

**SPEECH BY THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA, SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE
AT THE INAUGURATION OF THE INDIAN INSTITUTE OF
ENGINEERING SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY (IEST)**

Shibpur, Howrah, West Bengal: August 24, 2014

I am indeed happy to be here today on the occasion of the Bengal Engineering and Science University (BESU) being converted into the first Indian Institute of Engineering Science and Technology (IEST). IEST, Shibpur shall now be an 'Institute of National Importance', a richly deserved honour. The Institute shall integrate under-graduate education, post-graduate education and research in engineering and science under the same umbrella conforming, over time, to international standards. India also looks forward to the Institute producing quality manpower for our strategic sectors, research laboratories as also quality teachers for higher technical education.

2. This eminent institution has been blessed with a rich and glorious history of a hundred and fifty eight years. Its evolution from relatively modest beginnings to an institute of national importance is the result of the sincere, dedicated, and selfless work of a large number of its teachers, students and staff members over the last more than hundred and fifty years.

3. To the Institute's credit it focusses on all- round development of its students rather than academics alone. During my last visit in 2011 to inaugurate the "Students' Centre for Creative Expression" I was happy to observe students taking part in many creative activities alongside their studies. It is heartening to know that the students of the Institute are doing commendably well in all spheres of education, sports, and cultural activities.

4. The Institute has made significant advancements in several areas of human endeavour. In particular, they are actively seeking to address some of the global challenges today in areas as diverse as renewable energy, water technology, medical and environmental sciences. Some other important areas of engagement are Disaster Management; Clean coal technology; Power Electronics; Remote-sensing and GIS; Space Technology; Biochemical Sensors, Structural Engineering; VLSI and Embedded Systems.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

5. A sound education system is the foundation of an enlightened society. Our institutes of higher learning are the nurseries of our future administrators and policy makers. They need to inculcate in students progressive thinking and core civilizational values of integrity, compassion, pluralism, respect for women, tolerance and responsible action.

6. Though we boast of a vast higher education network of over 720 degree-awarding institutions and 37,000 colleges, the quality of standards in many is a cause for concern. It is indeed a sad commentary that a country like India which in the distant past boasted of universities like Nalanda and Takshashila does not today have a single educational institution in the top 200 universities in the world.

7. In order to accomplish this, a culture of excellence must be promoted in our higher academic institutions and core competencies nurtured. Academic cooperation between institutions must be encouraged. Research and innovation must go hand in hand and should be focused on solving our country's myriad developmental problems. It is also important that industry and academia operate in tandem and create the right synergies and environment for industrial growth and academic rejuvenation. Quality up-gradation of state-level institutions, which account for 96 percent of the higher education capacity, needs to be accorded high priority. The Rashtriya Uchcharat Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA) is an important initiative in this direction.

8. I understand from the Director's report that apart from in-house academic research, the University also has a strong base of industrial research and that, in the recent past, it has witnessed an upsurge in collaborations with reputed foreign technical universities as also with several industries in India. I hope this trend continues and that there is considerable expansion in the scope and content of faculty development and student exchange programmes within the ambit of such collaborations.

9. With these few words, I once again extend my warm wishes to all the faculty members and students on this momentous occasion of Bengal Engineering and Science University (BESU) being converted into the first Indian Institute of Engineering Science and Technology (IIST). I wish the Institute the very best in its future endeavours. I also take this opportunity to congratulate all the eminent persons who are being felicitated today.

Jai Hind!!
