

भारतीय प्रौद्योगिकी संस्थान रोपड़ th INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY ROPAR CONDOCOTION Wednesday, 16 July, 2025



CHIEF GUEST'S REPORT Shrikant Madhav Vaidya



A Moment of Pride and Possibility



Good morning to all of you—the graduating Class of 2025, proud parents, respected faculty, esteemed members of the Senate and Board of Governors, the chairman of the board of Governors' Sh. Adil Zainulbhai Director IIT Ropar Professor Rajeev Ahuja.

Let me begin by saying what a singular honour it is to be standing here before

you. Being invited as the Chief Guest to this convocation means a great deal to me, not only as a professional who has had the privilege to lead one of India's largest and most complex enterprises, but also as someone who, like you, once sat at a convocation full of hope, questions, and dreams.

In March 2021, I stood at the convocation of my own alma mater, NIT Rourkela, to receive the institute's Most Distinguished Alumni Award, conferred by none other than the Honourable President of India, Shri Ram Nath Kovind. It was not just a moment of personal honour. It was also a moment of pride for the institution because when an institute's alumnus is recognized by the first citizen of the country, the entire academic community rises a little taller.

So I want to say this to you right at the start:

Your bond with IIT Ropar doesn't end today. If anything, it begins anew.



Because this institute will forever track your success. It will watch you grow with pride. And as you rise in life, the prestige of your alma mater will rise with you.

Let me also say, I come to you not from a small town in Maharashtra, but from Pune, a city with a proud educational heritage and a deep respect for public service. And today, I stand before you not as a distant dignitary, but as someone who has lived the journey you are about to begin, from classroom benches to boardrooms, from uncertainty to leadership.

This is not just another graduation ceremony. It is a celebration of dreams that refuse to settle. A moment that marks your transition from structured academia to the unstructured, dynamic, often chaotic world outside a world that will test not just your knowledge, but your character.

So let us make this moment count.

Let us not waste it with platitudes or generic advice.

I want to speak to you future engineers, entrepreneurs, civil servants, professors, inventors, and impact-makers with the respect you deserve and the truth you need to hear.

Because what lies ahead is not just a job or a degree or a career.

What lies ahead is your chance to shape the future of this nation, and of the world.

And for that, you must not just be technically skilled.

You must be ethically grounded, emotionally intelligent, and purpose-driven.

Let's begin that conversation today, right here.



Section 2: The Leadership Journey – From Classroom to Boardroom

Graduates,

Allow me now to share a few reflections from my own journey, one that spans over three decades of leading teams, managing complexity, and, above all, serving a nation's energy needs.

I began my professional life not in a corner office or corporate retreat, but on the floor of a petroleum refinery. Armed with a degree in Chemical Engineering, I entered a world where precision, pressure, and people converged in real time.

What I discovered quickly was this: no position, no matter how junior or senior, is insignificant if you carry responsibility with sincerity. Leadership isn't about authority, it's about accountability, and the willingness to shoulder what others shy away from.

Over time, I moved across verticals operations,technical services, process projects ,project management, petrochemical integration, and corporate planning. I had the opportunity to operate at the frontlines ofIndia's energy ecosystem: 11 operating refineries, more than 20,000 kilometres of cross-country pipelines, over 35,000 petrol stations, more than 100 LPG bottling plants, aviation fuelling stations, depots, terminals and the 24x7 responsibility of unloading crude carriers at strategic ports like Kandla, Mundra, or Paradip. That was the scope.

That was the expectation. And that was the trust reposed in me and my teams.

When I was entrusted with leading one of India's most important enterprises, I did not step into that role with arrogance. I stepped into it with a sense of quiet duty.

What truly defines leadership, I learned, is not what you do when things are smooth, it's how you respond when things fall apart.



One of the defining moments of my career came during the COVID-19 pandemic. As the country locked down, fuel demand collapsed. But our mission did not pause. Petrol Diesel was needed to move people, food and medicines. Aviation fuel had to support life-saving transport. We had to ensure that the country kept running often without precedent, and always without pause.LPG was needed to keep the kitchens alive.

That period reinforced something I already believed: leadership is not about control. It is about clarity of purpose, consistency in decision-making, and the courage to act under uncertainty.

Later came other disruptions: economic shocks, volatile markets, and the geopolitics of oil and energy during the early states of Ukraine Russia conflict and the sanctions imposed on Russia. And through all of this, the essence of leadership remained the same—stay calm, stay credible, stay committed.

Let me offer you three truths I now carry with me:

- 1. Your technical skills will open doors but your ethics will keep them open.
- 2. The best leaders are not the loudest- they are the ones who listen with intention and act with integrity.
- 3. Trust is your greatest asset. Build it every day, and protect it fiercely.

As you prepare to step into your own careers whether in startups, research, the public sector, or entrepreneurship know this: the world will give you situations with no easy answers. But if your decisions are rooted in values, and your intent is anchored in service, you will not just succeed, you will matter.



Section 3: The World You Enter, and the Nation That Needs You

Graduating students of IIT Ropar,

You are stepping out into a world that is in flux and that's a good thing. Because in this moment of change, a new generation is being called upon not just to join the workforce, but to shape the future of India. You.

Let me begin with a simple observation: The headlines may be global, but the real story of the future is being written in India.

We are the fastest-growing major economy, the world's most populous nation, and a society in motion. With every reform, every start-up, every new airport, highway, data centre, or solar park India is not just evolving. It is arriving. And as you leave this campus, remember: **you are not just joining an industry, you are joining a nation-building mission.**

You're stepping into a country that is young, hungry, and brimming with aspirations. But it's also a country that needs problem solvers, innovators, ethical leaders, and compassionate citizens.

The greatest privilege of our generation is that we are living through the transformation of India from a developing nation to a developed one.

But that also places upon us the greatest responsibility: to ensure that this transformation is sustainable, inclusive, and deeply human.

Whether you become an AI engineer, a climate scientist, a policymaker, an entrepreneur, or an artist, ask yourself not just, "What will I earn?" but "What will I solve?" The world will try to define success for you. Don't let it. Build your own definition. And let that definition be rooted in values because without integrity, brilliance is wasted.

Let it be rooted in empathy because without compassion, technology becomes cold. And let it be rooted in courage because without



boldness, you will not stretch far enough to meet your potential.

You are graduating from one of India's premier institutions. Your IIT degree opens many doors. But what you do after that is entirely up to you.

Use your skills to not only uplift your life, but to elevate the lives of others. The world doesn't just need coders, builders, or managers. It needs visionaries with heart.

As you step into this exciting phase of life, know this: **India needs** your talent, not just in cities, but in villages. Not just in boardrooms, but on the ground. Not just for growth, but for transformation.

Your education has given you tools. Now use them to build a more just, more innovative, and more compassionate India.

Because when you succeed, India succeeds.

And when you dream big not just for yourself, but for others that is when you truly rise. So go out and be ambitious. But also be kind. Be restless, but also be grounded. Be smart but also be wise.

You are not just the future of India. You are the builders of that future.

Section 4: Seven Convictions That Anchored My Leadership

Graduates,

You are stepping into a world that will challenge you not just professionally, but personally. It will test your judgment, your patience, your values, and your resilience. In such a world, what will anchor you is not just knowledge or skill, it is your convictions.

Let me share with you seven convictions that have guided me through a demanding, purpose-driven career.



1. Reliability is leadership's quiet superpower

In the professional world, trust is not earned by charisma, it is earned by consistency. People follow those who deliver without excuses. Be the person others turn to when things are at their most uncertain.

2. Crises are not disruptions—they are defining moments

Leadership begins when things fall apart. In times of crisis, calm is your superpower. Clarity is your anchor. Courage is your differentiator. These moments will shape your reputation more than any title ever could.

3. Excellence begins when no one is watching

Some of your best work will be invisible. You will not always be applauded, even when you perform. But excellence is not about being noticed, it is about being trustworthy. Build habits of discipline and integrity.

4. Adaptability is more valuable than expertise

The answers that worked yesterday may be irrelevant tomorrow. Learn to unlearn. Reinvent without losing your essence. The ability to adapt is the new definition of intelligence.

5. Respect for people builds unshakable teams

Behind every milestone are the invisible hands of hundreds. Respect the people who support your success. Leadership is not about hierarchy, it's about humility. And the more power you hold, the more respect you must show.

6. Discipline is the bridge between potential and impact

Routines, preparation, and self-regulation turn ideas into results. Discipline doesn't just create output it builds trust. And trust opens doors that talent alone cannot.

7. Be the backbone, not just the face

Everyone wants to be the face of success. Few commit to being its backbone. Lead with substance, not just visibility. Let your work speak. That's the kind of leadership the world remembers.



These convictions were not learnt in classrooms. They were forged over time through field experience, real decisions, and honest introspection. They were born not from perfection, but from practice.

I share them not as rules to follow, but as reflections to internalize—anchors for your own journey. Because at the end of the day, your title may open doors. But your character will

decide whether those doors stay open. And your convictions lived consistently will define the kind of leader, and the kind of human being, you ultimately become.

Section 5: Stumbles, Purpose, and Becoming Fully Alive

Graduates,

Let's put aside strategy and structure for a moment and talk about something you will all encounter, whether you're headed into industry, academia, public service, or entrepreneurship.

You will stumble.

There will be moments when plans collapse, when certainty evaporates, and when success feels frustratingly out of reach. But let me say this with absolute conviction: There is no such thing as failure.

What looks like failure in the moment is often life trying to move you in another direction. A direction that's more aligned with your inner compass even if it doesn't come with a title, applause, or a straight path.

When you find yourself in that space, it's okay to pause. To sit with the discomfort. But don't stay there. Instead, ask yourself just one thing:

"What is the next right move?"

Not the perfect one. Not the most visible one. Just the next right move. One step. One honest decision.



Over my career, I've seen this truth repeatedly: the most successful people aren't those who never fall, they're the ones who know how to course-correct. They build not just careers but an internal GPS, a moral-emotional guidance system that doesn't panic when maps change. It quietly recalibrates and helps them find their way back to purpose.

You are entering a competitive, fast-moving world. Degrees and titles will open doors, yes. But what will sustain you when setbacks hit and they will is your sense of direction. Not external direction. Internal clarity.

And that brings me to the most vital question you will ever answer:

What makes you come alive?

Because as theologian Howard Thurman once said:

"Don't ask yourself what the world needs. Ask yourself what makes you come alive—and go do that. Because what the world needs is people who have come alive."

This is not motivational fluff. It's the sharpest truth I know. In moments of fatigue or doubt, don't default to what's expected. Return to what is essential.

Build a life that reflects not just your ambition but your essence. Let your GPS, your internal guidance system be shaped by compassion, courage, and conviction.

When you listen to that, you won't just survive, you'll come alive.

And the world needs you fully alive, not partially awake. Not just employed. Engaged. Inspired. Intentional.

If you can do that no stumble will ever define you.

Your purpose will.



Section 6: The Call to Greatness – Turn Up the Heat

Dear Graduates,

We have spoken about purpose, resilience, conviction and the power of living fully alive.

Now, as you prepare to step beyond these gates, allow me to leave you with one last Image, simple, memorable, and, I hope, catalytic.

At 211°F, water is hot.

At 212°F, it boils.

That single extra degree creates steam, and steam moves engines, powers ships, and once propelled the Industrial Revolution.

One extra degree. One more hour of preparation. One tougher question asked. One step more ,just one more uncomfortable but important conversation. One act of courage. That is often the difference between being competent and being exceptional.

Most people stop at 211°. They are close to boiling, close to transformation, but they ease off just before the breakthrough. I urge you: don't stop at 211°. Turn up the heat.

Make 212° your personal philosophy that quiet, invisible edge where excellence lives:

That extra degree of effort or whatever MATTERS.

Section 7: Three Truths to Carry Forward

1. India is rising, and you are its accelerant.

Dream big, work hard, and remember that the nation's trajectory will in part reflect your own.

2. There is no ceiling to what you can achieve except the one you build in your mind.



Challenge the limits that habit and history try to impose on you.

3. Lead not merely to climb ladders, but to build bridges.

Your legacy will be measured less by the positions you reach than by the people you raise.

2. Your Degree Is a Commitment

The parchment you receive today is more than a certificate of competence; it is a public promise that you will apply knowledge with integrity, exercise influence with humility, and pursue impact with empathy.

You are leaving IIT Ropar as its ambassadors. Wherever life takes you laboratories, boardrooms, start-ups, classrooms, policy desks carry the values of this institute with quiet pride and visible action.

3. Live at 212°

Fuel your journey with purpose. Ignite it with persistent effort. And remember that

Greatness is seldom a leap; it is usually the sum of countless, courageous extra degrees.

Class of 2025, your life is your locomotive.

Turn up the heat. Move mountains. Redefine possible.

Don't just live warm , just boil

Thank you. Jai Hind









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