Appendix - I

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH BENGAL

FOURTEENTH ANNUAL CONVOCATION

Address

by

Prof. P. K. Ghosh
Vice-Chancellor

RAJA RAMMOHUNPUR
2nd April, 1980

Mr. Chancellor, Dr. Swaminathan, Members of the University Council, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am happy to be able to welcome you all to this 14th Annual Convocation of the University of North Bengal. I would like to extend our warmest welcome to Dr. Swaminathan, Secretary to the Govt. of India in the Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation, who is present among us as Chief Guest. A former Director General of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research, and Secretary, Agricultural Research and Education, he is one of the foremost agricultural scientists of India, internationally renowned for his original research contributions. He is well known to all of us for introducing the dwarf wheat in India and initiating the high yielding varieties programme. A fellow of the Royal Society of London, Indian National Science Academy and Indian Academy of Sciences, he is recipient of a large number of awards including Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar Memorial Award, Birbal Sahni Medal, Raman Magasaysay award for Community Leadership, and Padma Bhusan. We are grateful to him for accepting our invitation to deliver the convocation address.

To the young graduates, awardees of doctoral degrees, distinctions and certificates, I would like to convey my best wishes for a successful career and happy life. When I say this, I am conscious of the realities of life which you will face hereafter. Let me remind you however that realities have been axiomatically different from the ideals in all ages and in all countries. Young men and women who are leaving the portals of their *ulma mater* must have by now developed certain noble values and ideals of their own. It may be difficult to reconcile these values and ideals with the realities. It would require conviction, courage and a spirit of optimisim to hold on to one's cherished values—and spirit of idealism. It would be particularly difficult to do so when the socio-economic conditions in our country appear to be passing through a crisis. I pray that you may have the necessary fortitude and strength of body and mind to bear with the conditions and strive for sustaining your optimism along with the eternal values of honesty and truthfulness. May God bless you.

That I have drawn your attention to the problems of our society

at large, does not imply that we have been free from problems in the University and Colleges. Indeed, during the year that we are just through, serious problems have arisen with regard to our development programmes, and more so in respect of our normal activities. One particular factor which has given rise to this problem is the continuous rise in costs of books, equipments, laboratory materials as also of the costs of maintenance and constructional work. While deficits on revenue account are mounting as a result of rising costs, we had no assistance from the University Grants Commission on capital account for purchase of books and equipments. This has resulted in serious handicaps for students, researchers and teachers to pursue their studies and laboratory work. Not only that, even sanctioned grants for ongoing building construction, fellowships and research projects are not being released by the University Grants Commission on the ostensible ground of lack of funds. This has actually happened in the case of all the State Universities. We have moved the State Government to take up the matter with the Chairman, University Grants Commission, and the Union Ministry of Education. I do not know how we shall meet the crisis if the position does not change for the better.

Normal activities of the University have also been hampered during the last year due to failure of power supply and power-shedding for long hours. This has adversely affected laboratory work and research activities in the Science Departments, and made it difficult to maintain regular water supply in the campus. There was some unavoidable delay in making arrangements for operating the additional standby diesel generator. Non-availability of technical staff and inadequacy of diesel supply did not permit the operation of the generator for sometime. However, we have been able to appoint the necessary staff sometime back and the diesel supply has fortunately improved to a certain extent now. Even then we have to install a few R.C. ring-wells and pump sets to solve the problem of water supply on a permanent basis. For this purpose, we have approached the State Government for capital grants.

Inadequacy of hostel accommodation for post-graduate students and absence of hostel facilities for Law College students and research scholars have also posed a serious problem for us for

some time. On our request the Department of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Welfare and the Department of Education have assured that some grant may be available to meet the immediate needs of post-graduate students. The State Government has also assured that the University buildings now being occupied by the Public Works Department (Construction Division) will be vacated but only part of these buildings will be available at present. We hope to provide some accommodation to the needy Law College students and research scholars as soon as the above premises are vacated.

The above steps, however, will act as a temporary and partial solution to the problems we are passing through. The University Grants Commission had meanwhile desired us to send our development proposals for the VI Plan period. We have formulated such proposals as per guidelines from the University Grants Commission. Let me briefly mention some of the more important of our proposals. Foremost of all, there are proposals for construction of hostels, expansion of facilities in the teaching departments and Centres for Life Sciences and Himalayan Studies including additional faculty positions, equipment and book grants and expansion of buildings. We have proposed opening of post graduate courses in Botany and Zoology in the University in view of the limited intake capacity of Darjeeling Government College and a growing pressure of admission to the Bio-Science courses both at the under graduate and post-graduate levels. For sometime there has also been a growing demand from students and teachers that there should be facil ties for study of foreign and oriental languages. A proposal has, therefore, been made for establishing an Institute of Languages and Linguistics in this University.

While dwelling on the question of introducing new courses, let me draw your attention to a particular problem which many of our colleges are facing to-day. We agree with the view held by UGC that new colleges should not be started when existing colleges are not viable. At the same time, one finds that there is heavy pressure on our colleges from students seeking admission at the +2 stage. Indeed, in some colleges students of Higher Secondary classes far outnumber those in the degree courses. This is partly because High schools have not been upgraded in sufficient numbers to admit the growing number of

students passing the secondary examination. It is also due to the fact that students normally prefer to join these classes in a college rather than in a school. In fact many schools with teaching arrangements for +2 classes are known to be languishing for want of students while nearby colleges are forced to admit many more than they can accommodate. This is particularly true of Jalpaiguri, Cooch Behar and West Dinajpur districts. Due to the absence of required teaching posts in these colleges and an inordinately large number of students in each Higher Secondary class, there is hardly any scope for effective teaching. But more serious is the problem of class room space. Added to this, quite a few of our colleges are under great pressure for opening Botany and Zoology courses at the undergraduate pass level. This is because the number of students offering Bio-Sciences at the +2 stage is increasing very fast. We hope that the State Govt. will favourably consider the proposals which have been made by colleges for opening undergraduate classes in Botany and Zoology, and also sanction additional teaching posts where justified. Incidentally, to make our M.A. course in Sociology and Social Anthropology academically stronger, we are formulating proposals for introducing this subject at the undergraduate level.

Coming back to our VI Plan proposals, development of the Service and Instrumentation Centre will help us to be self-reliant as regards repair, maintenance and servicing of equipments used in different laboratories and departments and thus lead to substantial saving in expenditure. Similarly, development of the Research Service Centre will facilitate computational work for research purposes; the available facilities now are located in Calcutta, which make them expensive and time-consuming. Reasonable Development Grants have thus been sought for these centres to make them more useful.

Proposals have also been sent for construction of a Stadium and gymnasium, a Students Union building and additional residential quarters for teachers, officers and employees.

Last year, we had finalised schemes for introducing employment-oriented courses in Science/Technology as well as Commerce and management. These have been recommended to the UGC for approval

and sanction of funds. I need hardly emphasise that it is urgently necessary to start these courses so as to make our academic programme more purposeful and productive for the average graduates. It is learnt that these schemes will be considered separately by the UGC. If so, we have a special case for starting these courses in the University of North Bengal located as it is in a backward region.

I am not sure to what extent all these proposals that we have sent will be approved by the University Grants Commission. As the position stands now, it is also not certain when proposals will be considered. Let us hope for the best.

I am, however, glad to say that inspite of resource constraints and limited facilities at our disposal, consistent efforts have been made to sustain and improve academic activities in our University and Colleges. During the last year, as in the past, the academic departments organised a large number of programmes in which students, research scholars and teachers had the benefit of interaction with experts from other institutions and among themselves. Extension lectures, seminars and workshops were successfully organised in the University Departments as well as at regional Centres, some of which were possible with financial assistance from the University Grants Commission. I would like to mention some of these programmes by way of recording their significance.

In the special extension lectures programmes, a number of eminent and distinguished scientists and scholars visited the University as guest speakers. In the Department of Physics, Nobel laureate Prof. Dorothy Hocgkin from U. K., Professor S. Ramaseshan, Director of the National Aeronautical Laboratory (Bangalore), Dr. N. K. Jaggi from Bhava Atomic Research Centre, Dr. Y. Singh of Banaras Hindu University and Dr. N. K. Sehgal from the Space Application Centre (Ahmedabad); In the Department of Chemistry, Dr. (Mrs.) Ashima Chatterjee from Calcutta University, Dr. G. Thyagarajan, Director of the Regional Research Laboratory (CSIR), Jorhat, Prof. S. K. Mukherjee, ex-Vice-Chancellor, Calcutta University, Prof. (Mrs.) K. K. Rohatgi Mukherjee from Jadavpur University and Prof. S. C. Bhattacharyya, Director, Bose Institute, Calcutta; In the Department of Mathematics, Prof. S. C.

Dasgupta from Bengal Engineering College, Howrah, and Prof. S. K. Chakraborty from Burdwan University. In the Centre for Life Sciences, Prof D. P. Burma from Banaras Hindu University, Prof. S. P. Ray Choudhury, Emeritus Scientist, Department of Zoology, Calcutta University, Prof S. Mukkerjee, Dean, School of Life Sciences, Jawaharlal Nehru University, Dr. (Mrs.) A. Mukherjee from the School of Environmental Sciences, Jawaharlal Nehru University, and Prof. P.C.C. Gurnham, former Head of the Department of Parasitology, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine.

In the Humanities and Social Sciences, eminent guest speakers included the following : In the Department of Political Science, Prof. Aniruddha Gupta from the School of African Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, and Dr. George H. Gadbois from the University of Kentucky (USA); In the Department of Nepali, Prof. D. R. Timsina from Banares Hindu University and Dr. Basudev Tripathy from Tribhuwan University, Kathmandu (Nepal); In the Department of History, Dr. Barun De, Director, Centre for Studies in Social Sciences and Dr. B. N. Mukherjee, Carmichael Professor and Director of the Centre for Advanced Study, Calcutta University; In the Department of Commerce, Prof. S. K. Das from Utkal University, Prof. L. D. Joshi from Lucknow University, Prof. R. G. Sarien, ex-Director, Podar Institue of Management, Jaipur, and Prof. S. Bhattacharyya, Tax Consultant and member of the faculty, Indian Institute of Management, Calcutta; In the Department of Philosophy, Prof. M. K. Bhadra from Burdwan University and Prof. A. K. Sarkar of California State University; In the Department of Bengali, Dr Victor Ivbulis of the University of Riga (USSR), and Dr. Somendra Nath Banerjee from Viswa Bharati University; In the Department of English, Dr. Mohit Kumar Roy and Prof. Sisir Kumar Ghosh from Viswa Bharati, Prof. Jyoti Bhattacharyya from Calcutta University and Prof. Jasodhora Bagchi from Jadavpur University.

Some special academic programmes are also worth mentioning in this context. A week long national symposium on 'Nuclear Interactions at high energies' jointly sponsored by the UGC and the Department of Physics was held in May 1979. It was attended by 30 outstation and 70 local participants, and as many as 75 papers were contributed at the symposium bearing on recent researches in the field. The Department

of Political Science organised a three-day workshop on 'Development Administration' with financial assistance from University Grants Commission. This was attended by academic experts, administrators, post-graduate students, research scholars and teachers from Colleges. A regional Conference on Indian Philosophy was also held in the Department of Philosophy with financial assistance from University Grants Commission. The conference was addressed by a number of experts. The subjects included particular aspects of the philosophy of Tagore, K. C. Bhattacharyya, Sri Aurobindo, Rashbehari Das and M. K. Gandhi. College teachers as well as post graduate students participated in the Conference.

A number of seminars of college teachers were organised at regional centres during the last year to enable them to discuss new dimensions of the under-graduate syllabi following the 10+2 Higher Secondary course. One was held at Siliguri for teachers of Political Science; one each at Jalpaiguri and Darjeeling for teachers of History; at Cooch Behar for teachers of Chemistry and Economics respectively; one at Gangtok for teachers of Commerce; at the University Campus for college teachers of English and Bengali respectively; and at Darjeeling for teachers of Botany and teachers of Zoology.

Along with the academic programmes, mention should be made of the programme of activities which has been adopted by the reconstituted Nepali Academy of the University. This includes preparation of a Nepali-Bengali dilectal dictionary and writing of text books in Nepali for under-graduate courses. It is needless to say that these programmes will not materialise unless we have special grants for the purpose.

The University Museum (named after Late Akshaya Kumar Maitreya) has been collecting sculptures and other articles of archaeological significance, manuscripts, coins and objects of folk art and culture from time to time. An exhibition of the Museum collections will be opened today at 2-30 P. M. by our Chief Guest. I am sure all of you will find the exhibits interesting as well as educative. Indeed, the Museum has been a source of inducement to research for many. Last year we sent a proposal to the Union Ministry of Education & Social Welfare seeking development grants for the Museum including funds for

construction of a separate Museum Building. We have been recently informed that an inspection team will soon visit the University and discuss the proposal with us.

Having spoken about academic programmes, I must report on other activities as well. Last year, the functioning of the University Sports Board was specially encouraging to all. The North Zone Inter-University Table Tennis Tournament was successfully held in November, 1979 under the auspices of the Sports Board assisted by the North Bengal Medical College. The Sports Board was also entrusted by the Cricket Association of Bengal to conduct a Central Cricket Coaching Camp for 21 days. There were 28 select trainees from different districts of West Bengal. The camp was stated to have been highly instructive and encouraging. Apart from the above two programmes, the Sports Board organised coaching for short periods for the University teams selected to participate in the inter-University tournaments. It also organised inter-college sports in football, cricket, table-tennis and athletics.

The activities of the North Bengal University Students Association during the last year included inter-class sports tournaments, debating competitions, and a two-day seminar on the language problem which was addressed by the Chief Minister of West Bengal. The Association also organised an enjoyable cultural programme consisting of vocal music, folk songs and drama. A seminar on land reforms organised by them was addressed by Sri Benoy Krishna Konar, the peasant leader. Shri Narayan Choudhuri spoke on 'Art and Culture' in a special lecture organised by the Association.

I am glad to say that the campus Recreation & Cultural Committee was active inspite of the limited financial resources which was available to it. Through its programmes an opportunity of developing social relations is provided to all sections of the University Community. The Committee organised a festival cricket match, a popular lecture on—*Rabindra Sahitya O' Chitrakala* with slide projections, and a programme of Boul songs by Purna Chandra Das. The Mahila Samity was also active last year having organised a sports competition for children of the Campus, a dramatic performance by young boys and girls, and a variety

programme of music and recitations.

On the occasion of the last convocation, I had mentioned about our involvement with the programme of adult education and literacy in this region. I am happy to say that some of our colleges which were already doing creditable NSS work, have since taken up adult education as an important part of their extension service. I would particularly like to mention the commendable performance of Balurghat College, Alipurduar College, Malda Teachers Training College, Dinhata College, Tufanganj College and Lorreto College in that connection. Notwithstanding difficulties in undertaking such activities, there is no reason why several other colleges should not be equally serious about it and make an honest effort. A Central Workshop was held in the University in December last to review our progress in this regard. We have been organising regional seminars now to discuss the problems and suggesting ways and means of overcoming the difficulties in starting adult education centres. There is reasonable hope that at least 15 colleges will be able to do something in the next few months.

I would now like to end my report expressing my sense of appreciation of the spirit of co-operation and understanding with which members of the University Council have helped me to steer the administration of this University, and the helpful manner in which teachers, students, research scholars, officers and employees have enabled me to resolve the problems of the University from time to time.