

## ADDRESS BY CHIEF GUEST

Sri Sushilkumar Dhara, Minister, Commerce & Industries, West Bengal.

Mr. President, Dr. Nag Chaudhury & Friends,

I am happy to inaugurate this conference on the occasion of the Golden Jubilee celebrations of the Association of Engineers and congratulate this oldest professional organisation in the field of engineering and technology on completion of 50 years of service to the profession.

At the outset, on this happy occasion, I join you in paying respectful homage to the illustrious founders who, imbued with patriotic zeal of the Swadeshi days founded this Association with a handful of civil engineers fifty years ago, with much the same objects in view as the Institution of Civil Engineers, England. This Association of Engineers, I understand, in this national endeavour, had to face the wrath of the British rule, but undaunted it struggled for existence without official recognition and worked as a parallel body to the Institution of Engineers, which came later with a Queen's Charter. The inspiring leadership of those pioneers and the ideals cherished by them will, I am sure, continue to guide the Association today into wider fields of activity in the changed context of the country's economic development through science, engineering and technology.

To mark this occasion of the Golden Jubilee celebrations, you have indeed initiated a very laudable step to organise the 3-day All-India Engineers' Seminar in which a galaxy of eminent scientists, engineers, technologists, economists, industrialists and educationists will participate and engage in fruitful discussion on the subjects chosen and the important deliberations that will follow will not only bring into focus the various problems of industry, agriculture, technical and engineering education and allied matters, but, I am sure, will bring-out useful guidelines for decision making by concerned authorities.

I have no hesitation in saying that whatever the failures and frustrations of development over the three plan periods, the spurt in engineering and technical education and expenditure on scientific research and development is, to my mind, bound to pay back rich dividends. If we have not been able to employ thousands of engineers, it is unfortunate no doubt, but I believe this is not an un-mixed evil. This potential human resource can certainly be geared up to productive use, and the country can achieve as phenomenal a growth rate, as has been achieved by nations like Japan inspite of meagre physical resources.

In the context of technical training facilities available in West Bengal, the volume of out-turn of trainees from the Institutes at different levels of technical education and also the ITI's, West Bengal, is about 21,000 per annum. But if we assess the potential need for technical training and education in the State, we may come to a rough estimate that the volume of skilled, semi-skilled and engineering (including managerial) personnel to be trained for industries, will come to nearly 1.5 lakhs per annum. Thus there exists in the State a sizable

un-utilised training potential along with un-utilised employment potential. Therefore the policy of expanding training facilities to provide 1.5 lakhs trained hands every year and to utilise the present outturn of trainees, largely rests on the ability of the State to revive its productive capacity and utilise its growth potential. The problem of engineering and technical education is thus vitally linked with fast industrial development. This was some what unplanned. The rulers should have thought of employment of this vast out turn before opening of new type institutes every year. I should however, mention here that the passing phase of recession should not make us pessimistic or make us retrace the steps already taken. The technical training facilities will have to be expanded at all levels particularly at middle and junior levels and reorganised in nature and content for gainful absorption in productive processes for meeting the developing needs of industries. The future of the State economy largely rests with the mechanised scientific agriculture and therefore the new and challenging problems will have to be faced to provide adequate training to the vast rural people for which the engineers and technologists must come forward.

In any modern industrial complex, specialised training has become a necessity, and the worker may also be benefited by the opportunity to display his excellence and efficiency in a specialised job. At the same time, however, care should be taken against the evils of specialisation affecting the industrial community. In other words, specialisation must suit the job requirements in view.

Friends, you are well-aware of the important role of agriculture in the country's economy. Countries with a large agricultural output significantly have a much larger proportion of the labour force engaged in industry. Unfortunately, low productivity in Indian agriculture, goes with a low proportion of the labour force, roughly 30%, engaged in industrial or rather non-agricultural activities. The vital task, therefore, today is to put to use the un-utilised capacity in industry to provide the tools and inputs for increasing agricultural production and 'modernisation of agriculture'. I urge upon the engineers and technologists to face the challenging problems of this new process and to harness the new resources of the rural sector of the economy. Considering that 85% of our population is dependent upon agriculture itself. I earnestly hope that in the indigenous design and development of necessary inputs for scientific mechanised agriculture and also in the application of better technology in diversification of production of the engineering industry to meet the changing pattern of demand for sophisticated items of products both at home and abroad, the engineers and technologists will play a significant role.

The Agro-Industries Corporation set up in this State is already a move in this direction to help the farmers with modern tools and implements and other necessary inputs for adoption of mechanised agriculture. The various service centres, repair shops and agro-based units that are likely to come up in the country-side in the process of agricultural development, will entirely depend on our engineers and technologists for effective planning and execution. We have already started training schemes in our I. T. I. s with a course of repairing pump sets for irrigation.

In the foregoing, I have touched upon the new sphere of activities that await our engineers and technologists with the new dynamism infused into the biggest sector of the economy. Further, it is high time that the small scale industries should undertake phased programme of modernisation in which our engineers are required to lend their hand and mind. There is another important field for engineers to apply themselves in right earnest namely the work of 'Import Substitution'.

The eastern region endowed with the physical resources of coal, steel and petroleum is of great economic importance to the country. The region, with its large measure of industrial development, offers unfettered scope of development in view of the developed infra-structure and the basic techno-economic advantages and I believe the deterrents to industrial growth of the region must be removed, so that adequate entrepreneurs in getting assistance readily, with the head offices of the Central Financial Institutions located in the western region. Procedural delays of the financing agencies must also be cut short for easy availability of finance to industries both as fixed and working capital.

Before concluding, I like to say a few words about the prospects of industrial development of West Bengal, a pioneer amongst the industrialised States of India. West Bengal was fortunate in achieving an unprecedented progress of industrial growth during the post-independence period, although no artificial incentives of any kind were offered for attracting industries. Industrial development in West Bengal resting on jute and tea, coal and steel, metallurgy and heavy engineering provides a wide and stable base and new growth centres coming up ensure a growth potential regarding the magnitude of which there can be little argument. The State has of late, been acquiring a new horizon of industrial prosperity with the construction of deep sea docks at Haldia. With the major handicaps of the Calcutta port eliminated by the Haldia deep sea docks, the trade and commerce of the entire region will receive a tremendous impetus. The State Govt. is committed to encourage industrial development as a matter of policy for which all assistance will be ensured to prospective entrepreneurs both in urban and rural areas. The very recent event of Bank nationalisation may be helpful to these.

It is my fervent hope that the scientists, engineers and technologists with their dedicated endeavour will work for the effective utilisation of the potential resources of the State, so that the industrial image of West Bengal can be restored to ensure a self-reliant economic growth to remove the painful unemployment and shameful poverty of the country.

I convey my heartfelt thanks to you all, once again, for this rare opportunity you were kind to give me to inaugurate your conference.

"Jai Hind".