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CONVOCATION ADDRESS

OF

Shri Tarun Gogoi
Honourable Chief Minister of Assam

AT

THE 9TH CONVOCATION OF
INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY GUWAHATI

25 MAY 2007

Chairman, Board of Governors, Dr. M. K. Bhan, Director of the Institute, Prof. Gautam Barua, members of the Board of Governors, members of the Senate, distinguished invited guests, faculty and staff, graduating students, parents, guardians, ladies and gentlemen –

I am very glad to be here at the 9th Convocation of IIT Guwahati. Every time I visit the campus, I find improvements and expansions. The growth and progress of this IIT is a matter of pride for all of us in this region. It is already the leading institute in technical education in North-East India and we have many expectations from IIT Guwahati.

Under the emerging global technology regime, higher education has become very important. Today the world is witnessing a process of massification of higher education. In a global economy which is becoming increasingly knowledge based, the demand is for a better and higher educated work force. Higher education is no longer the preserve of the elite.

The Government of Assam is committed to the development and expansion of the higher education sector, particularly in the professional sector. The policies and efforts of the State Government have resulted in investment coming into the State. To sustain and expand the flow of investment, availability of the right kind of manpower is essential. The Government of Assam has already taken a number of steps to promote the development of the higher education sector. Medical education has been strengthened by initiating the setting up of three more medical colleges in the State. A Medical University is being set up to oversee medical education. An Open University to provide Distance Education has recently been established. To encourage private investment in education, a Private University Bill has been passed by the State Assembly. With its passage, private universities can be set up in the State. It will encourage, we hope, the establishment of more engineering and other professional colleges in the private sector. This process of private participation has already started, as you may be aware, with two engineering colleges and a college of architecture being set up in Guwahati. The State Government will do all it can to help private entrepreneurs find land for the establishment of educational institutions.

The State Government is also committed to the expansion of technical education in the Govt. sector. A third engineering college will be announced soon. The Assam Institute of Management is being supported through the establishment of its own campus. We would like to see the region around IIT Guwahati to develop into an educational and research hub. Plan to set up a Biotechnology and Information Technology Park in this area is moving forward. IIT Guwahati is already helping the State Government in many of

these objectives. I am glad to inform you that IIT Guwahati has agreed to handle the joint entrance examination for admission to the State's Medical and Engineering Colleges from next year onwards. Your experience in holding the JEE examination will help ensure a free and fair and efficient examination system. Inputs from the Institute will be very important to ensure the success of the Technology Park. Technology Parks have successfully come up near major Technical Institutes such as those near Stanford University and near University of North Carolina. We have high expectations from IIT Guwahati and we are confident the Guwahati Technology Park will also be as successful.

We are also counting on IIT Guwahati's help in strengthening the faculty of our engineering colleges. We would like the Institute to introduce more flexibility in its PhD programme so that faculty in our State Colleges can do their PhDs from IIT Guwahati without having to disrupt their teaching commitments. Our State Engineering Colleges have already contributed a lot to the strength of the faculty of IIT Guwahati. We hope this contribution will no longer be necessary and you will now contribute to our Colleges.

This brings me to another point that is of concern to us. The number of students from the North-East entering the IIT system in general, and IIT Guwahati in particular, is well below expectations. There is no dearth of talent in the region as is evident by the successes achieved by our young men and women all over the world. What is required is increased awareness of the value of an IIT education. Society needs to spread the message so to speak. In this, IIT Guwahati can play a role by publicising the IIT system in the schools of the region. I urge the Institute to take adequate steps to distribute material and to use other means to reach the students of the North-East.

India is growing economically and we have to ensure that the growth of Assam keeps up with the rest of the country. Science and Technology is playing a major role in this growth. The IT boom is essentially a technology-led boom. IIT Guwahati can therefore play a significant role in the development of the economy of Assam. I am glad to know that the Institute is already providing its expertise to the Government. The offices of the Commissioner of Taxes, spread all over the State and the 53 treasuries of the Department of Finance are computerised and this has been possible due to significant inputs from IIT Guwahati. Help is also being provided in establishing the Assam State Wide Area Network (ASWAN) and in setting up of Community Service Centres all over the state of Assam. IIT faculty have provided help in the establishment of the ISBT at Garchuk. They have provided inputs to the planning of the drainage system of Guwahati. They

have also helped the State Government in various committees. We expect this co-operation to continue and we look forward to significant interventions from IIT Guwahati in solving many of the problems of the State such as those caused by floods, landslides, and other natural disasters. We are also looking for inputs in environment management, in preserving and exploiting our rich bio-resources, and most important of all, in helping our farmers achieve higher levels of productivity and income.

After many years, the State is in a position to take development initiatives meaningfully and vigorously because of our improved financial position. Our priority is infrastructure development, employment generation and good governance. I am sure IIT Guwahati will contribute meaningfully in our endeavours.

Graduating students, most of you have come from outside this region and obtained one of the finest educations that the country has to offer. You are among the brightest minds in the country. You have many missions to accomplish. I wish you all the best in your career. I urge you to remember this North-East region where you learned to be a man/woman and hope you may contribute some time to the development of the region.

Jai Hind

Tarun Gogoi
Chief Minister, Assam