

Chairman's Speech for the Fourth Convocation of IIITG S. Ramadorai

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Members of the Board, Members of the Senate, and Members of the
Faculty and Staff

Graduating class of 2021 and 2022, parents, distinguished guests, ladies
and gentlemen.

I would like to extend a very warm welcome to all present, both in-person
and virtually, at the 4th Convocation of the Indian Institute of Information
Technology Guwahati.

Let me begin by congratulating each one of the students and scholars who
are receiving degrees, awards and prizes today. While it is a celebration
of your achievements, it also marks the beginning of your journey into a
world of opportunities and challenges.

On this special occasion, I was to welcome the Hon'ble Chief Minister of
Assam Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma to the Fourth Convocation of IIIT
Guwahati, but unfortunately, he could not be here today in person.
However, he has sent his best wishes and I am told that his message will
be read out.

The Hon'ble Chief Minister is a man of action with tremendous commitment towards the development of the state and the welfare of its people. Under his leadership we have seen the state's progress on several fronts – be it in public health, education, industrialization, or infrastructure development.

As a patron of this institute, Hon'ble Chief Minister has supported the Institute right from the very beginning. When the Govt of India introduced the scheme of establishing IIITs in the country in PPP mode, he was then the Education Minister of Assam. The Govt. of Assam was the first State to submit a proposal to the Centre. He not only ensured that the land is allotted to the institute for its permanent campus on a priority basis, but also made sure that the state fulfils its financial obligations timely, and in fact, going beyond, by allocating additional funds in the State budget for FY 2022-23. On behalf of the Institute, I would like to express our deep appreciation and gratitude to the Hon'ble Chief Minister and his government for their continuous support to the institute as it makes rapid progress towards becoming one of the finest technology education centres in India. We have the comfort and confidence that we can approach the Hon'ble Chief Minister in the future as well for any help and assistance.

Today, I have special reasons to applaud IIIT, Guwahati. As we all are aware, the Covid 19 pandemic cast a shadow on the academic lives and careers of students across the world. Precious hours of academic engagement, debates and research was lost in lockdowns. Yet, IIIT Guwahati did exceptionally well even in these challenging and testing times. It has not only kept the academic cycle of teaching and learning

rolling through innovative methods, but also made great efforts to help students stay on their career-track despite the disruptions. I am happy to find that the second and the third M Tech batches are graduating today. Research has been a major thrust of the Institute and today 7 PhD degrees are being awarded. There are about 100 PhD scholars in the Institute currently. Here, I would also like to express my appreciation and gratitude to the Members of the Board for their continuous support and guidance to the institute in pursuit of academic excellence. Corporates like TCS has always been helpful and supported the institute. Oil India is another example.

My dear students, the world you are entering as a graduate today has changed, and continues to change, at an incredibly rapid pace. You would have seen the James Webb space telescope broadcasting 13 million years ago how the cosmos looked and what we are witnessing is a remarkable progress in the application of technology. Digital transformation is creating an unprecedented opportunity for innovation across all industries, with total reinvention of products, services, and experiences. Interestingly, technology feeds on itself. Each technological improvement creates the next and stronger generations of technology at a very accelerated rate. Therefore, this is indeed a great time to graduate with skills that equip you to ride on this technology wave. An ocean of opportunities awaits you if you have the right attitude and you embrace learning as a lifelong endeavor.

Technology is a means to an end, not an end in itself. It provides the means to create and make a difference to the lives of people, which ultimately brings lasting progress and radical transformation. India has

numerous problems, most of those of a gigantic scale, that need to be addressed on a mission mode – be it inequitable access to education or public health, or tackling climate change. This can be viewed as opportunities in the journey towards a digital economy that is inclusive. The Digital India initiative has been driving creation of technology infrastructure at a massive scale, including connectivity and adoption of digital practices. Our challenges with digital inclusion, transportation, healthcare, education, agriculture, etc. essentially require transformative and scalable technological innovations. We need technologies that can go beyond lab systems and work in the real world. For example, with over 600 widely used languages in India, efficient cross language communication is a necessity. Speech-to-speech translation in real-time across languages has been a dream for ages; but now it is fast becoming a reality. Thanks to the advancements in technology and Artificial Intelligence.

For decades, India's efforts to deliver government services have been plagued by a host of problems. But now with public digital platforms or what we call the 'India Stack', India has been trying to solve hard-problems by adopting presence-less, paperless, and cashless service delivery. The impact has been impressive. For example, over 6 lakh crore rupees was transferred directly to the bank accounts of people across the country using the DBT-Aadhaar platform. This is just a tip of an iceberg of an unprecedented opportunity waiting to be unfolded in the years ahead. Entrepreneurial ambition and a start-up ecosystem await you in addition to other jobs.

The North-East has started seeing a wave of positive changes as new opportunities are being created here. Assam is already leading the way by leveraging technology for the socio, economic and cultural development of the state. The cancer grid set up in collaboration with the Tata Trusts is an example of a distributed, yet deeply connected network of hospitals and doctors that has the potential to transform Assam into a cancer care hub of the region. Another initiative that I have had the honour of participating with the Hon'ble Chief Minister recently is the modernization of the Industrial Training Institute (ITIs) in collaboration with Tata Technologies. It is quite impressive to see the futuristic courses and curricula in advanced manufacturing, IoT, semiconductors, chip technology, and automation that the Tata Technologies has created for the ITIs that will go a long way in creating a vibrant skilling ecosystem in the region – aligned with the demands of Industry 4.0.

The rich biodiversity, flora and fauna, and the opportunities for sustainable growth of the region look bright and exciting. The region has great potential for development and could well become the growth engine that will give the next big push to the Indian economy. It could be transformed into an economic corridor connecting India, Bangladesh, Myanmar and the other ASEAN countries. The benefits of such a transformation would be multifaceted, impacting not only India but the entire sub region. And IIIT Guwahati is uniquely positioned to make meaningful contributions by using its strength in technology with an interdisciplinary outlook.

The potential for growth in the Indian economy in the years ahead is certainly possible and a reality. Growth will create numerous possibilities

for young and talented people like you. Indeed, most of these opportunities will be created by young entrepreneurs themselves. I see amongst you the creators of successful future start-ups. The world is waiting for you. Step out and take the plunge. Success or failure is an opportunity for learning. All of you need to pursue your dreams with passion, purpose and persistent efforts. Your dreams will indeed come true. Make all of us at IIT, Guwahati proud. Make your parents proud. Make India proud.

With these words, once again, I would like to congratulate all the students graduating today and also the award winners, and wish you a successful and memorable journey ahead. It is worth recalling Mahatma Gandhi's inspiring words - "The future depends on what we do in the present".

Thank you

Jai Hind