

Address: Inauguration of SPSI-MACRO-2025, Kolkata 15 December 2025

Professor Suman Chakraborti, Director, IIT Kharagpur, Professor Dubey, Professor Brigitte Voit, Organisers of the Conference, Professors Dey, Banerji and Naskar, Convenors of the Conference, Professors Singha, Dhara and Khatua, distinguished guests, participants to this Conference, ladies and gentlemen,

A very good morning.

It is a privilege for me to be on stage on this occasion and address all of you.

In many ways, this conference is historic.

We are in the campus of IIT Kharagpur in Kolkata, an institution of higher learning that is commemorating its Seventy-Fifth year of inception. IIT Kharagpur began its functions in a building that used to be a jail where the colonial rulers kept the Indian freedom fighters imprisoned, and as an expression of a newly independent country wanting to give its citizens the best education in science and technology. IIT Kharagpur and the several IITs that followed have lived up fully to this aspiration and have become iconic brands, globally respected. IITs have become one of India's most recognized symbols of its soft power.

We should also recall today that research in polymers was initiated in IIT Kharagpur in 1950 by Professor M.S. Muthana, a PhD student of Hermann Mark at Brooklyn Poly, who became a faculty member here.

I thank the Director, IIT Kharagpur, for providing us with these impressive facilities for hosting this Conference.

We are also meeting in a historic city, called "The City of Joy" after the famous 1985 novel by the French author Dominique Lapierre. It is a city bestowed with a rare energy which no words can describe. It has to be experienced as the three characters in the City of Joy did and became a permanent part of the city, never to return to their own countries. Kolkata is a confluence of civilization, culture and compassion. This city also gave five of the ten Nobel Prizes that people of Indian origin have won; and it is also home to India's oldest scientific research Institute, The Indian Association for the Cultivation of Science, which will celebrate its one hundred and fiftieth year of inception in 2026 and where Raman made his epochal discovery.

The 18th SPSI-MACRO-2025 also marks the 35th anniversary of the Society of Polymer Science, India. I had the privilege of conceiving this body in 1990, to create an identity for those practicing polymer science research in India and to bond them together. I am so pleased to see Professor Indra Verma in the audience. She was the first President of the Society,

formally constituted in 1995. The Society has grown far beyond my wildest imagination, thanks to numerous individuals who have given their time and effort, selflessly, to nurture it. I have attended every meeting of this Society since its inception, and I am so pleased to be here for this 18th meeting. The response to this meeting, over 200 oral lectures, 300 poster presentations and 600 participants, attests to the vitality of this Society and its continued relevance even after 35 years of its inception. May the Society flourish, grow stronger and serve the community fruitfully.

I wish the 18th SPSI-MACRO-2025 a grand success.