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IIT Recognition

On August 8, 2009, at the 55th Annual Convocation, the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT Kharagpur) presented their Distinguished Alumnus Award 2009 to Dr. Subir Chowdhury.

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IIT's surprise convocation package India's moon man

Shounak Ghosal, TNN 9 August 2009, 03:51am IST

KHARAGPUR: IIT never fails to amaze. At a convocation, where all you expect is a thousand degree handouts and cursory speeches from business honchos, you wouldn't expect the star of space research in India to take the stage. But that's exactly what happened at the 55th IIT-Kharagpur convocation on Saturday. It wasn't on the invitation card (no reporter claimed to know this), but Isro chief G Madhavan Nair dropped in to collect the institute's highest honour, Doctor of Science (Honoris Causa).

"I'm honoured," Nair said, while the applause at the mere mention of Chandrayaan said it all. The Isro chief invited IIT grads and Gen-Y with open arms: "If you aren't afraid of hard work and have vision, Isro is the place for you."

Prof Ashoke Sen was honoured for his contribution in the field of high-energy physics, while chairman of TVS, Venu Srinivasan, got it for his role in "quality movement and manufacturing excellence in India".

Vice-chairman of Tata Motors, Ravi Kant, rights crusader Arvind Kejriwal, scientist Dr Amit Goyal and Dr Subir Chowdhury, CEO of ASI Consulting Group, USA, among others, were given the Distinguished Alumnus Award.

Presiding over the occasion where 1862 students received their degrees Tata Steel MD B Muthuraman, who's also the chairman of IIT-Kgp's board of governors, stressed on the long-term benefits of living within one's means. "You must be a part of a new, evolving India," he advised the fresh IIT alumni.

For executive director of Tata Sons, R Gopalakrishnan, it was a homecoming of sorts. "I'm a father, a son and a brother here depending on whom I'm talking to. I was here 45 years ago. It's tough to be an IITian, tougher to be an IIT alumnus, and toughest to be the chief guest," he said to loud cheers. The Tata bigwig was at his witty best. "I had picked up the habit of brushing after every meal while I was with a toothpaste company. A friend had said how my mother would be proud of seeing me brush at 2 in the afternoon. When I gave him my toothpaste defence, he guffawed: Thank god you don't work for a condom company".

IIT director Damodar Acharya opened up with a range of expansion plans and long-term goals. "We are aiming for 11,000 students by 2011. If the government permits, we intend to eventually take in 20,000 students. This year, we had 228 PhD students, which is a record of sorts. As of now, we have about 15% PhD students. We aim to make it at least double," the director said.

"We're also looking at venturing into medical science. For that, we need a medical college and hospital."

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