

Convocation Address
by H.E. Indra Mani Pandey, BIMSTEC Secretary General
at the 28th Convocation Ceremony of Chandra Shekhar Azad University
of Agriculture & Technology

- Shrimati Anandiben Patel, Honourable Governor of Uttar Pradesh and Chancellor of CSAU;
- Distinguished Vice Chancellor of CSAU, Dr. Sanjeev Gupta, my dear batchmate;
- Distinguished Members of the Board of Management and Academic Council; Faculty members; students; Alumni of CSAU; ladies & gentlemen!

Namaskar, a very good afternoon to you all!

01. It gives me immense pleasure to participate at the 28th Convocation Ceremony of CSAU, my Alma Mater. It's a great privilege and honour and I am grateful to Vice Chancellor, Dr Sanjeev Gupta, for inviting me to deliver the Convocation Address. I am delighted that CSAU, my Alma Mater, has decided to honour me by inviting me to this Convocation ceremony as its chief guest.

02. Let me begin by extending my heartfelt congratulations to all the Graduates, Postgraduates and PhD Scholars, who have been conferred with their richly deserved degrees, awards and medals for their academic accomplishments. I also congratulate their proud parents, family members and friends. I take this opportunity to congratulate Dr Sanjeev Gupta, Vice Chancellor, Faculty members and support officials of CSAU for providing the conducive environment for the students to succeed in their academic pursuits.

Honourable Governor, Distinguished Guests, Dear Students,

03. I am happy to learn that CSAU today offers a number of degree programs through its constituent nine Colleges. I understand it is one of the 5 universities in UP that have been involved in research & development of technologies and best practices suitable for the farmers of the State. The outstanding contribution of CSAU is evident in release of more than 300 high yielding, early maturing, diseases/insect resistant varieties. I wish the University, particularly students, research scholars and faculty members success in their future endeavours. It's very opportune that Dr Sanjeev Gupta has taken over as Vice Chancellor of the University. I am confident that CSAU would scale new heights of excellence, success and glory under his leadership.

Dear Students,

04. As you start the next phase of your lives, begin your higher academic pursuits and commence your professional journeys, I wish to remind you that, in just over a month, we will celebrate the 80th Independence Day. It will be a momentous occasion as it would herald beginning of the year-long celebrations of 80 years of our independence. As we get ready to celebrate 8 decades of our independence, we all need to rededicate ourselves to the noble goal, set by our beloved Prime Minister Modi Ji, of transforming India into a developed nation, Viksit Bharat, by 2047, when we will celebrate 100 years of our independence. I am quite confident that our youth are aware of their role and are keen to contribute to our development as a nation.

05. As you move forward in your journey to realise your individual life goals, I urge you to remember that the nation has great expectations from its youth like you. Our success as a nation depends on the contribution made by each one of us, irrespective of the role that we are required to play through whatever responsibilities we assume or we are entrusted with. As you take decisions to chart your own destinies, always reflect on how your achievements and accomplishments are going to contribute to the success of our nation.

Honourable Governor, Distinguished Guests, Dear Students,

06. Since I joined IFS in 1990, India's stature in the comity of nations has grown tremendously. Today India's voice is heard attentively and is respected by both the developing and developed countries. India's growing role in global affairs is not only appreciated but welcomed. With a few exceptions, countries around the world seek friendly relations with us and are keen to cooperate with us. There is better awareness about our civilizational heritage, our cultural traditions and our vibrant democracy. Our economic, scientific and technological progress is applauded. There's no other country like ours, the world's largest democracy, and the world recognizes this reality.

07. In this context, let me briefly speak to you about BIMSTEC, the regional organization which I represent as its Secretary General, the regional organization, which has emerged as a shining example of India's leadership in forging South-South cooperation, particularly in Asia and the Pacific.

08. As you aware, the world is facing today grave geopolitical and geoeconomic challenges. The rules-based international order has faced grave setbacks. The global multilateral institutions, including the UN Bodies and International Organisations, have been facing unprecedented challenges and an uncertain future. With global multilateralism under stress, the salience of regional multilateralism has, naturally, grown. Regional organizations, like BIMSTEC, are being seen as the preferred platforms to forge cooperation amongst the countries located in a region.

09. BIMSTEC was established in June 1997 by its 4 founding members - Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka and Thailand - as a non-political platform to facilitate cooperation amongst the countries of South Asia and South East Asia. BIMSTEC is an Inter-Governmental Regional Organisation, with its Permanent Secretariat located in Dhaka, Bangladesh. Since its inception 29 years ago, BIMSTEC has made significant progress. It has adopted its own Charter and has institutionalized the requisite core and sectoral mechanisms for forging regional cooperation. It has its vision enshrined in BIMSTEC Bangkok Vision 2030, which provides a roadmap for expanding and deepening regional cooperation.

10. BIMSTEC has a comprehensive and diverse development focused agenda, comprising 19 domains of cooperation. BIMSTEC has held 6 Summits of the Heads of the Governments and numerous Ministerial and Senior Officials Meetings, including Sectoral Ministerial and Senior Officials Meetings. There are agreed Master/ Action Plans for cooperation in various Sectors, which are being implemented.

11. In order to institutionalize cooperation in various sectors, BIMSTEC has established Centres of Excellence such as BIMSTEC Centre for Weather and Climate and BIMSTEC Energy Centre, both located in India. Further, the BIMSTEC Technology Transfer Facility is being set up in Colombo, Sri Lanka. 8 more Centres of Excellence are being set up in order to enhance regional cooperation in various areas, including in agriculture and allied sectors.

12. BIMSTEC has been seeking developmental partnerships with the non-members as well as the UN, International and Regional Organisations. With measures being taken to reform and revitalize it, BIMSTEC is poised to emerge as a dynamic and successful regional organisation and committed to play an enabling role in realizing security and sustainable development of its member States.

Honourable Governor, Distinguished Guests, Dear Students,

13. The goal of Viksit Bharat cannot be realized without growth and development of agriculture and allied sectors and our village communities and rural areas. We have made tremendous progress in growth and development of agriculture and allied sectors in India, particularly during past 12 years. Thanks to our farmers and our scientists as well as the Central and State Governments, India has emerged as one of the world's largest producers of rice, spices, milk, fruits, vegetables and several other agricultural commodities. I hope that in respect of those agro commodities where we lack self-sufficiency, like pulses and oilseed, we will become self-sufficient soon.

14. As natural, India today plays a vital role in global food security. Through agricultural exports, sharing technologies and best practices, capacity building and cooperation with the developing countries, India contributes significantly to strengthening food security across the world. There is a global recognition and appreciation of India's success in research and development of agricultural technologies as well as its success in leveraging digital technologies and AI. We have made significant progress in dealing with the challenge of adaptation to climate change by making agriculture and allied sectors climate resilient, which is appreciated globally.

15. Under BIMSTEC, regional cooperation in agriculture and allied sectors, like fisheries and livestock, as well food security has remained a high priority. We have comprehensive Plans of Action in these sectors, which are being implemented. Our member States have agreed to take steps to enhance intra-BIMSTEC trade in agro commodities, create a BIMSTEC food reserve and a BIMSTEC seed reserve and make agriculture and allied sectors climate resilient. We have already created a network of premier agricultural R & D institutions of the BIMSTEC member States. We are also exploring opportunities for cooperation with FAO and IRRI.

Dear Students,

16. The world, that you are going to live in and follow your professional paths, will be very different, from the world you have experienced so far. On the one hand, the climate change, due to global warming, is transforming the environment of our planet, changing weather patterns and climate conditions in unimaginable and unprecedented ways. Climate change has gravely impacted agriculture and its allied sectors.

17. On the other hand, a confluence of technologies like data analytics, machine learning, robotics and artificial intelligence is transforming our lives in all its dimensions. We have witnessed technological advances, which were unimaginable a few years ago. There are growing concerns whether AI will take away a lot of jobs and weaken the human agency and whether we as human beings will be ruled by robots and algorithms. Will the human civilization survive the twin challenges of climate change and AI? I hope so and we have the collective responsibility to ensure that it does.

Dear Students,

18. I can't resist the temptation of sharing with you a few glimpses my own life as a student of CSAU, even though I am aware that my experiences aren't relevant to you, because you grew in a different world than I did, the University has since changed in many unrecognizable ways and you have lived a different kind of life at the campus. Also, you are better informed than I was and you are more confident than I was.

19. I started my journey with CSAU in July 1981, 45 years ago. I was then very young, just 15 years and 6 months old. I had hardly traveled beyond my district town Basti. Traveling alone for the first time to Kanpur to seek admission, I was scared as I had no idea about the city and the University.

20. I have a host of cherished memories, happy times spent with my professors, fellow students, in dining halls, in class rooms and during practical classes early in the mornings. I recall the scare of spot quizzes, excitement of countless evenings spent watching chitrahaar and weekly films telecast on DD etc. I loved the beautiful campus and often went for walks in parks and gardens.

21. in spite of my desire to continue academic pursuits, due to family pressure, my ultimate goal was to secure a job and I left CSAU in June 1986, as soon as I found a job in a bank, without completing my post graduate studies, even though I had secured ICAR's Junior Research Fellowship and I was enjoying studying seed technology. I was ill-advised to do so and I regret doing so. I changed my job twice in a short span of 18 months. Having done so, I felt the urge to compete for UP Provincial Civil Services and then Indian Civil Services.

22. As I said earlier, it was a different era. There were no coaching facilities and no YouTube Gurus to guide. In spite of all the challenging circumstances, I managed to pass both the exams in first attempt. I managed to secure a reasonably good rank in Civil Service Exam to get selected for Indian Foreign Service, which was my dream. For 35 years, I lived my dream of representing India to the world as its diplomat. I believe there is no greater privilege and honour than representing India, a great nation of 1.4 billion people. In case you were to choose Indian Civil Services as your professional life, I would encourage you to opt for IFS.

23. My journey as an IFS Officer has been a rewarding experience. I have been posted to different parts of the world, except Latin America. My journey as an Indian diplomat took me to Egypt, Syria, Pakistan, Afghanistan, China, France, Oman, twice to Switzerland, and, of course Bangladesh, where I am presently posted. It has allowed me live in and travel to a large number of countries and to experience the diversity of the world in all its dimensions.

Dear Students,

24. Although I don't believe that my life represents an example to follow, because you live in a different world than the world I lived in as a student, there are two life lessons it offers: first lesson is that we should not be deterred by our adverse circumstances and challenges we face. We should believe in ourselves, set our goals and then focus on realizing them. Second lesson is that planning, preparation and hard work always pays. I will encourage you to always abide by the key lesson of Bhagwat Gita: we must always do our duty to the best of our abilities, without worrying too much about the outcomes, which are beyond our control, as they are also a function of a number factors, which are not in our control.

Dear Students,

25. As you all know, while cannot go back to our past, we always recall fondly various cherishable moments and feel nostalgic about the happy times we spent. So, my advice to you is - while you are in CSAU do whatever you enjoy doing and enjoy whatever you have to do. Years and decades later, you would, like me, look back at your days in CSAU with a sense of nostalgia. So, create beautiful memories with your batch mates, friends and colleagues. We all go through periods of ups and downs in our professional and personal lives. Don't let them bog you down. Don't get distracted from your goal of living a meaningful and purposeful life. While you move forward in your life, after completing your academic studies, stay always curious and willing to learn with an open mind. Be willing to question even age old beliefs and traditions. Remember our civilizational value of vasudhaiv kutumbkam. Based on my experience of traveling to different parts of the world and living for years in different societies, I am firm in my belief that, in spite of all the divides, we are one as a humanity. So, try to be kind and helpful to fellow human beings. Remember that you have the potential to improve lives. The measure of our success is not only in what we achieve for ourselves but also what we contribute to the society.

26. Before I conclude, I would like to pay my humble tribute to distinguished freedom fighter, Chandra Sekhar Azad, after whom this University is named. I remember visiting his birthplace as a student of CSAU, which was a highly inspiring experience for me. In conclusion, I once again congratulate all the students and their families for being conferred with their degrees and medals. I wish you all success in your future vocations and your personal lives. May your knowledge serve the humanity, may your dedication strengthen our nation and may your achievements bring pride to our Alma Mater, CSAU!

Jai Hind! Vande Mataram! Long Live CSAU.

Thank you all for your kind attention. Have a great evening and a great life.
Namaskar
