

Indian Institute of Management
Ahmedabad

For release after 8 p.m. on
April 19, 1975

10th ANNUAL CONVOCATION

Speech of Mr. Keshub Mahindra, Chairman, IIMA

MR. PAI, DISTINGUISHED GUESTS, LADIES & GENTLEMEN :

I welcome all of you to the tenth Annual Convocation of this Institute. To you Mr. Pai, a special welcome. In the handling of your ministerial responsibilities, you bring to your office, years of experience in managing industries in the private as well as the public sector. It is therefore only natural that you have given to your present assignment a distinct managerial direction. We have watched with interest your efforts to reorient industrial policy. The subtle change in official thinking towards economic growth have not gone unnoticed.

As a practising manager, concerned more with performance and results rather than in the philosophical pursuit of dogma, you know that it is only if we create more wealth in the country that we can look to easing the economic burdens that the masses of our people bear today. Towards this effort, you have our full support. You Sir, require no introduction. It is our great privilege to have you present here as our Chief Guest. I would like to thank you for coming and all of us look forward with much interest to your Convocation Address.

You will forgive me if I talk a bit about ourselves. We would like to feel that over the last thirteen years our Institute has made a worthwhile contribution to managerial development in the country.

We believe that a meaningful programme of management education is an effective instrument to help achieve our national goals. Looking to changing needs, we have attempted to reorient the contents of our programmes to service such wants. Special programmes have been conducted for Government personnel involved in developmental activities. To help in the spread of management education, we have been organising special programmes for University teachers of management.

Managerial education cannot be confined to enterprise management alone; it must concern itself with other spheres of national endeavour as well. Our Centre for Management in Agriculture has conducted research and has also offered training programmes over the last ten years. During the past year it has started a comprehensive research project on the problems of rural development. Special groups of faculty members have been constituted to investigate the problems of management of Family Planning programmes - and thus we involve ourselves in areas of national priorities.

Many have contributed to making this Institute what it is today. The faculty, the students, the alumni and many others have all helped but the services of some individuals deserve special mention. To this audience, I need not perhaps recall the pioneering role played by the late Dr. Vikram Sarabhai - without whose effort, I doubt if we would be where we are today. Another member of our society who has been our guide, philosopher and friend is Mr. Kasturbhai

Lalbai - I cannot visualise the development of our Institute without the benefit of his mature counsel. Not only is he a founding member but has continued to serve ever since. In spite of his many activities he has always found time to devote himself to the cause of the Institute. He has now decided to retire from our Board and although this means a formal severance, I know that his interest in our Institute is so deep and special that we can look to his counsel for years to come. May I on your behalf and my own, express our deep appreciation for all that Kasturbhai has done for the Institute and wish him much happiness.

I would like to congratulate all the young men and women who graduate from this Institute today. You carry with you the lessons that you have learnt here and in the years to come you will transmit this learning to the practice of management. As you leave the calm and protective atmosphere of this campus, your success will depend on the sensitivity that you show to your environment. This or any other Institute can only teach you the tools and concepts of management. How you use them depends on your own ability to understand human nature. No one can teach you how to handle men, this you have to learn yourself.

As I welcome most of you to the wide open world of business, in which I have spent most of my life, I must mention that you enter

business at a time when there is a growing suspicion about the purpose and efficacy of many of our established institutions - this certainly applies to the corporate sector and also includes education and government. In addition to your daily job which enables you to earn your living, you have a much larger obligation to the society in which you live. You have to manage and to lead. This implies awareness of things around you. It means getting involved. Your true success will be measured by your ability to leave things better than they are.

Where-ever you work, I urge upon you not to shun major issues of national interest. You must not take cover under narrow professional duties and keep away from urgent issues of public concern. Your strength will lie in your vision and your values. The compulsions of our time and the imperatives of survival demand more than new ideas and innovations. Your knowledge gained here will be consecrated in practice. This can only succeed in a climate of freedom. If you cherish freedom, which we all do, we must remember that democracy cannot last long if the majority of people are festering in poverty. The tasks before you are clear, the challenges are for you to take.

I would like to conclude by recalling the wise words of an eminent historian :

"In the end, more than they wanted freedom, they wanted security. They wanted a comfortable life and they lost it all - security, comfort and freedom.

When the Athenians finally wanted not to give to society but for society to give to them, when what they wished for was freedom from responsibility then Athens ceased to be free".