Address
by
Chairman, Board of Governors

Distinguished Chief Guest, Hon’ble Vice President Shri Mohammad Hamid Ansari Jee, distinguished Atomic Energy Scientist Dr Anil Kakodkar jee, Director IIT Delhi, Prof Surendra Prasad jee, Hon’ble Members on the Board of Governors and the Senate, Esteemed Faculty Members, Staff Members, dear students and their parents and other family members, distinguished invitees, Ladies and Gentlemen!

It is matter of great honour for us to have the Hon’ble Vice President Shri Mohammad Hamid Ansari jee amongst us today, as the Chief Guest of this 41st Convocation of IIT Delhi; We are also honoured to have Dr. Anil Kakodkar, one of the eminent Atomic Energy scientists of this country, in our midst.

I join the Director in extending a hearty welcome to the Chief Guest and all of you who are present here and also heartily congratulate the young men and women who will be receiving their degrees and diplomas today from this great Institute on this very solemn and at the same time very joyous and fulfilling occasion. This has been possible only due to the loving support and backing of your parents and your other family members as well as the guidance and support extended to you by the faculty. So your parents and other family members as well as the faculty, deserve our congratulations. This marks the commencement of a new phase in life. Some of you had joined this Institute as an adolescent and are now leaving it as a young adult and with a Bachelor’s degree. Others have studied for higher degrees and have earned the right to be called an IIT’ian. This is, I am sure, a fulfillment of a great dream for you and your parents, as the brand name IIT, itself has become synonymous with success. Dear students, you are going to embark on a new journey in your life – a journey, which we hope will not only lead you to a fulfilling and exciting career, but also, through your dedication and efforts, you all will in some significant way contribute to the faster development of the country, and a better and sustainable future for life on this planet.

I hope that, along with the specialized knowledge that you acquired from the excellent faculty and the infrastructure that you had the opportunity to enjoy, you have also learnt a few things about how to be a good human being. Even more important, in this day when the corpus of knowledge is growing at an exponential pace and is said to be doubling every few months, if not weeks, you need to understand that learning is a lifelong process and one should continue to learn as if one is going to live for ever. Learning should obviously include unlearning and relearning. IIT Delhi has, hopefully, set you on this path and has imparted to you the necessary skills to effectively face the challenges of today as well as tomorrow. To continue unflinchingly on this path, is the sure way of achieving success for yourself, and serving the humanity.

IIT Delhi is, no doubt, doing well, as clearly brought out by the Director’s report. It has built an excellent research and teaching infrastructure, even as it continues to expand and build further. Its faculty is fully involved and is busy in taking its curriculum and teaching pedagogy to the next level, and most importantly, is doing so in a socially inclusive and
sensitive manner without diluting its standards. IITs have amply shown by regularly filling up all the prescribed reserved category seats that “Equity and Excellence” can definitely coexist and go together.

I am particularly happy to mention about the special efforts put in by the Institute this summer in very successfully organizing a special workshop for the new students, with the main focus of raising the self-confidence and motivational levels of some of the students, who come from disadvantaged backgrounds, besides raising their learning and communication skills. This effort was followed by a similar effort for the entire new batch of 2010, in designing and executing an orientation program which had, among other components, a strong ingredient of value inculcation, not so much by preaching and indoctrination, but more by way of a process of engagement for self-introspection and analysis, which should help them understand themselves better and set up appropriate goals and objectives for their study at IIT Delhi. I commend the faculty of IIT Delhi, for this special and innovative effort, which no doubt will help the newcomers to make full use of the opportunity to study in IIT Delhi. Innovations and experiments like these are the hallmark of a great and sensitive institution.

I also take pride in mentioning that IIT Delhi had very successfully mentored IIT Ropar and had given its full assistance in the setting up of a temporary campus for this new IIT at Ropar which has this year admitted its 3rd batch of B Tech students.

IIT Delhi does fully realize and understand that as an institution of national importance, it is meant not only for imparting knowledge but also for creating new knowledge through basic and applied research for effectively tackling the present and future challenges. The Director’s report has mentioned about the new and recently built research infrastructure at the Institute. It is indeed commendable that the institute continues to engage in both basic and socially relevant research and is attempting to grow on scale. Its new research funding has crossed Rs. 100 crores in the second successive year this year, and will no doubt continue to increase substantially in the years to come. It has recently set up a state-of-the-art facility for research in smart textiles, and is presently engaged in setting up and upgrading its facilities in the areas of biosciences and creating a new facility for nano-science and technology. As announced by the Director, it has recently received a sanction for investing Rs. 50 crores over the next three years in the nano-fabrication facilities for non-silicon devices, which will put it in a unique position for research in this area in the country. The School of Biosciences is expected to receive a similar amount of funding over the next few years. It is heartening to note that our strength in the area of Computer Science has been recognized internationally with the setting up of an Indo-German Max Planck Centre of Excellence in Computer Science, with joint funding from the Department of Science and Technology and the German Government. All these developments in a short period of time, not only indicate the high-profile research path of its faculty, but also indicate their strong commitment to continue to take the Institute to greater heights. I congratulate the faculty and its research students for their committed efforts.

The Board of Governors of IIT Delhi, on their part, continue to goad and encourage the system to continue
its march towards excellence in both teaching and research. It does so by formulating and approving policies in place which will both encourage and empower the faculty to give their best. We are no doubt, helped in this effort by the Director and his excellent team, who keep bringing proposals on the Table, together with resources to execute them. The Institute has been able to raise considerable resources over the last few years to support and encourage faculty effort, from its alumni and other well wishers. These funds are utilized to support Chairs, Young Faculty Fellowships, Research travel grants and even help build new facilities. The Board has recently approved the setting up of a Rs. 60 crore research and development fund based on the Institute’s earnings from research, for further promotion of these and other similar activities. I can thus, safely say that the future looks bright, though there is a long way to go if we have to compete with the very best at the global level.

While the IIT Delhi is doing well, it is confronting some very serious challenges. Reaching a goalpost of 50 years has its own pluses and minuses. While it is an opportunity to build on its strengths, there is the dual challenge of building new and rebuilding the old. In sheer physical terms, the effort required is mammoth, both in terms of funding and its execution. The Institute, no doubt has to rise to a new level of performance and efficiency, for which it may have never been challenged before.

Similarly, recruitment and retention of bright faculty will continue to play an important part in the Institute’s development, both in view of considerable expansion that is happening, as well as the continuous retirements of a large number of senior faculty members after years of distinguished service to the Institute, in the next few years. With the opening of a large number of new institutions besides massive expansion taking place in the existing institutions of higher learning by the Centre and States including starting of new IITs, NITs, and IISERs etc., there is bound to be a shortage of good faculty and we have to make special efforts to attract and retain our existing faculty in IIT Delhi, which is indeed excellent. Recognising the need to attract and nurture the bright students to the teaching profession, MHRD and other related ministries have initiated a bouquet of measures which include substantially raising the number and fellowship amounts for the PhD and post doctoral programmes. However, to really pull and attract the best to the teaching profession, the society will have to restore the traditional status and prestige as used to be attached to the teaching profession. “Teacher first” should become our national slogan. If we can handle these challenges well, which, no doubt, we shall, the future continues to bode well for this great Institution and the Country. I wish the Director and his team the very best for the success of all their efforts.

I once again congratulate all the graduating students, their parents and other family members and wish you a great future ahead of you. We hope that you will cherish your days at the IIT and will nurture a lifelong relationship with your alma mater. We sincerely hope that you will all have a very satisfying and successful career, serving your motherland with distinction and pride, and would bring laurels to your alma mater.

IIT Delhi has been uniquely fortunate in having been able to get very distinguished public figures as Chief
Guests for blessing its graduating students at its Convocations. It is now my pleasant duty to introduce our Chief Guest, though he needs no introduction.

Our Vice President Shri Ansari jee has been a career diplomat, an administrator and an academician. Having joined the Indian Foreign Service (IFS) in 1961, he has held several high positions at national and international levels including Ambassador to the United Arab Emirates (1976-1979); Chief of Protocol, Govt. of India (1980-1985); High Commissioner to Australia (1985-1989); Ambassador to Afghanistan (1989-1990); Ambassador to Iran (1990-1992); Permanent Representative to the UN, New York (1993-1995); Ambassador to Saudi Arabia (1995-1999).

He had been a Visiting Professor, Centre for West Asian and African Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi (Dec 1999-May 2000); Vice-Chancellor, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh (2000-2002); Distinguished Fellow at the Observer Research Foundation, New Delhi (2002-2006); Visiting Professor, Academy for Third World Studies, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi (2003-2005); Co-Chairman, India-U.K. Round Table (2004-2006); Member, National Security Advisory Board (2004-2006); Chairman, National Commission for Minorities (March 2006-July 2007); and has been the Vice President of India and ex officio Chairman, Rajya Sabha since 11th August 2007.

He has also published and edited several books and written several academic papers and newspaper articles especially on West Asian Politics. In recognition of his contributions, the Government of India had honoured him with “Padma Shri “ award, as back as in the year 1984.

We are extremely happy and grateful to our Hon’ble Vice President Shri Hamid Ansari jee for his kind acceptance of our invitation to grace this solemn occasion. His presence today is a source of inspiration to our students and all of us. We are all eagerly looking forward to listen to his words of wisdom and his sane advice to our graduating students.

On behalf of the Board of Governors and on my own behalf, I also take this opportunity to express my grateful thanks to Prof. Goverdhan Mehta, former Director, Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore and currently Lilly Jubilant Chair Professor, School of Chemistry, University of Hyderabad, who has kindly agreed to be the Chief Guest for the second day of our 41st Convocation, tomorrow.

Prof Goverdhan Mehta, Ph.D. (Poona) and DSc (honoris causa), is the former President of the International Council for Science (ICSU). He is a Bhatnagar Fellow and former director of the Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore, a premier institution in the country. He has made notable and outstanding contributions in Chemical Sciences and specializes in the area of Organic Chemistry. He has also contributed to science education, science policy and planning and R&D efforts in India and abroad in many ways. He has been exceptionally prolific in his scientific contributions, having published more than 370 original research papers in international Journals of high repute. He is a member of several national and international bodies which include being a fellow of Indian National

In recognition of his outstanding academic and research contributions, Prof. Mehta has been honored with several national and international awards including Alexander von Humboldt Research Award, Germany (1995) (1st award in India), Officer dans l’ordre des Palmes Académiques, awarded by the President of France (1999), Padma Sri, Civilian Honor awarded by the President of the Republic of India (2001), C. V. Raman Medal, Indian National Science Academy (2003), Lifetime Achievement Award, Indian Chemical Society (2003).

He has also been honoured with conferment of Honorary Doctorates (Honoris Causa) by many institutions including University d’Aix-Marseille, Marseille, France (1996), University of Paris (VII), France (2003), University of Joseph Fourier, Grenoble, France (2005), and IIT Kharagpur. His gracious presence and words of advice would greatly benefit, inspire and guide the graduating students in shaping their future careers.

We also deem it a great pleasure and privilege in honouring Dr. Anil Kakodkar, an eminent nuclear scientist of our country with the Degree of Doctor of Science (Honoris Causa) for his outstanding contributions in the area of research and development of nuclear reactors. Dr. Kakodkar is the Former Chairman, Atomic Energy Commission and Former Secretary, Department of Atomic Energy and is currently the Chairman, Board of Governors, IIT Bombay as well as the Homi Bhabha Chair Professor at Bhabha Atomic Research Centre, Trombay, Mumbai.

Dr. Kakodkar is actively involved in programs related to augmentation of Thorium utilization in our nuclear power program and has been leading the team engaged in the design of the Advanced Heavy Water Reactor. He has created a roadmap for shaping the third stage of India’s nuclear power program aimed at tapping the vast energy potential of our thorium resources, not only as source for electricity production but also as a primary energy source. If these efforts bear fruit, India’s energy needs will be addressed to a great extent. For his outstanding contributions and achievements, the Government of India honoured him with the Padma Shri Award in 1998, Padma Bhushan in 1999 and Padma Vibhushan in 2009. He has been bestowed with numerous awards and has been decorated by doctoral degrees (Honoris Causa) by several universities and academic institutions.

Now, it is my pleasure to invite the Chief Guest, the Hon’ble Vice President, to give his address at this 41st Convocation.