

**Speech of Hon'ble Chief Minister Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma for the Fourth
Convocation of Indian Institute of Information Technology Guwahati
on 13 July 2022**

- Respected Chairman of the Board, Mr. S. Ramadorai, who is joining this Convocation online
- Director of the Institute, Professor Gautam Barua,
- Members of the Board,
- Members of the Senate,
- Distinguished guests, parents and guardians and
- Dear students

At the outset, I extend my heartiest congratulations to all the graduates of this prestigious institution who are receiving their degrees at today's Convocation. It is indeed a moment of pride and jubilation for all of you, your families and this institution.

Today I propose to start with something which is all known but still I would like to highlight it, ie. the importance of Information Technology. The steam engine, an 18th century invention, was an iconic technology of the Industrial Revolution. It has the same relationship to the Industrial Revolution as the Transistor has to the Information Revolution. While the working of the steam engine is quite intelligible it is not the case with a transistor. Working of the transistor has something magical about it. It is something beyond one's comprehension as to what goes on inside a computer or a mobile phone when they work. The technology of the steam engine is essentially confined to limited areas. But the transistor, embodied in the computer, is a universal technology. Right from the wrist watch to a space station, it is central to their working.

Secondly, Information technology has spread faster and over a larger area than any of the industrial technologies do. IT has become critical to the working of every feat of human activities today. Sequencing of human genome or operation of atomic power plant would not have been possible without the application of Information Technology. Today electronics constitute over 20% of the components of a high end car. Aeroplane and factories and even homes are being designed much more efficiently with aid of the computer.

It is the combination of these two factors that have empowered the information revolution to transform practically every facet of human activity. Whether it is the economy or education, polity or entertainment, the application of Information Technology is radically changing their character.

Today, we are living in an Information Society where the computers have relieved us of complex tasks, made work more meaningful, rendered the production

process more efficient, reduced costs at all level, made decentralization possible and thereby enabling people to work from home, opened more avenues for creative pursuits and so on and so forth.

That is why when the Government of India announced the scheme of IIITs in public-private partnership mode, we saw this as an opportunity to set up a national level institute specializing in Information and Communication Technology in the State. We had already acquired space for an IT Park near the LGBI airport, and we found that we could acquire land next to the IT Park for the Institute. This would enable interaction between the faculty and students of the Institute on the one hand, and entrepreneurs who would be establishing their businesses in the IT Park, on the other hand. This would help attract investors into the IT Park, and also help researchers in the IIIT to interact with industry to solve real life problems. Thus the IIIT campus got established by 2018.

When Information technology was first invented, immediate feature that caught people's imagination was its probable impact on globalization, by elimination of constraints of time and place. People noticed that it enabled the transnational corporations to grow much faster through exercise of remote control in real time. It's argued that IT was developed by commercial interest. Advent of IT has also brought along with it a host of curses as evidently million of workers having lost their jobs or their jobs deskilled. As of now employability of IT in our country is more as an instrument of corporate profits.

But now it's essential we turn towards its humane facets and have a fuller appreciation of how the IT can be used more on societal causes. We are all aware of the remarkable achievements of Indian software industry. What is inspiring about this part of the story is that IT is applied on the countryside to empower the villagers. We have to now focus more on an overview of the information revolution as to how it unfolds in our developing economy. IIIT, Guwahati has a constructive role to play in this.

The benefits of IT do not fall from heaven. It has to come through infrastructure and technological advancement. The university education system, particularly the system of research universities has a bigger role to play in bringing IT closer to the society through its social applications. Educational, research and industrial infrastructure complement such an ecosystem. We need to create such infrastructure of education and research over time. Industries provide a fertile soil for growth of research in IT. A culture in mathematics in the society and love for the subject generated in the young minds at the school level itself always foster development of IT culture in the society.

Our government is very much keen in applying of IT Enabled Services (ITES) in the government machinery. We have a deep sense of purpose and earnestness in applying ITES to make the administration more people friendly. With an aim to make the system more objective, our government is planning to bring in IT to a wider area of government functioning. I am sure of a substantial public benefit likely to accrue from our government's purposeful drive to use IT in the service of the people. Recently our government started a project called *Sadbhabana* to dispose of all old files pending in the Assam Secretariat. This project was launched with an aim to efficiently deliver public services by using IT enabled services. Under this Project, steps are taken to dispose of all pending files till May 10, 2021 within August 15, 2022. For all pending files, concerned persons were given the option to upload their petition informing the subject matter, giving reference number etc. through *Sadbhavana* portal. Such petitions are then processed at the concerned department and people can track the status of their files on the Portal itself. Implementation of the project is also monitored through a dashboard.

Our government has also taken a big stride in applying ICT in a mission called Mission *Basundhara* which is a great example of invoking ICT in the service of the people in matters relating to land. Of late we have noticed that land has become the largest source of dispute, litigation, violence and corruption. Manual maintenance of land records provides ample scope of all such menaces and suffering by the citizens. Therefore, in a bid to streamline and resolve and make land revenue services more accessible to citizens, Mission Basundhara was launched. The mission enables to reduce the pendency in updation of land records, through mission mode, accelerated disposal of services sought by citizens and an ease of doing business environment in the land management ecosystem. The implementation of the mission will see achieving the goal of 100% Digitalization of Maps and total Integration of Maps, Land Records and Registration for the State under the Integrated Land Records Management System. In the first phase, since the launch of the Mission on 2nd October, 2021 till its successful completion on May 10, 2022, altogether 8,13,981 applications were disposed.

We are also very much inclined to associating with the private sector in pursuit of promoting public private partnership in the field of Information Technology. The creation of IT infrastructure is capital intensive and its rapid expansion is possible only with private partnership as the government has other priorities to look into. Above all, level and type of expertise that the new technologies require are not readily available within the government. Private companies therefore are best suited to fill the equity gap and the gap of technological advancement. Our government is therefore receptive to the idea of IT Industry joining hands with the state government and partnering in all areas of the sector.

To that effect a project of Electronics Manufacturing Cluster is being set up at the Tech City in the vicinity of IIIT Guwahati, in a partnership of MeitY, Government of Assam and AMTRON. The project is slated to be completed in December 2022. In another initiative our government is setting up with MeitY a Computer Emergency

Response Centre which will cater to the need of the entire Northeastern states. You will also appreciate that we are nurturing to set up at the Tech City itself an International Internet Gateway (IIG) connecting Guwahati and Cox Bazar in Bangladesh starting with 100 Gbps connectivity. Moreover AMTRON has been working in the field of Augmented Reality and Virtual Reality and in another initiative AMTRON is all set to bring 3D manufacturing for industry and healthcare at the Tech City.

Regarding IIIT Guwahati, our government is committed to continue our financial support for Capital expenditure in the Institute. As has already been mentioned, the state government has announced a grant of Rs. 10 crores for 2022-23. Based on the plans of the Institute, I assure that our government will consider further requests for funding. However, I find that the number of students graduating from the Institute who are from Assam are very few. The percentage has been dropping especially after spot admissions to fill up vacant seats were stopped. I request the Institute to consider reserving some of the seats, maybe about 20%, in the B.Tech programmes for students from Assam. This will be similar to the scheme being adopted by the NITs in the country. Students from Assam are more likely to establish Start-ups in the state and we need to increase the number of such start-ups in the State. I am sure, IIIT Guwahati graduates will be very successful on that front.

We are aware that path breaking research is mostly done not by engineering graduates but by the Ph.Ds and Masters in engineering. Bachelor of engineering is produced by tens of thousands but few Ph.Ds and Masters are produced annually. It is in view of this lacuna that Indian Institute of Information Technology has been set up. IIIT admits engineering graduates for higher studies and the institute has been successful in fulfilling its given objective. For example, once the Bangalore IIIT produced nearly 150 post graduate engineers per year, a number that was higher than the combined production of Masters by all the IITs put together. IIIT Guwahati needs to look into this and efforts must be made to increase the number of masters and research scholars. It is not only the quantity that matters for the IT companies, we must also look to fulfilling the quality gap so that paucity of highly qualified scientists and engineers can be done away with. We must understand that this current era belongs to those who produce more Ph.Ds and Masters in the field of science and technology.

We must be judicious and set our priorities in using a powerful tool like Information Technology. Technology is after all a mirror of society. Its usages are shaped by the forces and interests of the stake holders. Our government is desirous for maximum usage of Information Technology in the services of our people. We are averse to a technology which serves only the commercial interests and bereft of any pretension to serve the social ends. Technology and administration are inseparable. Rather they are two arms that control the polity. Hence, IIIT and Government must forge a strong alliance as the two have to work in tandem to optimize the benefit of Information Technology and bring its much desired fruits to the common masses.

Dear graduating students,

As you are stepping out of this institute, I urge you all to make best use of your knowledge and expertise to maximize the benefit of IT and ITES for the common people. I am confident that what you have learnt in this Institute will help you in fulfilling this hallowed objective. We are aware that obtaining a degree from IIIT is a privilege of a very few and you all have worked very hard in getting admission to this institute and graduate successfully.

Dear Students,

You are at the prime of your youth. The way in which you utilize your energies will decide not only your future but also the nation as well. *Swami Vivekananda* who had deep faith in youth power urged the young generation to amplify their mental energies and physical fitness and work for social transformation. *Swami ji* said,

“Take up one idea. Make that one idea your life, think of it, dream of it, live on that idea, let the brain, muscles, nerve, every part of your body be full of that idea and just leave every other idea alone. This is the way to success.”

On this important occasion today, I also urge the students to be more focused with their goals, resolute with their ideas and committed in their mission. I congratulate you all once again for receiving the degrees in today’s Convocation and wish you all success in your future.

With these few words, I conclude my speech. Thank you! Jai Hind!!