

## Independence day 15th August, 2013

*N. Sathyamurthy*

*My dear students and colleagues:*

*It is a privilege to do the flag hoisting in IISER Mohali and to stand in front of you. We have lots of reasons to be happy on this occasion. The foremost is the independence that we regained on August 15, 1947. Sixty six years have gone by. We are enjoying the fruits of the sacrifices made by our forefathers. We were a poor country at the time of independence. Our values were destroyed and our valuables were taken away by the coloniser. We were left to fend for ourselves. The country was divided into two nations. Thanks to Sardar Vallabai Patel and others we could emerge as a strong nation. Thanks to Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the country invested heavily in science and technology. In the following years, the nation invested in atomic energy and space too. Today we are emerging as a developing nation. While several institutions including the IITs thrived, the universities declined. To boost science education and research, five IISERs were created, one after another in 2006, 2007 and 2008.*



*Although the Foundation Stone for IISER Mohali was laid on September 27, 2006, the institute started functioning on June 18, 2007 in a cubicle in the basement of the library building in MGSIPAP Complex in Sector 26, Chandigarh. We have come a long way since then. We have built our campus in the land given by the Punjab government. We had no bijli, pani and sadak when we started. Now, we have a reasonable infrastructure. I know many of you are not happy with it. All I can say is that we are still in the building process. By the end of the year, we hope to complete phase I of construction. Then we will focus on cleaning the campus up. We will redo the pavers. One of the students came to me yesterday and showed me pictures of poor*

*finish in many parts of the campus. I appreciated his concern, but I could not assure him that I would take care of all of them. That is because, unless everybody is interested in the same quality, we cannot reach heights of excellence. Each one of us has to be committed to excellence. I see students eating ice cream, biscuits, chocolates and leaving the wrappings on the road. This is your institute. Nobody is going to come and clean your place. At home, your mother would do it. Here, you have to do it. I want you to commit yourself to a clean campus.*

*One of the girls was attacked one night by somebody in the campus. I understand that there were many students in the vicinity and nobody came forward to help her. When I heard about it, I buried my head in shame. I understand that many boys make lewd remarks on the girls of the campus. Would you allow anybody to do that to your sister? How can you not help your neighbour? If you don't help your neighbour today, nobody else will help you tomorrow.*

*Our librarian is sad, because our students have taken away books from our library. When there was no librarian, our students used to look after the library and there was no loss. Now we have a librarian and library staff and we lose books. Students had unlimited access to the computer centre and there were no pilferages. But today, we have to lock things up. How can you steal from your own house?*



*At the academic front, we are doing reasonably well. Two batches of students have graduated. Three PhDs came out last year. I am sure more number will graduate in 2014. Many labs have been set up. I know some of them are cramped. But soon, we will have more space in AB1 and AB2. We have published several papers last year. Still, our number of papers is less than 100 per year. We are number three among the IISERs in terms of publications. IISER Mohali should emerge as one of the top institutions in the country. With the facility that we have we can do wonders. I don't see our facilities used fully. Lights should never go off in our research labs. Every piece of scientific equipment should be utilised 24x7. In response to a question from the government, we had to find out what fraction of our equipment is imported. It is 80%. It is a shame on us. We must do everything possible to build our equipment. Everybody wants a comfort zone. You must work hard when you are young. You will*

*enjoy the fruits of your labour when you get old. You are taking a lot from the society. Every student in this institute gets a scholarship. What upsets me is some of the students lose the scholarship. If you are the cream of the nation, how can you fail in a course? It means you don't care. When you let yourself down, you are letting your parents down, you are letting your institute down and you are letting your nation down. When you look around, there is a large number of people who do not get to study. The country is spending on you. In return, you must prove yourself worthy of the investment and give it back to the Nation.*

*I congratulate all our students who are receiving the C N R Rao Foundation Prize for their excellent performance in the first year. I also congratulate the students who are getting the Academic Excellence Prize. Many of our undergraduates have co-authored research papers. I congratulate each one of them. Several colleagues have done very well. Some of them have published excellent papers. Some have filed patents. Dr. Vinayak Sinha and his students have published a very important paper in Current Science on the benzenoids that are emitted when the rice stocks are burnt after harvest. As Dr. Mashelkar put it, they have used the state-of-the-art equipment to quantify a socially relevant problem. Once we identify the problem, we will be able to solve it.*

*I want to specifically address the first year students. You are a chosen few. The country is investing heavily on you. You are the first batch to enter a fully furnished campus. Many of you are sharing rooms. Soon, each one of you will have a single room. I want each one of you to commit yourself to put in your best. Then your batch will emerge as the best.*

*The Nation expects a lot from the IISERs. We at IISER Mohali are committed to achieve scientific excellence. If each one of us does our best, we will emerge as a leading institute. I will do my best. I am sure each one of you will do your best.*

*Jai Hind!*

*N. Sathyamurthy*