

Republic Day Speech

Republic Day on 26th Jan marks the coming into force of the Constitution. The Constitution supplanted British laws, regional traditions and cultures, religious books as the foundational principles of our laws. It defines the notion of India, of its citizens.

We as citizens have ownership of India. As owners, we often focus on what we can get from India – roads, electricity, clean water, jobs, salaries, stipends, promotions, etc. As with our other possessions, cameras, cellphones, vehicles, ownership implies benefits but also responsibilities. I benefit from my camera by taking memorable pictures. However, if I don't clean my camera, the picture quality suffers. If I abuse my camera say by dropping it, it stops taking pictures altogether!

The Constitution enshrines for every citizen Fundamental Rights and Fundamental Duties. While ownership of India may be an abstract idea to many of us, we can relate to ownership of our IIT. While we benefit from IIT, it is our duty to work for IIT so that it grows in stature, in size and in achievements. In my experience and that of many others, the best approach is to focus on our responsibilities. In due course, benefits will come, besides the immediate satisfaction of a job well done.

Two examples from IIT Mandi:

1. In the evenings and on weekends, we see many staff who regularly work well beyond normal office hours to complete their work. They do not ask for overtime pay or other rewards.
2. A number of people have come out of retirement to work with great commitment for IIT. They include faculty and staff. Recently, one of these, Prof S.C. Jain, had planned a 1-month trip during January to the UK and US to spend time with children and grandchildren. He was due to leave on a Saturday. On the preceding Thursday, he met me to inform me that as there were many urgent issues in construction and few people to take care of them, he had decided to cancel his tickets and remain on duty during January.

It is such dedication by many faculty, staff and students that has transformed IIT Mandi from a green field into an full-fledged member of the IIT System, with many achievements under its belt, in the short span of 9+ years. I'm confident that IIT Mandi will continue to grow, for the ultimate benefit of India and its citizens, including you and I.

T.A. Gonsalves
26th January 2019