

# Seventh Annual Convocation

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*Address*

*By*

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*Vice-Chancellor*



**UNIVERSITY OF NORTH BENGAL**  
RAJA-RAMMOHUNPUR  
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Mr. Chancellor, Shri Das, Members of the University, Students and Guests.

We are extremely happy and grateful to have with us today Shri Sudhi Ranjan Das, a great Philosopher and an eminent jurist who has kindly consented to be the Chief Guest and to address the Seventh Annual Convocation. I would consider it my proud privilege to welcome him most heartily on behalf of students, teachers, employes and others connected with this University. I take this opportunity here of welcoming all our Guests, who have kindly joined us today to make this ceremony a success in spite of their very many engagements.

Shri Das has fortunately for us chosen the Himalayas in North Bengal as his place of abode but that should not lend a claim to this University on such personage. He is a savant of the East, one of the most distinguished Desikottama of the University of Viswabharati. We all pray for his long life to guide the country in achieving the desired goal.

A decade has elapsed since this University was established and there are till today only four faculties under which teaching and research are going on viz. Humanities, Science, Engineering & Technology and Medicine & Pharmacy. The Deans of the latter two faculties were appointed lately by the Chancellor and the Boards of Studies and Faculty Boards under these faculties will soon start functioning. The Faculty of Education comprising all teacher-training colleges and Faculty of Law could not yet be started in spite of constant popular demand for paucity of funds provided by the U. G. C. during the current plan period. There has also come an urge from the people and a positive suggestion from the State Planning Board to start an 'Institute of Tea Science and management of gardens' under this University. In spite of our enthusiasm the success will depend largely on the magnitude of pecuniary help extended by the agriculture departments of the State and Central Govt. and the planters' associations, Tea Board etc. No help for such specialised course is available from University Grants Commission.

The University Grants Commission has lately decentralised the appointment of their own Jr. Research Fellows and has sanctioned grants for the same to the Universities allowing them to appoint their own scholars. This has enabled this University to add a few more Junior Research Fellows in Arts and Science Faculties both for Post-Graduates Departments here and at Darjeeling. The University Grants Commission has also favoured the University with grants for undertaking Research Projects in both Science and Humanities subjects in which teachers from Post-Graduate Departments as also from Degree Colleges may participate. This will be a good incentive to the young teachers of Degree Colleges to participate in research particularly in Natural Sciences and the Social Sciences. It is heartening to mention that students of this University are regularly qualifying for Doctorate Degree enjoying Scholarships from the University, University Grants Commission and other sources and some have taken their diploma today.

In the Jalpaiguri Engineering College, which is a Constituent College, some of the teachers have qualified for Master's Degree in different branches. The college was recently inspected by three experts in the three different disciplines to suggest further development necessary both in equipments and in man-power to arrange Post-Graduate teaching in specialised branches for the fresh graduates.

In Medicine & Pharmacy the Post-Graduate teaching cannot start before the entire under-Graduate teaching has stabilised in one institution which will take some time. The Academic Council, however, have recommended formation of Statutes, Ordinances and Regulations for Ph. D. Degree in preclinical subjects by research. It may be mentioned here that the University Medical College now functioning at its own campus at Sushrutanagar is teaching only the Pre-clinical course upto 1st M. B. B. S. Examination. The rest of the course is being taught at the I. P. G. M. E. R. and at the S. S. K. M. Hospitals. This arrangement will continue for a few more years till the teaching hospitals have been set up here. The first batch of our final M. B. B. S. students will appear next year from Calcutta.

We have to confess that the Convocation again has been delayed inconveniencing the students who have passed out for non-conferment of their Degrees and Diplomas. This is mainly due to the delay in

completing the programme of annual examinations which is accruing from year to year starting from 1970. The Post-Graduate sessions are about 1 year behind time and so I am afraid, will be the Under-Graduate from the next session due to deferment of all examinations and holding of special examinations for each course of study this year. The financial resources of the University are also dwindling away.

The Minister of Education and the Chancellor are aware that this University has made utmost efforts to bring back normalcy to the process of conducting examination after a lapse of a number of years and a number of examinations at various centres had to be cancelled for not having maintained the norms. This was rendered possible with the active co-operation of Principals, Teachers and a section of leading students for which conferences were held before the examinations. It is felt, however, that coupling between the teams were not equally strong in every institution as is to be anticipated on the first occasion after a long period. The Offices of the University and the officers, had to meet students' deputation, both big and small, frequently but except on one occasion they were not violent. In this connection I have to express my gratitude to the teachers of North Bengal University and colleges and to the administrative staff of the University for their ungrudging help and efforts to bring the process to a success.

The University has introduced examination of each paper by two examiners for both Honours and Post-Graduate examinations as there is no Head Examiner or Convenor for these examinations. This may be one of the reasons for long delay in the finalisation of results but it is expected to bear fruit in the long run.

There are altogether 31 colleges under this University and the total enrolment is about 25,000. The number of students undertaking Post-Graduate courses is about 500 and the number of research fellows is about 30.

The Academic council of the University approved of the 18 months' Part-time B. Ed. course for working School teachers introduced as a crash programme by the Education Department. All the centres recommended by the Govt. in North Bengal have been inspected and temporary affiliation granted to most of them on fulfilment of the conditions imposed for maintaining the Academic standard.

The Nepali Academy has started functioning with a small staff and Research Assistants. The Academy has already taken up the programme of holding a seminar, publishing a Trilingual in Nepali English-Bengali and preparing a bibliography of Indian writers in Nepali. Sm. L. Sundas, Secretary to the Chief Minister in the Hill Secretariat has been good enough to volunteer to look after its day to day administration outside office hours. Although the set up is a very small unit it is expected that good results will come forth from the Academy.

Publication section has been successful in completing the publication of the book "The Totos and Meches of North Bengal" by Dr. Charu Chandra Sanyal, D. Litt (Honoris Causa) of this University. The Souvenir volume of the 150th Birth Anniversary of Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar with contributions from educationists and litterateurs will be published very soon. The University has also undertaken to publish a Souvenir on the Bi-centenary of Raja-Rammohun Roy.

The University celebrated the Birth Centenary of Sri Aurobinda and held an exhibition of his writings and other articles collected from the Ashrama at Pondichary. The commemoration lecture was delivered by Prof. Kalidas Bhattacharyya, Retired Vice-Chancellor of Viswabharati University.

The National Service Scheme has been taken up seriously by this University and two more colleges have been brought under it, making the total number of colleges participating in the Scheme six. It is proposed to take four more colleges under the Scheme from the next session as a number of colleges have expressed their keenness in implementing the Scheme.

Under cultural development programme for University and college students, the students are participating in the debates held in different Universities and also in Youth festivals under specific cultural forum. It is understood that the committee set up for the purpose with teachers and students will organise cultural programme with students of this University.

A Summer Institute under the auspices of the University Grants Commission for school teachers in Chemistry was held during May 1972 and Dr. A. K. Ghosh, Reader in Chemistry directed the same. The University has applied for holding Summer Institute in Physics and English during 1973.

A small Printing Press has been set up with the assistance of University Grants Commission. Though a modest beginning all the job works of the Examination branch and other branches of the University are being satisfactorily done by the Press.

The State Bank of India has opened a Sub office of the Siliguri branch at the Campus in September 1972. This has been housed at the Multipurpose Building provisionally much to the advantage of the University, the inmates of the Campus and the people of Bagdogra & Matigarah.

We are happy to acknowledge that a 'Chaffe' tank was presented to the University by Lt Gen M.L. Thapan and officers of XXXIII Corps in June last year. This tank was captured from Pakistan Army in Bangla Desh in December 1971. The tank has been mounted on the island in front of Gate No. 1.

Regarding sports and games, this may be stated that although this University did not get the opportunity of conducting any Inter-Varsity competition at the campus as in last year our students participated in almost all major games and athletics and fared very well in Table Tennis and athletics. Steps are being taken to start the construction of a Stadium and Gymnasium on the Campus with U. S. C. grants.

In the Post-Graduate departments 11 (eleven) teachers were appointed during 1971-72 and 6 teachers have been appointed thereafter. The posts of Professors in a number of subjects were advertised and steps are being taken, so that the posts may be filled up soon.

The University has provisionally started Cheap Canteens for students and employees on basis of subsidy.

There has been considerable progress in the construction of

protective embankment on the left bank of the Balason was constructed at a cost of Rs. 6.90 lakhs under the orders of the Chancellor thus saving the continuous erosion that scoured away 200 ft. width of land along the bank during monsoon of 1971. This has made possible for the University to undertake the construction of the teaching hospitals, which also will be the biggest hospital for people of North Bengal. The civil construction of teaching buildings including the clinical subjects is nearing completion. The foundation of the teaching hospitals was laid by the Hon'ble Minister of Health and Family Planning on 27.9.72 and the work for the civil construction of this 476 bedded hospital is in progress. The University has approached Govt. for acquisition of more land in the neighbouring area for construction of residential quarters of the staff of the hospital, hostel for students and nurses and for other ancillary buildings.

At the Campus at Raja-Rammohunpur a small Telephone house has been built as per specification of the P. & T. Deptt. The University Day Students' Home is nearing completion and the construction of residential quarters for Professors, Readers and Administrative staff has started. It has been proposed by the Building Committee to start the construction of the administrative buildings in phases keeping within the grant sanctioned by the Govt. The want of a suitable room to hold meetings of the University and the Executive and Academic Councils brookes no further delay. The extension of the Faculty buildings for Mathematics and Geography & Applied Geography, though very essential, could not yet be taken up for want of funds.

The Committee for campus development and beautification has started in right earnest the work of levelling the open space in front of the Library building and also of setting up of gabions by the road side. It is proposed to consult the Forest Department for planting flower trees during the next monsoon so as to keep some of them blossoming in turn all through the year.

I would like to conclude my say by focussing the attention of the teachers and students of this University as well as the people of North Bengal on the historical mission this University is expected to fulfil in



the current Indian national context. India today is in the throes of a developmental process. Things are changing. The national economy is breaking off the age-old shackles of stagnation. Political systems are in a process of rapid transition. Social values are in a state of flux. Needs and aspiration of the people are assuming new dimensions.

Is our educational system playing its due part in this broad national situation? Education is looked upon both as an end in itself, and as a means to higher productivity through the formation of skills. It is difficult to estimate the economic benefits of investment in education, because the yield on educational expenditure is dependent on complementary investments made in other sectors of the economy. Extensive historical researches into the process of development in advanced countries have revealed that higher education and better skills have contributed more towards the rise in national income than all the physical infrastructures and material equipment in the production system.

Unfortunately we are yet to realize that the North Bengal University can become one of the most effective catalysts in bringing about revolutionary changes in the socio-economic environment in North Bengal. I also believe that this realization exists more in the younger generation than in us—the elderly people—who are at the helm of affairs today. This unequal realization of the future potential of education and educational institutions lies, to my thinking, at the root of much of the discontent observed to-day. But this discontent, by and large, is creative.

I would not like to exonerate the students from the occasional lapses in their behaviour. But that is not the major factor in the socio-cultural environment of North Bengal to-day. The dominant factor is that students look ahead—into the future, and feel restive when they find the path of progress is blocked by fixed ideas and age-old value-systems in the elderly generation.

The vast reservoir of unutilized energy lying dormant in the people today can be harnessed and siphoned off to productive enterprises, and the University has to create the human assets needed in the



University Medical College and other associated buildings. The process. Let us examine ourselves a bit. Agriculture is the main stay of 75 per cent of the people of North Bengal. Sons and daughters of people who depend on agriculture for their livelihood get their education in this University. How much thinking have we made on the problems of agriculture, of needs and aspirations of the Agricultural population here in North Bengal? North Bengal Tea Gardens are rich assets of the Nation They are largely in decay. They are in trouble. How many of us have cared to think of their problems in real and concrete terms, and ascertain if the University may have anything to do about them? After the opening of the Farrakka link, North Bengal's role, in the expanding trade and traffic between West Bengal and Assam, between the Eastern Zone of India and the rest of the country, has assumed new dimensions. Have we done any active thinking of the subject?

I am not to sound a discordant note in a Convocation address. My purpose is not negative. I want to raise new visions, and suggest to my colleagues, teachers and administrators, and most importantly, the students to get involved, instead of keeping aloof. Involvement is conditioned on faith. Have faith. Look into the future. Do not wait for the future to be born. Take a leadership in ushering in the future. The North Bengal University was set up by a great son of West Bengal, with high hopes. Let the University fulfil at least partly those hopes by creating human Capital, and providing new values to the people in this region of the State and the Nation.

In Conclusion I offer my sincere felicitations to the new Graduates, Post-Graduates and Doctorates and wish them to remember that 'Nothing succeeds like success'.

I pay my respectful thanks to all.