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ADDRESS BY THE CHAIRPERSON, BOARD OF GOVERNORS, IIT MANDI

Honourable Chief Guest Dr. R. A. Mashelkar, Esteemed Director Prof Ajit Chaturvedi members of the Board of Governors, the Senate, esteemed faculty, graduating batch of 2020, dear students, staff, distinguished invitees, ladies, and gentlemen!

I am delighted to welcome our very distinguished Chief Guest Dr. R.A. Mashelkar and express our gratitude to him for having accepted our invitation to grace the occasion as the Chief Guest and deliver the convocation address. I am sure that his presence, though virtual, will be a great source of inspiration to not only the graduating batch but the entire IIT Mandi family.

It gives me immense pleasure to congratulate the graduating students of IIT Mandi on the occasion of its 8th Convocation ceremony. My hearty congratulations also to the faculty and staff of IIT Mandi, who have made this journey possible in the face of unprecedented crisis humanity has been confronted with in recent times. It is the beginning of a new journey for the graduating students, and I am sure a challenging, yet successful career path lies ahead of you. I sincerely hope that the knowledge and skill the graduating students have acquired and the ethos they have imbibed during their stay at IIT Mandi will stand them in good stead through the coming years of new challenges and opportunities. Also, these students would help contribute significantly in diverse ways to the country's development and the welfare of humanity.

I feel quite happy to note the impressive progress the Institute has made since its foundation in 2009. Eleven years down the line, the residential campus in the Himalayas currently houses nearly seventeen hundred students, more than a hundred faculty and staff members, offers six B.Tech. programs, along with a B.Tech. – M.Tech. the integrated dual degree program, and multiple postgraduate programs including M.Tech., M.Sc., M.A., MS (by Research), and Ph.D. The

innovative feature of our B.Tech. the program has been the incorporation of hands-on project-based courses. Similarly, the five-week induction program, introduced in 2016, for the new B.Tech. students have also been unique in its objectives and execution. IIT Mandi is the first IIT to launch an induction program of this scale and scope for the fresh batch of B. Tech. students. The induction program is aimed at initiating and integrating the incoming B. Tech. students into the thriving academic milieu on the campus through interactive modules. These modules are entirely mentored by faculty, and these are designed to impart a diverse set of academic, social, and physical skills and ethos. I congratulate the faculty and staff of the Institute on this remarkable accomplishment.

The Institute has also made its mark in research, collaboration, and international linkages established over the past decade. It is an outstanding achievement to have research projects worth more than a hundred crores so far. I am delighted that a Technology Innovation Hub (TIH) is being set up in the area of human-computer interaction under the “National Mission on Interdisciplinary Cyber-Physical Systems (NM-ICPS)” alongside the existing business incubation program of IIT Mandi Catalyst. In this context, it gives me also great joy and satisfaction in acknowledging the achievements of the IIT Mandi Catalyst. Initiated in 2016 as the first Technology Business Incubator (TBI) in Himachal Pradesh, it has established itself over the past four years. Catalyst has a strong and reliable mentoring presence in the innovative entrepreneurial/start-up landscape of Himachal Pradesh. It has to be mentioned to its credit that IIT Mandi Catalyst has so far received more than 1000 applications and supported well above 100 start-ups. It has to date disbursed about INR 3.5 crores for prototyping and commercialization of diverse start-ups in clean energy, environment, health care, agriculture, enterprise management, biotech, education, manufacturing, and consumer internet. The fact that one-fifth of the total start-ups have been founded by the IIT Mandi faculty, staff, and students underline the innovative and entrepreneurial spirit of IIT Mandi once again.

It is noteworthy to report that alongside the academic and entrepreneurial milestones of the Institute in its short history, the Institute has also been its sensitive social face in the comprehensive and successful outreach of Enabling Women of Kamand (EWOK). The idea of and plan for EWOK grew out of a project study conducted by a few B.Tech. students on the glaring gender imbalance in education and employment among the population in the Kamand valley. Aimed at addressing gender skewness in the local community, EWOK, established by the Women Cell at IIT Mandi in June 2016, has been promoting and fostering various enterprises run by women in the Kamand valley and surrounding areas. It brings excellent contentment to our social conscience as an Institute to see that EWOK has contributed significantly towards the empowerment of local women through its growing regional network of social entrepreneurship.

Partnerships with other institutes and universities of excellence across the globe have been central to the expanding international academic outreach of IIT Mandi. Since 2013, over 50 of our students have spent a semester at RWTH Aachen University, the Technical University of Munich, IT University of Copenhagen, Blekinge Institute of Technology, Hepia, Switzerland, and McMaster University, Canada as part of the semester exchange program. It is a matter of pride that IIT Mandi has been made the national coordinating institution for Germany under the SPARC (Scheme for Promotion of Academic and Research Collaboration). In the past ten years, the Institute has signed MoUs with as many as 11 international universities. We have been leading among the eight-second generation IITs in attracting students from SAARC nations.

It fills me again with immense pride and joy on this occasion to list here a couple of notable academic achievements of our faculty members and students. Dr. Manu Devadevan, Assistant Professor, School of Humanities and Social Sciences (SHSS) was awarded the prestigious Infosys Prize in 2019 for his outstanding research on the cultural, literary, economic, and political vividness of South India. In a similar vein of academic excellence, Dr. Syed Abbas, Associate Professor, School of Basic Sciences (SBS), was one of the forty scientists to be inducted last year as a member of the prestigious Global Young Academy (GYA) for a term of five years. IIT Mandi students won the top three positions in the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers, Industry Application Society (IEEE – IAS) Student Thesis Contest 2020 in the non-PhD category. Above all, looking back and reflecting upon the last academic year, it is immensely gratifying to note that even in the face of immense challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Institute has been able to keep on track most of its academic and research programs by switching to digital and hybrid modes. The Institute even rose to the occasion on the research front, for instance, by inventing a UV-C Disinfection Box and a Foot Operated Hand Sanitizer Dispenser to minimize the risk of COVID-19 infection.

Dear graduating batch: you were privileged to get admission in one of the most reputed IIT brand and your teachers have nurtured you to the best of academic standards. Use your knowledge and wisdom for the good of society and contribute to the process of nation-building. As alumni of IIT Mandi, your relationship with your alma mater is a lifelong one. A good engineer has to be a good human being first and I am sure that you will contribute with full enthusiasm, a positive attitude, and good human values and professional ethics to bring glory to your alma mater and the nation.

I am sure that IIT Mandi, with its newly enriched sense of pride, added confidence and commitment, strengthened resolve, drive, and focus would keep scaling the heights of excellence in times to come. I would conclude by offering my heartfelt congratulations to the graduating class of 2020, their parents, the faculty, and the Institute's staff on reaching yet another milestone in these trying times and wish them all the very best in their future endeavors. May God bless you all. Thank you, JAIHIND.

Prof. Prem Vrat