

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH BENGAL

EIGHTEENTH ANNUAL CONVOCATION



Address

by

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*Vice-Chancellor*

RAJA RAMMOHUNPUR

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Mr. Chancellor, Prof. (Mrs.) Chatterjee, distinguished Guests  
my colleagues of the University Council, and the Academic  
Committee, Ladies and Gentlemen:

I take pleasure in welcoming you all to the 18th Convoca-  
tion of the University. We are privileged to have as our Chief  
Guest today Prof. (Mrs.) Asima Chatterjee whose life of  
dedication to the cause of higher education and research has  
been an unfailing source of inspiration to generations of her  
students and admirers. We shall treasure her words of wisdom  
which will spur us to strive for excellence in all our endeavours.

I congratulate the scholars who were awarded degrees,  
prizes or medals today. I trust they regard the Convocation not  
as an empty ritual but as an invocation to be true to the values  
their Alma Mater stands for—humanism, tolerance, reason and  
adventure of the spirit.

Let me briefly review the salient features of our academic  
calendar over the year that is gone. 6143 students received  
diplomas in this Convocation, 621 at the Master's level, and  
5542 at the Undergraduate level in Medicine, Engineering,  
Law, Commerce, Science and Humanities on successful comple-  
tion of the respective courses of study. Besides, 58 research  
scholars were awarded Ph. D. degree this year, against 22, the  
previous year. 40 of them worked on different areas under the  
Faculty of Sciences and 18 under the Faculty of Arts &  
Commerce. Most of the scholars are the University's own  
products at earlier stages. This lends credibility to the view that  
this University maintains a certain standard in teaching and  
research.



To the disappointment of many of us, we cannot as yet see the coming of the appointed day when the academic and administrative control will pass on to the democratically elected authorities as envisaged in the North Bengal University Act, 1981. We must wait for the unravelling of the legal knots in which the issue is tied at present.

The University Grants Commission promised to assist the University with a development grant of Rs. 1.00 crore over the Vth Plan period. A sum of Rs. 88.94 lakhs is already in the pipeline. Dialogue continues for the residue meant for the Centre for Life Science and the University Service and Instrumentation Centre. The break-up of the grants is roughly as follows:

i) Buildings:	Rs. 31.17 lakhs
ii) Equipments:	Rs. 25.45 lakhs
iii) Books & Journals:	Rs. 19 lakhs
iv) Teaching and ancillary posts:	Rs. 12.77 lakhs.

Outside the plan, the University was helped by the UGC and the DOE with a grant of Rs. 10 lakhs for the development of Computer facilities. An 'O' level Computer has been installed which paved the way for the introduction of one-year post-B. Sc. diploma course in Computer Science and its Applications. Under the Area Studies Programme, the Centre for Himalayan Studies received approximately Rs. 7 lakhs for its activity during the next five years.

The grants will meet some of the most pressing needs of the University. It thus made possible the introduction of M. Sc. courses in Botany and Zoology under two divisions of the Centre for Life Science. But the assistance falls far short of what the glaring gaps in basic amenities, infrastructure and space justify. Successive U. G. C. Visiting Teams, while expressing genuine appreciation of the University's contribution to the spread of higher education in this region, made critical comments



on the partial occupation of the Library Building by the offices of the Controller of Examinations and the Inspector of Colleges. The departments are still there not because the University is insular to criticism but under compulsion. Lack of space is a source of unhappiness on all fronts. Even deserving students seeking admission are turned away as Hostel and laboratory facilities are already stretched to the limit of their capacity. Inadequate housing finds the teachers, officers and employees in a sad plight. Space is also the constraint for the introduction of M. Phil. Courses in many departments. Rapid development in science and technology requires the development of new skills and training in newly emerging areas. The University has not been allowed access to resources which could help it discharge this primal responsibility. Our plans to introduce post-graduate degree courses in Law, Management, Computer Science, Electronics, to mention only a few areas where jobs outnumber job seekers, gather dust. Some of these lacuna and critical shortages will have to be taken care of while drawing up our VIIIth Plan profile.

Even the routine work of the University is not free from financial constraint. The unceasing fear of running out of steam is apt to inhibit bold thinking, affect the appetite for innovations and creative work. It is to the credit of our faculty and the supporting staff that they do not fall a prey to depression or frustration. The current difficulties are dismissed as passing clouds. The business as usual stamp shows clearly in the account of departmental activities that follows.

The Department of Physics pursued its research interest in the fields of Plasma Physics, Nuclear Physics, Solid State Physics, Particle and High Energy Physics and Dielectrics. Eleven research workers received Ph. D. degree of the University in this Convocation. Twenty research papers were published or communicated by the members of the Faculty. Specially invited lectures were delivered by Prof. T. S. Shenkara, IIT, Madras; Prof. R. H. Pratt, University of Pittsburg, USA, Dr. S. Chatterjee, I. A. C. S., Calcutta, Dr. A. Roy Choudhury, University College of Science and Dr. N. K. Manday, I. I. T. Bombay.



The Department of Chemistry was able to project itself as an active centre of research. 14 research workers were formally awarded Ph. D. degree today. Quite a few teachers are also involved in individual research projects sponsored by the U.G.C./the Planning Commission, Department of Environment. The University of Calcutta conferred the degree of D. Sc. on a member of the Faculty. Specially invited lectures were delivered at the Department by Prof. R. C. Kapoor, University of Jadavpur, Member, Electroanalytical Commission of International Union of Pure & Applied Chemistry, Prof. J. J. Zuckerman, University of Oklahoma, U. S. A.

Prof. M. Dutta, S. N. Bose Institute of Physical Sciences, Calcutta, Prof. A. B. Roy, Jadavpur University delivered special lectures at the Department of Mathematics. At the Centre of Life Science Prof. Charles H. Southwick of John Hopkins Institute, U. S. A. and Prof. M. S. Kanungo of Banaras Hindu University delivered seminar lectures. Six scholars received Ph. D. at the Centre for Life Science. The Department of Geography & Applied Geography invited Prof. S. Sen Gupta, D. Sc., Department of Geology and Geophysics, I. I. T., Kharagpur and Dr. R. N. Chatterjee, Department of Regional Planning Architecture, I. I. T., Kharagpur to deliver special lectures. Two Polish Scientists who visited India under Exchange Programme, Prof. L. Starkel and Dr. N. Froeplich of the Polish Academy of Sciences gave seminar lectures at the Department. One scholar earned Ph. D. from this department.

The Centre for Himalayan Studies opened its windows to fresh winds from all sides. Seminars were addressed by specialists from University Departments. Special lectures were delivered by Shri Udipta Ghosh, IAS, Development Adviser, Royal Govt. of Bhutan, Shri J. D. Awasthi, Deputy Director, Agriculture (Horti), Royal Govt. of Bhutan, Mr. Lopen Pamela, Director, National Library, Bhutan and Mr. Rigzim Dorjee, Secretary General, Bhutan-Indo Friendship Society.

The Department of Bengali held a seminar on Bankim Chandra's Ananda Math and organised two extension lectures by



Dr. Kshetra Gupta of Rabindra Bharati University and the renowned poet Sri Subhas Mukhopadhyaya. There are five recipients of Ph. D. in Bengali this year.

The birth anniversary of Sri Bhanubhakta, the father of Modern Nepali Language & literature was an occasion for the Department of Nepali to have his life and work assessed from all angles. Besides, a special lecture was given by Prof. Basudev Tripathi, Tribhuvan University, Kathmandu.

Two all-India seminars sponsored by the Government of West Bengal and I. C. P. R.—one on "Socio-Political Philosophies of Mahatma Gandhi, Netaji Bose, M. N. Roy" the other "Philosophical Thoughts of J. Krishnamurti, Professor T. R. V. Murti, Prof. N. V. Banerjee and Prof. Kalidas Bhattacharyya"—were held at the Department of Philosophy. The Department also sponsored three Departmental seminars on wide-ranging themes. One scholar was awarded Ph. D. in Philosophy this year.

The Department of Commerce organised a U. G. C. sponsored workshop on "The Management Control System", and arranged special lectures by Dr. B. N. Panda, Bidhan Chandra Krishi Vishwa Vidyalaya and Sri S. Bhattacharyya, the well-known tax expert. Two Faculty members won the award of Ph. D. One was invited to give a Special Lecture at the University of Gauhati. A few published articles on their own areas of interest.

The Department of Political Science invited for special lectures Prof. Abhijit Dutta of the Institute of Public Administration, Prof. Iqbal Narain, Vice-Chancellor, Banaras Hindu University, Dr. T. T. Nossiter, London School of Economics, Sri Bidyut Chakraborty, a scholar at the L. S. E. and Sri D. N. Banerjee, Special Officer and Secretary, Govt. of West Bengal. Many teachers participated and presented papers in seminars and conferences outside. Ph. D. was awarded to two scholars in the subject.



Special lectures were given at the Department of History by Sm. Kalpana Joshi, Sm. Suniti Choudhury, noted freedom fighters and Dr. K. K. Ganguli, Retired Bageshwari Professor of Indian Arts, Calcutta University. One scholar earned Ph. D. in the subject at this Convocation.

Education is not entirely or even mainly a classroom exercise. Mahatma Gandhi taught us that true education of the intellect must proceed pari passu with education of physical faculties. The University Sports Board keep the playgrounds humming with activity all round the year. The inter-collegiate tournaments in Table Tennis, Football, Athletics, Cricket, Badminton and Volleyball went off as scheduled. The University Football and Badminton teams participated in inter-University Competitions with moderate success.

The North Bengal University Students' Association acted as if they believed that the idle brain is the devil's workshop. There was a spate of extracurricular activities which met with enthusiastic response, a wide display of talents and team spirit.

The Research Scholars' Association brought out the first issue of their own magazine and arranged a symposium and cinema show on "Social and Medical Aspects of Leprosy" with the participation of Specialists and social workers.

The University Law College had the benefit of two extension lectures—one by Prof. P. Chattopadhyaya, Visiting Professor, Department of Commerce and the other by Sri S. Bhattacharyya, the eminent expert on taxation. With more full-time teachers in position than ever before, the Law College is now poised for steady growth in different directions.

It is clear that the University's heart beats soundly; it is an active agent for the propagation of modern knowledge, given its resource constraints. But complacency shall be suicidal. It is important that danger signals are heeded and acted upon. The University Grants Commission with the help of its panels of



experts tried to identify the reasons for the unquiet campuses, and the failure of the University system to break away from tradition and to respond to the winds of change. The North Bengal University, to my mind, cannot escape the charge of pursuing a set course, heedless of the need for flexibility, innovations and an open mind. The University community must examine at depth the U. G. C. guidelines for restructuring of courses at Under-graduate levels, nurse thrust areas in different departments so that they can go in for special assistance immediately with the sight firmly fixed on the long term goal of growing into advanced centres. Above all, the North Bengal University must have a distinct identity of its own, in terms of objectives, functions and courses. Course contents should be thoroughly revised to have local relevance. Research problems should be derived from its own environment and region. To see the University merge with the local landscape is a task worth striving for.

Another source of concern is stagnation in growth of infrastructure in affiliated colleges. In some areas, there was an intense pressure for admission into plus two and degree levels. Although the institutions had already crossed saturation point, the College administration ultimately succumbed to pressure. All set norms governing admission were thrown overboard leading to lowering of standard. The pressure points were localised. There was no possibility of relief as neighbouring Colleges do not provide the equivalent facilities. The state Govt. should reappraise its policy regarding expansion of Under-graduate education in selected areas in consultation with University administration. The difficulty of the State Govt. is compounded as the University Grants Commission disclaims all responsibility in respect of Under-graduate Colleges.

Before I close, I must put on record my deep appreciation of the unstinted support I received from my colleagues in the University Council, the Academic Committee and the University fraternity. The silken thread that binds us all is unflinching loyalty to the University. I hope we all realise that this is a trust to be preserved and fostered.