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Aim for the top: President Pranab Mukherjee

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Pune : Observing that India had been a leader in higher education for 1,500 years from 3rd century BC, President Pranab Mukherjee today wondered "why cannot we occupy our rightful place in the committee of nations".

"India was the leader in higher education from 3rd century BC, from the glorious days of Takshila to Nalanda in the 12th century AD," the President said.

While delivering the third convocation address of Indian Institute of Science Education and Research (IISER), he said we have requisite faculty and brilliant students and there is appropriate conducive atmosphere to encourage research and innovation.

"Why cannot we occupy our rightful place in committee of nations in the fiercely competitive world? We must earn our place. Our seat is in the top bench of the international community. Nothing will be offered. Everything will have to be earned," he said while departing from his prepared speech.

Noting that our higher education institutions do not meet global standards according to international surveys, the President asked that international rankings be taken seriously to attain all round development.

Subject-wise a few institutes manage to garner higher rankings, he said, mentioning that IITs of Madras and Mumbai are among the top 50 civil engineering colleges while IITs of Delhi and Mumbai are in the top 50 electrical engineering institutes.

"Their achievements are mostly peripheral as they are not among the top 200 universities in the world in overall ranking. Our academic institutions must take international rankings seriously and use it as a guide to attain all round development," Mukherjee said.

The President noted that it was his first visit to any IISER which are a product of the effort to push the country to frontier of scientific knowledge.

Maharashtra Chief Minister Prithviraj Chavan, HRD Minister Smriti Irani, Maharashtra Governor K Sankaranarayanan were also present on the occasion.