



ADDRESS BY

**HIS EXCELLENCY LT GEN (RETD) S K SINHA, PVSM  
GOVERNOR OF ASSAM**

**AT IIT CONVOCATION : 19 MAY 1999**

As Chairman of the Board of Governors of Indian Institute of Technology, Guwahati, it gives me great pleasure to welcome you all to the first Convocation of this Institute. Convocations are a solemn occasion, when degrees are conferred upon students, who have successfully completed their courses. Being the first Convocation of IIT, Guwahati this occasion has a special significance. It is an important milestone in the history of technological development of the North East.

I congratulate all the recipients of degrees at this Convocation. The knowledge and skill that they have acquired at this Institute would stand them in very good stead in meeting the challenges of life. A whole new vista now lies open before them and they can pursue their chosen course with full confidence in themselves. I wish them every success in their endeavour to build their career and to serve the society. They must make themselves worthy of their alma mater. The presence of their parents and guardians at this function adds lustre to this occasion.

The Faculty and Staff of IIT deserve special praise for their contribution in bringing up this institution and imparting a high level of specialised education. It was only in the summer of 1995 when students started arriving at this IIT. Adhoc arrangement in rented accommodation were made to commence the functioning of this IIT. In a matter of 4 years, all the inevitable teething problems were overcome and the IIT has been made fully functional. To a large extent the IIT has got established in its campus on the North bank of the Brahmaputra. In another couple of years, all the remaining work at this campus would be completed. The Director and the staff of IIT have been the pioneers in building up this institute. During the last nearly two years that I have been associated with the IIT and I have seen, how brick by brick, it has reached its present stage. I am very optimistic and confident about its future.

It is so apt that our Chief Guest at the first convocation of this IIT is Shri Prafulla Kumar Mahanta, the Chief Minister of Assam. As the then President of All Assam Students Union, he has been an important signatory of the Assam Accord. The setting up of an IIT at Guwahati is part of that accord. The vision of having a prestigious institution like an IIT in Guwahati involving an outlay of Rs. 1,000 crores has been made a reality. Government of India has been generous in providing funds. Nearly half the total amount stands already allocated and remaining allocations will follow. The Government of Assam has provided land and other facilities for setting up this institute. I wish to place on record our appreciation for the assistance given by the Central and State Governments.

IITs were conceived as 'Institutions of National Importance'. Initially five IITs were set up in our country - each with assistance from foreign countries and they flowered into institutions of excellence. In my visits to USA, I have been interacting with the academic community there. Our IITs enjoy a high reputation abroad and our IIT graduates have made a mark in the USA. I am positive that IIT Guwahati which has been established without any foreign assistance will maintain that tradition and I hope may even improve upon it.

This IIT has been established in a backward region with a great potential for development. I am sanguine that it will serve as catalyst for technological development and scientific advancement of the entire North East region of our country. Starting with a B.Tech. programme in 1995, Ph.D. programme was introduced in 1996 and M.Tech. in 1998. In 1998, a four year course of Bachelor of Design was introduced. This is the first such course in India. There are also plans to have centres for Applied Biological Sciences, Agricultural and Forest Research, Safety Engineering and Disaster Management, and Environmental Science and Engineering. All this will help us to exploit the rich bio-diversity of this region and raise the level of

technological awareness and skill. This will overcome the technological backwardness and infrastructural underdevelopment of the region. At the same time it will help us in developing capability to mitigate and manage disaster like floods and earthquakes which are recurrent problems that we face in these parts.

The ancient city of Pragjyotishpur was the prime political and cultural centre of North East and also the leading Tantric centre in the country. However, people from these parts used to go to Kashi and other places for specialised and higher education. In present times, people from the North have been going to other parts of the country for higher education. IIT, Guwahati has started a new trend when people from other parts of the country have started coming here for technical and specialised education. In the medieval period the bulk of the city of Guwahati used to be on the North bank of the river. Today, this has got reversed. IIT, Guwahati is all set to start another new trend of developing the North bank. On the waters of the Brahmaputra nearby the undying glory of Battle of Saraighat was won. And today from the North bank close to the site of that battle, IIT, Guwahati has laid the foundation for technological and scientific glory for the people of this region. The seeds sown have yielded results and at this convocation we are reaping the first harvest on the eve of a new millennium. I am sure that in the years to come, we would be having bumper harvest and IIT, Guwahati would render outstanding service to the North East and to the Nation. I once again congratulate the faculty and the students of the IIT on this historic occasion.

**Jai Ai Assom, Jai Hind.**