful conduct of elections. Let us celebrate the fact that India is the largest democracy in the world though sometimes noisy. Elections to the 16th Lok Sabha are under way and the people of our country, including the people of this State have

turned out in record numbers to cast their votes and assert their rights.

19. I am happy to know that the Manipur University Students Union which was disbanded in 2009 is now being revived from the next academic session. I am sure that it will play an important and constructive role in improving the welfare of students of this University. It is unfortunate that the capital city of Delhi had some time back witnessed certain tragic incidents of attacks on young people from the north-east. We must ensure that the pluralistic character of our nation and the thread of India's unity, which is the collective pride of all Indians, are not weakened by such unacceptable events. I am happy that both the Central Government and the Delhi Government have taken firm action, by not only apprehending and punishing the accused but also putting in place measures to ensure that such incidents do not recur.

Friends:

20. India is on the threshold of new opportunities and higher achievements. Assuming global leadership by India is no longer a utopian proposition. You, the educated youth of our country, will build this resurgent new India. Use the education you have received here to become the change-agents in society. Draw inspiration from the words of Mahatma Gandhi who said and I quote: *"Essence of education lies in drawing out the very best that is in you"* (unquote).
21. I wish Manipur University great success in the years ahead and all of you the very best.

Thank you.

Jai Hind.

