

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH BENGAL

Twenty-second Annual Convocation



Address

by

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Vice-Chancellor

RAJA RAMMOHUNPUR
20th January 1989.

Mr. Chancellor, Professor Yash Pal, Members of the Court, the Executive Council, Teachers, Students, Officers, Non-teaching Employees of the University and Guests ;

The University of North Bengal holds the twenty-second Annual Convocation of this day, the twentieth January 1989 and I, on this solemn occasion welcome you all. I am particularly happy that our Chancellor is with us this morning. We are grateful to him for the love and affection he cherishes for us in his mind. We are all the more happy that Professor Yash Pal, the Chairman of University Grants Commission has found some time in his extremely busy schedule to be present amongst us on this occasion. He has braved a long distance and an arduous journey from Delhi. This speaks of his abiding love for education and a very deep concern for the universities. I particularly feel proud that this is the first occasion that a University Grants Commission Chairman visits this University. I invite him to see for himself whatever little we have achieved and what we need for the fulfilment of the great task we are entrusted with.

This University was established in the year 1962 with six Post-graduate departments and sixteen affiliated colleges and over the years it has grown in size and quality. The Silver Jubilee Celebration of the University completed last year. With the completion of the twenty-fifth year of its existence, it has come up to its youth. Now there are fifteen post-graduate departments under this university. In addition to these, there are two research centres viz, the Centre for Life Sciences and the Centre for Himalayan Studies and the departments of Computer Science and Application is the latest addition to the academic programme of the University. The number of affiliated colleges, too, has gone up to fiftythree, stretched over the five northern districts of the State of West Bengal that comprises the territorial jurisdiction of the University.

Over the years, the University has awarded research degrees to more than two hundred and fifty students in different fields of study. More than seventy thousand students have received their first degree and more than six thousand of students their master degree from the University.

This University was established with a certain idea in view. Dr. Bidhan Chandra Roy, the great visionary rightly thought that this obscure region of the Country needed a centre of education and learning that would stand for humanism, tolerance, reason and truth. For the very genesis of the population of the region because of its composite character was in the need of an institution like this and the University, I am proud to say, has discharged its duties well and it has helped the people of the region, in its onward march towards ever higher objectives. It can legitimately claim that it has been with the Nation and the people. Peoples of diverse culture of different customs, manners, religions and traditions, speaking different languages have found a 'Common Nest' in this University. The rhythm of the hills, the rhymes of the plain and the sweet melody of the flute of those who have sung the song of Nature since earlier times, have formed into an orchestra of national unity and integrity. The academic programme of the University or the peaceful life on the Campus has not been told upon in spite of occasional disturbances on the hills or on the plain. The University, on the contrary, has always helped, in its own way diffuse the problems of the region and it is happy that the problems of the hills have been so honourably settled.

Convocation is a great ceremony for a University and its Community. For students, it is an occasion of joy since it marks the culmination of a successful academic career; the teachers feel happy to see that a fresh batch of their pupils is ready to carry the torch of the light that they have so fondly kindled for long. The non-teaching employees, too, have reasons to be proud to note that they also have contributed towards the nurturing of the young plants in the garden of the

University that are about to blossom into so many flowers of fragrance.

In this Convocation, 8028 students will receive their diplomas, 633 of them at the Master's level and 7395 at the first degree level in Arts, Commerce, Science, Law, Education, Medicine and Engineering; 21 scholars will get the Ph. D. degree, 13 of them in Arts and 8 in Science. I congratulate them all and wish them well.

I however, appeal to the new graduates to prove through their thought and action that they have been rightly schooled to meet the challenge they are to face. They must keep in mind that the country is passing through a very critical time. Democracy and Secularism are the two basic tenets we are committed to. Unfortunately, however, we have very often failed to meet the demands of a secular democratic society and steady erosion of faith and conviction that can sustain these two social values is a matter of serious concern with us. Religions fundamentalism has been challenging the social code based on reason and ethics and has posed a great challenge to our constitution. Votaries of tradition and prejudices are trying to pull the society back to the dark age of bondage and slavery to unreasoned social behaviour and practices. Regionalism, linguistic chauvinism, casteism, communalism and the like other forces are trying to cast a shadow on our ideals of Nationalism, Democracy and Socialism. Communities or individuals occasionally seek to settle issues through violence and loss of innocent lives. I urge upon the young students to rise above these forces of evil. They must have a clear view of the 'Image of Man' as reflected in our literature and in the constitution and they must have faith, courage and conviction not to lose sight of that image. They must also take the resolve that they will stand against all such forces as are trying to bring in a crisis in human civilisation and will usher in an era of principled social behaviour based on tolerance, reason and understanding.

Now a brief sketch of the academic activities of the departments is sought to be presented :

A. FACULTY OF SCIENCE :

1. Department of Physics :

The Post-graduate courses have been redesigned and expanded in the directions of Plasma Physics and Particle Physics to meet the demands of specialisation of students in the North-East Zone.

The continuing research efforts by the Department have led to launching new programmes in the areas of liquid crystals, superconductivity and High Energy Cosmic Ray Physics with assistance from the University Grants Commission and the Department of Atomic Energy. The Regional Research Faculty in High Energy Cosmic Ray Physics, sanctioned by the University Grants Commission, is under active consideration of the State Government.

2. Department of Chemistry :

It is one of the largest teaching departments of the University. In the field of research also, the department has its own contribution. During the last one year, fifteen research papers have been published by the members of this Department and three scholars have been admitted to the Ph. D. degree of this University. Some new DST and CSIR research projects have been approved by the concerned authorities and work thereon is in progress. Two students from this Department have qualified in the NET conducted by the University Grants Commission and the CSIR.

3. Department of Geography & Applied Geography :

During the last one year, the Department of Geography and Applied Geography keeping in line with its past achievements, has made considerable progress in environmental studies, human and population geography. The areas of research include urban geography and regional planning. The Department has been running research schemes sponsored by University Grants Commission, Department of Environment and the State Government.

4. Department of Mathematics :

The Department of Mathematics lays emphasis on the teaching of basic mathematics with a flexible combination of optional and special papers. Courses on Computer Programming and Graph Theory have been introduced recently. Emphasis has been given on theoretical research on different branches of pure and applied mathematics. Some scholars from other Universities delivered lectures on different problems of the subject while some of the departmental teachers participated in seminars and conferences held in other Universities.

5. Department of Zoology :

The Department of Zoology has been continuously working on Ecology, Biochemistry, Cell Biology, Genetics, Animal Physiology and Neurobiology. The Department is working on some research projects sponsored by ICMR, CSIR and the University Grants Commission.

6. Department of Botany :

The Department of Botany has addressed itself to the study of genetics and structural Botany. It has undertaken research in the areas of Taxonomy, Physiology, Biochemistry and Microbiology and it has some projects sponsored by CSIR and the University Grants Commission.

7. Centre for Life Sciences :

The Centre for Life Sciences is working on four major areas of research viz. Molecular Cytogenetics, Plant Physiology and Pharmacognosy and Cell Biology, Ecology and Animal Behaviour. The Centre recently acted as host for the fifteenth Annual Conference of Indian Immunology Society and a Symposium on 'Activation of Immunity to Cancer'. The Conference was inaugurated by Prof. Hasan, the Chancellor of the University.

8. University Science and Instrumentation Centre :

This Centre conducted a four month course in Microproce-

ssor system for teachers, Research fellows and technical staff from the science Departments of the University.

B. FACULTY OF ARTS AND COMMERCE :

1. Department of Bengali :

The areas of study undertaken by the Department of Bengali are Modern Bengali Literature and Comparative Studies in the field of Language and Literature. During the last one year, the Department organised two seminars, one on Mohitlal Mazumder and the other one on Jatindranath Sengupta.

2. Department of English :

The Department of English has undertaken study and research in Modern Novels, Literary Criticism, American Literature, Marxist Study of Literature, European Poetry and Drama. During the last one year, two seminars of importance were held.

3. Department of Nepali :

It is the only Department of its kind in the Country and it is working on Linguistics, Folk Literature and Theory of Literature. It has been working on a UGC sponsored Trilingual Dictionary Project (Nepali-Bengali-Hindi).

4. Department of History :

The Department of History is engaged in the study and research on Modern Indian History, History of Political Thought and the History of Political Movement. During the last one year, some seminars were held and some scholars from outside delivered lectures on different topics of research.

5. Department of Economics :

The Department specialises in the field study and research on the regions around the University, problems relating to the northern region of the State of West Bengal, Nepal and Bhutan and decentralised rural planning. During the last one year, the

eighth All Bengal Economic Conference was held under the auspices of the Department. A good number of research papers was published by the members of the Department. Many members of the Department attended many a seminar held in other Universities. The Department has been running some projects like River Valley Project and Economic Development, Economic Development of North Bengal (an IDBI Sponsored Project), Factors affecting fertility, Agrarian Structure, Agricultural Performance and Rural Poverty and Participation of Women in Labour Force—all sponsored by the UGC.

6. Department of Philosophy :

The main focus of the Department of Philosophy is of contemporary Indian Thought, Philosophy of Social Sciences, Philosophy of Arts and the Philosophy of Science... Philosophy of Religion and Culture, too, is duly emphasised upon. During the last one year a number of seminars and conferences on different aspects of Philosophy was held and one of the seminars was on Tradition and Revolution in the perspective on the ideas of M. K. Gandhi, M. N. Roy and J. Krishnamurti sponsored by ICPR.

7. Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology :

The Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology has undertaken various research projects related to different aspects of our society. These projects are sponsored by the University Grants Commission, A. S. I. or I. C. M. R. Five such projects have been completed during the year while six are under progress.

8. Department of Political Science :

The Department of Political Science lays emphasis on the study and research on such problems as have relevance to this region, Nepal, Bhutan and Bangladesh. During the last one year, the Department organised a UGC Sponsored advanced level workshop on Research Methodology for the Eastern Zone for twenty-one days. Some special lectures were also delivered by persons from outside.

9. Department of Commerce :

During the last one year, the Department of Commerce held three departmental seminars and organised six special lectures. The Department has laid emphasis on the financial aspects of various economic activities of this region, both at the macro and micro levels.

10. Centre for Himalayan Studies :

During the last one year, the Centre for Himalayan Studies held one two-day national seminar on 'Problems and Strategies of Development in the Eastern Himalayas' and organised two special lectures. The first batch of five students completed the one-year certificate course in Tibetan Language. The second issue of the Himalayan Miscellany—a journal published by the Centre was released and one occasional paper was also published.

C. UNIVERSITY LAW COLLEGE :

During the last one year, the College organised a seminar and held a debate competition.

D. ADULT EDUCATION & EXTENSION PROGRAMME :

This programme is running since the year 1987 under the guidelines of the UGC. There are about 220 centres of which 60 are located in the Hills.

E. EXAMINATION REFORMS :

The University has appointed a committee for the purpose of Examination Reforms and the recommendations of the said committee are under consideration. New Ordinances on Examination pattern have meanwhile been approved by the E. C. wherein the Semester system has been replaced by Annual system of Examination with 15% of the total marks earmarked for continuing Evaluation.

F. SPORTS BOARD :

The Sports Board of the University organised a number of

tournaments and meets and Inter-University and Inter-College Football, Cricket, Basketball, Table Tennis and Badminton tournaments and Athletics meet and organised coaching camp in football sponsored by the Association of Indian Universities.

G. The Employees Union of the University also organised sports and games like Bridge Competition, Carrom Competition, Volley-Ball Tournament and Football Tournament. It also engaged itself in different cultural activities like staging dramas, organising film shows and it published the Annual Souvenir, Sanhati.

The Research Scholars, too, have an association who organised many indoor games and held friendly football, volleyball and cricket matches.

The culmination of the Silver Jubilee of the University was observed in 1988 through various programmes which included debate competition among students of the University and affiliated colleges, cultural programmes, drama and a friendly cricket match between students and staff. A Seminar on the 'Problems of Higher Education in India' was also organised.

I take this opportunity to place a progress report in respect of the VII plan projects. The UGC granted eighteen teaching positions in different subjects during the VII plan and the State Government has been approached for concurrence. The UGC sanctioned a few building projects and these are :

- 1) Men's Hostel
- 2) Women's Hostel
- 3) Teachers' Quarters
- 4) Visiting Faculty Complex
- 5) Building for the Department of Nepali
- 6) Extension of Life Science building (Part—III).

Of these, plan and estimate for projects 1, 2 and 3 have been approved by the UGC and work on these projects are to start very soon.

The plan and estimate about the rest are under preparation.

The University is also waiting for the sanction of the following building projects :

- 1) Extension of Life Sciences Building ; (Part—IV)
- 2) Extension of Humanities Building ;
- 3) Extension of Law College Building ; (Part II)
- 4) Construction of Non-Teaching Employees Quarters ;
- 5) Construction of Auditorium.

There are some projects sanctioned under the VIth plan and these are :

- 1) Health Centre Building ;
- 2) Law College Building ;
- 3) Extension of Life Sciences Building (Part—II) ;
- 4) Himalayan Studies Building ;
- 5) Sociology Departmental Building ;
- 6) Political Science Departmental Building ;
- 7) Guest-cum-Reading Rooms in Girls' Hostels.

I am happy to say that work on almost all these projects except that on the Himalayan Studies Building is in progress. The plan and estimate for the Himalayan Studies Building is under preparation.

In addition to these, the construction of the first floor of the Administrative Buildings financed by the State Government has started.

We have also received sanction from the UGC for the construction of Gymnasium and Swimming Pool on 75% - 25% sharing basis and work on the projects will start after the plan and estimate are sanctioned by the authorities concerned.

Before we go in for the VIIIth plan, we must get the projects at our hand completed. So far as the VIIIth plan is concerned, the University will draw up its plan and programme

in due time. At the moment, I think, while consolidating the academic programmes already running in the University, we must think of introducing certain new disciplines both at the under-graduate and the post-graduate levels. I consider the Centre for the Himalayan Studies, to be one of the most distinguished institutions of this University and I hope the UGC will give a special attention to its growth and development.

In the long run, I put on record the unstinted help and assistance from the teachers, students, officers and the non-teaching employees of the University and I am sure any institution that has such nice people as its members is destined to go ahead.

I conclude my speech with these words and I wish all well-being to the University I have come to serve.