

Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad

Ninth Annual Convocation on April 27, 1974

Speech by Dr. S. Paul, Director

Professor Hasan, Mr. Lalbhai, Ladies & Gentlemen:

We are extremely grateful to the Union Minister for Education, Professor Nurul Hasan for being with us this afternoon as our chief guest at the Ninth Annual Convocation of the Institute. This is not Professor Hasan's first visit to this campus. But this is the first occasion on which he has addressed a gathering here. This also happens to be the first time we hold a convocation in this new plaza which will be the permanent venue for functions of this type in future. Sir, we are delighted that you who are in charge of the educational system of our country have inaugurated the central plaza of our new academic building complex by addressing us here this afternoon. I must take this opportunity also to convey to you our appreciation for the support and autonomy you have given us because without these we would not be where we are today. The words you have spoken and the ideas you have shared with us have been most refreshing and will have an abiding influence on all of us and especially the young men and women who are graduating from this Institute today. I am also grateful to our alumni and all other distinguished guests who were kind enough to be with us on this occasion.

This year has been an unusually difficult one for the whole country and the Institute had its share of woes too. The mounting inflation that crippled the economy and the agitation and disturbances which

rocked Gujarat did upset our plans and programmes on the campus. The only silver lining in the cloud was the tremendous sense of commitment to institutional tasks and the spirit of accommodation shown by our students, faculty and staff during this troubled period. Our students expressed their sympathy and concern for the issues which were at the core of the agitation, but continued to attend classes. Our staff and faculty managed to keep the activities going against heavy odds. Early in March, we even thought that the academic programmes might have to be suspended for the rest of the year. Ladies and Gentlemen, you will be interested to know that our students at that stage said that they would not like to be known in history as the incomplete graduates of IIM and that they would like to come back and finish their studies later, if the Institute had to be closed. I would like to take this opportunity to tell the 152 graduating young men and women in front of me, "We are proud of you. You will be a source of inspiration to the future generation of students on this campus."

In spite of the unusual conditions we faced this year, the Institute made considerable progress in all its activities. The total number of students in our Post-Graduate Programme, Programme for Management in Agriculture, and Fellow or Doctoral Programme together is marginally higher at 281. The number of job openings announced for the graduating students is the highest ever in our history. More significant is the fact that some of our best graduates this year have accepted offers from the Planning Commission and several other public sector organisations. We have made special efforts in the

past two years to get public sector organisations to come here to recruit our graduates. I am happy to say that public sector's response has been gradually improving over time.

The total number of participations in the nine management development programmes for practitioners offered during the academic year is 520 as against 477 last year. Six more programmes are being planned for the summer. Our programmes include those for enterprise managers both in the public and private sectors, trade union leaders, government administrators and university teachers. A new development here is the increasing number of programmes we have organised for the government sector. Last summer, we held a special programme on district management for young IAS officers at the National Academy in Mussoorie. The programme faculty developed considerable new and relevant teaching materials based on field work for this purpose. The programme was so well received that we are offering an expanded version of it again this summer at the request of the Department of Personnel, Government of India. Another short programme on inventory management was organised exclusively for public sector organisations at the request of the Bureau of Public Enterprises.

In the area of research, nearly sixty projects are in progress during the current academic year. While the majority of these represents individual faculty efforts, there are quite a few group projects too. I would in particular like to mention the projects in Gujarat Agricultural Administration, Family Planning Strategies in the Organised Industrial Sector, and the Management of Family Planning Programme in

UP as examples of inter-disciplinary group projects which have considerable social significance.

In terms of our plans for the future to which references were made at the last convocation, I would like to say that with effect from next year, we have decided to merge the Programme for Management in Agriculture with the Post Graduate Programme in Business Administration. We propose to admit a total of 160 students to this new integrated programme. We are making special efforts to increase the intake of students from scheduled castes and tribes and to organise remedial courses in the summer to help prepare the weaker students for next year's Post Graduate Programme.

An important area of research and training into which we are likely to enter is the management of educational systems in which I am sure that you, Sir, will have a special interest. A small group of faculty has already started working in this field on an informal basis and we hope that this subject eventually becomes an important area of concern at the Institute.

Sir, your Ministry has been anxious that we step up our efforts in developing the management faculties in Universities and other institutions. We shall be delighted to respond to this need since we have always believed in the important role of faculty development. It is only because of resource constraints that we were not able to do much more in the past.

Among the different activities that I have just recounted, none ranks as high in terms of visibility as our Post-Graduate Programme.

The quality and thrust of this programme, the performance of its graduates and their conduct in the world of practice receive a great deal of public attention. To the graduating class of 1974, may I say that we hope your record of work in the outside world will be as commendable and praiseworthy as your record within this Institute? We are living at a time when excellence tends to get branded as elitism and the pursuit of mediocrity receives acclaim. It is therefore important that the pre-requisites of excellence are understood in proper perspective. In the first place, excellence in your job will be of no avail if you are insensitive to the forces and pressures operating in the environment in which you work. I am not for a moment suggesting that you should bow down to pressures or be pushed around. But understanding and coping with the forces in the operating environment must be a part of your conscious strategy. Secondly, excellence will not attract social approval if your goals are too narrow and are inconsistent with the values and broad goals of the society in which you live. We do hope that in your pursuit of professional excellence you will bear in mind the overriding importance of the need for sensitivity to the problems of the operating environment and a commitment to the values and goals of the wider society.

Wherever you go and in whatever walk of life you serve, be sure to uphold the dignity and honour of your profession and above all your personal integrity. Good bye and Good Luck.

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