Address
by
Chairman, Board of Governors

Distinguished Chief Guest of the Convocation, Member, Planning Commission of India, Dr. Krishnaswamy Kasturirangan jee, Director IIT Delhi, Professor Surendra Prasad jee, my distinguished colleagues on the Board of Governors, distinguished members of the Senate, esteemed Faculty members, Staff members, dear young Graduating Students, respected Parents, distinguished Invitees, Friends from the media, Ladies and Gentlemen!

On behalf of the Board of Governors and on my own behalf, let me join Professor Surendra Prasad jee, in extending a very warm welcome to our Chief Guest Dr. Kasturirangan jee and to all of you on this very joyous and fulfilling occasion, the 42nd Convocation of the IIT Delhi, in its Golden Jubilee Year. I am particularly happy that today, a degree of Doctor of Science (Honoris Causa) will also be conferred on Dr. Kasturirangan jee for his outstanding contributions in the field of Science and Technology. I would also like to convey our hearty congratulations to all the 5 distinguished alumni who are being honoured with the distinguished Alumni Award, for having done us proud with their outstanding contributions in their respective fields. I offer my hearty congratulations to all of you who are receiving the degrees today, which is a culmination of your scholarly efforts at this Institute and I am sure it is a fulfillment of a great dream for you and your parents. Congratulations are also due to all those who inspired you for this achievement in your life: your parents and your teachers.

You will soon be stepping out into the world, with new hopes and aspirations, to commence a new phase in your life. I have no doubt that with the education and training you have received at this great Institute, you will be ready to take on your role as leaders in science and technology as well as good human beings in the society. Whether you decide to take up a job, or go for higher studies or venture out in your own business, all of you have the potential to make a positive difference to the world. Our hope and expectation from you is: whatever you choose to do, do it well by giving it your 100% and make your country and your alma-mater proud. In this fast changing world where knowledge corpus seems to be doubling in less than even a year, what knowledge you have acquired during your stay at IIT Delhi, is obviously not going to suffice and you will have to constantly learn and update yourself. The learning many a time, would also mean and encompass unlearning and relearning.

Professor Surendra Prasad jee, has given an overview of the achievements of the Institute during the year. It is a happy augury that IIT Delhi continues to retain the top slot in many of the rankings published nationally and is counted amongst the top 50 technological institutions globally. The faculty, the staff and the students of the Institute deserve praise for their dedicated efforts and for their commitment. During the past 4 years, IIT Delhi has increased its intake in UG/PG courses by over 54% and that too in a socially inclusive manner by fully honouring all the prescribed reservations in admissions. Thus IIT Delhi has shown beyond doubt that “Equity and Excellence” can coexist and in-fact should go together. I congratulate the Director and his colleagues for a job well done, and wish the Institute a continued and steady march towards academic excellence. I have no doubt that many of the initiatives taken by the Institute Administration in recent years, have the potential to considerably further improve its all-round excellence in the years to come.
As informed by the Director, this year has been significant in many ways for the Institute. The Institute, in its Golden Jubilee year, has made all out efforts to improve its research and teaching infrastructure. From creating new academic spaces (in the form of an academic complex), building new hostels and faculty residences, and renewing and renovating all buildings and utilities, the Institute is fully engaged with the effort of growth and renewal in this Golden Jubilee Year. It is also noteworthy that in this effort, not only is the Institute receiving generous support of the Government, but also has received a very big helping hand from some of its prominent alumni. The fact that in a single year, the alumni have come forward to pledge more than Rs. 50 crores for its various projects, speaks volumes for the excellent feelings and the commitment which the alumni of IIT Delhi, have for their alma-mater. There is no doubt that the alumni contributions are going to be even more important in the years to come, since these help the Institute in certain very special ways.

The Golden Jubilee Year is an occasion not only for celebration, but also a time for serious introspection. We can not afford to be complacent with the status quo as in today’s competitive world we have to run faster, even to remain at the same place. Keeping this at the back of our mind that accepting status quo, itself can be the cause for the downfall, while building on our past strengths, we will have to eliminate all the non value added activities and devise ways to do better than our previous best, both in teaching and research.

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. Together with excellence in teaching, the system has also been growing its stature in research. There are many fronts on which the Institute has contributed to the national effort in the Technology Development, and continues to do so today. It will take too much time to enumerate all such achievements. However, there is no doubt that we have to strengthen this aspect further. The Institute is acutely aware of this need and is constantly striving in this direction. The basic approach has been to empower its faculty and scholars to take up both basic and socially relevant applied research through better research facilities and greater flexibility of working. I am happy to state that in this Golden Jubilee Year, the Institute has taken the initiative to set up a special Research Promotion Fund with a Corpus of nearly Rs. 60 crores to create new opportunities for Research in the Institute. The Institute is also investing heavily into facilities for Nano-scale research and devices, and for basic research in Biological sciences. A new Central Research facility is also being planned for housing sophisticated instruments for advanced research in many fields. I am happy to note that the Institute has devised a scheme for providing seed funding for high-impact research and leadership projects, to interdisciplinary groups.

Dr Anil Kakodakar Committee which had been asked by the MHRD to draw a road map for future of IITs as world class institutions for research and higher learning, in its Report, which is yet to be approved by the IIT Council, has inter-alia suggested that IITs should scale up their PhD output by a factor of 10 in the course of next 10 years, which would give the required impetus to research ambience in IITs besides helping in tiding over the chronic faculty shortages in IITs as well as in other institutions of higher learning in the country. This for IIT Delhi means that we have to gradually increase the enrollment of PhD students from the existing number of about 1500
to over 3500 Ph.D. students, say during the course of next 10 years. Similarly, the report has recommended that every old IIT should have an optimum level of about 12000 students over the course of next 10 years. This would need innovative ways of creating new infrastructure in a limited space which was not originally planned for such numbers. In this context, it is particularly heartening to see that the Institute’s efforts to acquire additional land in the NCR region for further expansion of its activities especially research, are bearing fruit, through the help and co-operation of the Haryana Government, as announced by the Director.

While the proposed increase in output of MTechs and PhDs from IITs, would certainly help in getting over the faculty shortage to some extent, to pull and attract the talented youth to the teaching profession in big numbers, the society will have to restore the traditional aura and respect which used to be bestowed on the teachers. “Teacher First” will have to become a national slogan.

Thus, the conventional view of IITs as undergraduate teaching institutions which also do some research, has to steadily give way to a picture of IITs as Research Universities which have to play an increasingly important and pivotal role in many of the Research frontiers. In fact, the fundamental paradigm even today in IIT, is to provide research based education to all our students, whether undergraduates or post-graduates, since that is the best education possible for imparting the problem solving skills. We perceive that the time is also ripe for the IITs to take leadership position in scientific research and technology development for finding solutions to the grand challenges, in selected areas such as renewable and clean energy, rural and urban infrastructure, advanced materials, processing and manufacturing technologies. For this to happen effectively, it is equally important that the brightest amongst you consider opting for a career in higher education and research, since clearly the quality of research output will directly depend on the quality of manpower going into these fields.

We are fully conscious of the fact that in today’s globalised world, being one of the best or even the best in one’s own country, is not good enough and that the nation expects the IITs to match with the very best in the world and expects them to not only impart quality education but also create new corpus of knowledge and technologies to enable our country to effectively tackle the current and future challenges. The IIT Delhi undoubtedly has the potential and capacity to do so and on this happy occasion IIT Delhi commits itself for attaining even further higher levels of excellence so as to come up to the expectations of the nation.

On this happy occasion, we gratefully acknowledge that IIT Delhi has been a privileged lot and owe a sense of our deep gratitude, for the very generous funding and autonomy, as has been provided since its inception by the Govt of India, on behalf of its people, despite its several financial constraints. Keeping this in mind, everyone in the IIT system, has to strive to repay to the nation by doing something which will make a positive difference in the lives of its countrymen especially its poor.

I once again congratulate all the graduating students, their parents and other family members and wish all the graduating students, a great future. We hope that you will cherish your days at the IIT Delhi and will nurture a lifelong relationship and a bond 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.
It is now my proud privilege to introduce Dr. Kasturirangan, the Chief Guest of this function.

Dr. Krishnaswamy Kasturirangan took his Bachelor of Science with Honours and Master of Science degrees in Physics from Bombay University and received his Doctorate Degree in Experimental High Energy Astronomy in 1971 working at the Physical Research Laboratory, Ahmedabad. He was also a Member of Rajyasabha (2003-2009). He is presently the Member (Science) with the Planning Commission of India. For over 9 years until 2003, Dr. Kasturirangan steered the Indian Space Programme as Chairman of the Indian Space Research Organisation. Under his leadership, the programme witnessed several major milestones including the successful launching and operationalisation of the India’s prestigious launch vehicles, the Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle and the Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle, the development and launching of some of the world’s best civilian remote sensing satellites, IRS-1C and 1D, new generation INSAT communication satellites, besides ocean observation satellites IRS-P3/P4. As an Astrophysicist, Dr. Kasturirangan’s interest include research in high energy X-ray and gamma ray astronomy as well as optical astronomy. He has made extensive and significant contributions to studies of cosmic X-ray and gamma ray sources and effect of cosmic X-rays in the lower atmosphere. Dr. Kasturirangan is a Fellow Member of several prestigious national and international academies.

He has been conferred with the highest civilian honours Padma Shri, Padma Bhushan and Padma Vibhushan by the President of India and Award of ‘Officer of the Legion d’honneur’ by the President of the French Republic, France.

We acknowledge his inspiring presence today and it is an honour and privilege to invite him to deliver his address.

Jai Hind !

For next day 14th August 2011

It is also my proud privilege to introduce Shri Malvinder Singh Banga, the Chief Guest of the function.

Mr. Banga joined Clayton Dubilier & Rice, an American private equity firm, as a partner in their London office in 2010 after a 33-year career at Unilever. He is the former President Global Foods, Home and Personal Care and member of the Unilever plc Executive Board. He was responsible for the global consumer business and also led the creation of a Global Category Organization, responsible for innovation and marketing mix development across 170 countries for all 270 Unilever brands across Foods, Home & Personal Care. He was also responsible for Unilever’s sustainability agenda. Previous appointments include President, Home and Personal Care Asia as well as Chairman and Managing Director of Hindustan Unilever Ltd. He has been on the Prime Minister of India’s Council of Trade & Industry since 2004.

He holds a B.Tech. in Mechanical Engineering from the Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi and an M.B.A. from the Indian Institute of Management, Ahembdabad and he was a Gold Medal awardee at both the above institutions.

Mr. Banga was awarded the Padma Bhushan by the Prime Minister of India in 2010.

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Jai Hind !