

CONVOCATION ADDRESS

OF

Lt. General (Retd.) Ajai Singh  
Governor of Assam



सत्यमेव जयते

AT

THE 10<sup>TH</sup> CONVOCATION OF  
INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY GUWAHATI

23 MAY 2008

Dr. M. K. Bhan, Secretary, Department of Biotechnology, and Chairman, Board of Governors of IITGuwahati; Members of the Board of Governors, Prof. Gautam Barua, Director, IIT Guwahati; members of the Senate; Distinguished Invitees to the Convocation; Faculties and Members of the Staff; dear graduating students and their parents and guardians; ladies and gentlemen.

I am privileged to be invited as the chief guest of this 10th Convocation of IIT Guwahati. This Institute has a special place in our hearts because of its location and the services it has rendered to Assam and the North East.

IIT Guwahati has, in its fourteen years of existence already established its name as an institute of excellence in the North East, as well as all over India. I am happy to see that this leading institute of academic excellence has developed state-of-art infrastructure and built excellent academic resources. The campus with its natural beauty and serene surroundings, is an ideal place for learning and for engaging in research. It has become a place of attraction of Guwahati. Alas, the number of students from the North East are still very few. Society must create an atmosphere of confidence and ambition so as to motivate our boys and girls to sweat and compete and enter institutions like these. We must not be satisfied with what we have and we must be confident in our abilities. However, we must also have enough students who are eligible. We must encourage more of our children to do Science after they complete their class X. The number of students passing class XII in Science in Assam is a small percentage of the total students passing.

Even with a relatively small number of science students, we do not have enough institutions to absorb them. So many of our children are having to go to far off places to look for opportunities of quality higher education in technology related subjects. We need a big expansion of technical education in this region. For new quality institutions to come up here, we must open up the education sector for massive private participation. Regulatory mechanisms must be replaced by quality control mechanisms. The knowledge commission in its recent report stated that engineering education is among the key enablers of growth for transforming India's economy. The quality of teaching and research in this sphere will play a critical role in the emergence of our country as a global knowledge leader. It will also provide vital inputs for enhancing productivity across sectors. In the past two decades, we

have seen an eight-fold increase in the number of institutions imparting engineering education at the undergraduate level. Yet, there are some fundamental issues that need to be addressed. To strengthen the knowledge base of the country and to emphasize the role of science, the Knowledge Commission has even recommended bridging the gap between science and engineering.

In the light of the recommendation of the Knowledge Commission, it is heartening to note that IIT Guwahati has already taken a lead role by integrating Science and Engineering at the B.Tech level. Physics, Chemistry and Mathematics departments at IIT Guwahati are offering BTech programmes in Engineering Physics, Chemical Science & Technology and Mathematics and Computing, respectively.

Speaking on a broader platform, the XIth Plan (2007-2012) places a high priority on education as a central instrument for achieving rapid and inclusive growth with specific emphasis on expansion, excellence and equity. This is reflected in the proposed allocation of Rs. 3 trillion, a five fold increase over the Xth Plan. The share of education in the total plan will accordingly increase from 7.7% to 20% representing a credible progress towards the target of 6% of the GDP.

Focusing on the Higher Education Scenario, specifically in the North East Region, it is to be highlighted that higher education in the region is characterized as 'Single track' focusing on general education and within that, a major concentration in the arts. Over 80% of the three lakh students enrolled in colleges are in the arts, which bears testimony to the assertion that the standard of science teaching is poor in the region. Further, College enrolment is very low in the region. It is evident that higher education in the North East Region needs to become more relevant to the population's need. Each of the North Eastern states has a Central University which, as an autonomous entity, can chart its own growth and development plans and a major thrust would be to focus on areas related to the region's need, such as agro-based sciences. (Biotechnology, patent awareness, organic farming, water conservation, veterinary sciences and seismology), horticulture, medicinal plants and food processing.

I am glad to know that IIT Guwahati is working on projects that are of relevance to this region. I appreciate their involvement in flood control projects, in earthquake research, in the oil sector, and in harnessing the bio-resources of the region.

I expect much more though. I expect major breakthroughs to emerge from your research. Breakthroughs that will change the economic scenario, breakthroughs that will bring joy and hope to the millions of people who are struggling to eke out a living. Agricultural practices must be transformed and technological solutions must be put forward to improve productivity, to increase value addition, and to reduce waste.

The city of Guwahati is expanding and our government has released a draft master plan visualizing the future expansion of the city. We have also recently initiated a study to develop a comprehensive mobility plan for the Guwahati Metropolitan area. Certainly, North Guwahati has a decisive role to play in shaping the growth of an environment friendly city, and to de-congest the city. Hence, we are committed in developing and providing good connectivity to this part of Guwahati City. We look towards IIT Guwahati for playing an effective role in planning and developing a better mass communication system in the city.

I am optimistic that today's graduating students will undoubtedly make the best use of this hard earned privilege and live up to the responsibilities that go with it.

My dear students, you are on the thresholds of a professional career ahead and I wish you the very best for everything – Always remember, strive hard and remain focused, because you have been specifically chosen and skilled to make the lives of your fellow beings more comfortable, and in doing so, making your existence fruitful. I congratulate all of you, your proud parents and near & dear ones and the faculty of this esteemed institution who guided and taught these students and I once again wish you all the very best.

Thank you.

Jai Hind

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Assam