

Speech by Shri Morarji R. Desai at the
foundation stone laying ceremony

Mr. Morarji Desai:

Mr. Prime Minister, Ladies and Gentlemen, before I call upon the experts to explain to you the purpose of this great institution, I, as President, am supposed to make a few remarks. I do not know why there should have been a President at this function, but the Governor who had very kindly consented to be President could not remain present to day as he has not been well for a few days and so I have had to take his place. I do not know whether many of you know that this Tata Institute of Fundamental Research came into being because Dr. Bhabha started the idea and persuaded the Tata Trust to take up this work. He decided that he should do better service in the country itself instead of going to Cambridge where he had a post waiting for him and which he had come away from during the war and he decided not to go there and to remain here and in order that he could carry on his work he entreated my friend, Mr. J.R.D. Tata and the Tata Trust to take up this work and the House of Tatas have always been known for doing pioneering work in several fields and in this field too they readily took up the question and the Government of Bombay also at that time joined in this idea. The Government of Bombay at that time was thinking of doing something in the Royal Institute of Science for research in physics and had actually offered Dr. Bhabha a Chair there. But as this work required a separate institution because of its independence and conception and ultimate expansion for being done in any other institute dealing with smaller things. It required a separate institution and the institution came into being by the joint efforts of the Tata Trust and the Bombay Government, because the larger share was borne by the Tata Trust.

But its expansion as it has taken place today would not have been possible if the Government of India had not come forward to assist this Institute with very substantial grants which have gone on increasing. We are very fortunate that the foundation of the building which will go on expanding in future years will be laid today by the Prime Minister who has done more than anybody else to foster research in sciences in this country during the last few years. Though this Institute is being located in this area which is military area it need not be assumed that the work that is going to be done is being done for military purposes. The work is fundamental research in physics and mathematics to support and include nuclear physics and cosmic rays. But it is research which will help us in a constructive way and not in a destructive way. I do not know whether many of you know that this idea took shape before people knew about the atomic bomb, i.e. before Hiroshima was bombed. A year before this decision had been taken and I am quite sure all of us will be grateful to the House of Tatas for taking up this work and beginning it as we have not done so. I do not know whether it would have been at this stage at the present shape.

Mr. J.R.D. Tata is a great friend of mine particularly because he has the capacity to take decision in a friendly way and we are confident of the great work the House of Tatas have done for the country and for the State of Bombay particularly. We are very happy that the foundation of this great building is being laid today on the 1st of January by the Prime Minister of India. I will now call upon Dr. Bhatnagar to say a few words.