

# UNIVERSITY OF NORTH BENGAL



Thirteenth Annual Convocation

ADDRESS

by

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VICE-CHANCELLOR

RAJA RAMMOHUNPUR

18th March 1979

Mr. Chancellor, Professor Dastur, Members of the University Council,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to welcome you all to this 13th Annual Convocation of the University of North Bengal. Nearly 4,000 young men and women are being awarded degrees and certificates at this Convocation including those being conferred degrees in absentia. To the young graduates and all awardees of certificates and distinctions, I would like to convey my best wishes for a successful career and happy life. May God bless you.

On the occasion of our 12th Convocation about a year back, I had an opportunity of presenting a report in which I mentioned the prospects of development which lay before the University. I also spoke about a few problems and constraints in that connection. In the fitness of things I should inform you to-day about the development efforts which have been initiated during the last one year, the progress thereof, and tentative proposals for further development during the sixth plan period.

Of the two Centres of regional studies and research in this University, one—the Centre for Life Science Studies—was established in 1977. This Centre has been engaged in continuing programmes of research bearing on Cytogenetics, Immunology, Eco-system studies and Pharmacognosy. The construction of a separate building for this Centre in the Campus is to start very soon. At present it is located at the North Bengal Medical College. We are grateful to the Government for agreeing to the Centre's continuing location there after 17th August 1978, when the administration of the Medical College was transferred from the University to the Health Department.

The second Centre of great significance—the Centre for Himalayan Studies has started functioning this year with Professor N. C. Sinha as Visiting Professor and in charge of the Centre. The research programme of the Centre is expected to be drawn up very soon with guidance from the Advisory Committee which has been set up for the Centre. With a view to creating a general awareness of the multiple facets of life in the Himalayan and trans-Himalayan regions, Professor Sinha has just delivered a series of nine lectures on such topics as 'Buddhism in the Himalayas', 'Indian Culture across the Himalayas', 'Trade across the Himalayas', 'Political theories, institutions and processes in the Himalayas', 'Economic conditions in the Himalayan region', 'Ways of life of the people in the Himalayas', 'Historical Geography of the Trans-Himalayas' and 'Buddhism as Life Science.' A seminar on 'Ecology of the Eastern Himalayas' was organised in December 1978 in the same context. Sponsored jointly by the Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology, Department of Geography and Applied Geography and the Centre for Life Science Studies, the seminar was attended by a number of scholars from

other Universities and institutions. An attempt was made in that seminar to define some of the problems and areas of research from a multi-disciplinary point of view. Professor Ram-Rahul's lecture on 'Inner Asian Frontiers of India' delivered earlier under the auspices of the Historical Association was also of great relevance to the Himalayan area studies programme.

In the Department of Physics, an important development worth noting is the decision of the Department of Atomic Energy, Government of India, to shift the Magnetic Spectrograph Laboratory from the Regional Engineering College, Durgapur, to this University. It may be justly claimed that the decision was based on the recognition of the valuable research being done in this University. The scope of research bearing on investigation of cosmic rays will be considerably enhanced and facilitated with the installation of this sophisticated precision equipment—the Magnetic Spectrograph. Steps are being taken for its shifting and installation. Research work in Plasma Physics, Nuclear Physics, Solid State Physics and Liquid Crystals have been encouraged by the University Grants Commission and the Atomic Energy Commission through special financial assistance.

The members of the faculty in the Department of Chemistry have a number of ongoing research projects which are expected to progress faster and new ones will be facilitated with the joining of the Micro-analyst who has been recently appointed. Members of the Department had the benefit of special lectures by guest speakers from the Indian Institute of Sciences, Bangalore, and other Universities. The Department of Chemistry, indeed the academic world in general, suffered an irreparable loss in May 1978 on the sad, untimely demise of Professor H. N. Khastagir, who was founder-Head of the Department and built it up through his untiring zeal and devotion to the cause of research. The little that we can do now is to keep his memory alive through academic programmes and activities. A memorial committee is working out details of steps to be taken in that direction. I hope the field of research which was of special interest to late Professor Khastagir will continue to engage the attention of others in the department.

The prospects of research in all the departments, more so in the science departments, have been enhanced by the steps taken for recruitment of technical personnel and purchase of equipments for the University Service and Instrumentation Centre. We have finalised the building plan for the Centre for which we had prior approval of funds from the UGC. With the purchase of a Micro-computer for data-processing at the Research Service Centre of the University, high hopes are being nurtured by the faculty members and researchers in the humanities and science departments for intensive research work based on quantitative analysis.

The prospects of research having been enhanced and with the schemes of advanced research work currently in progress and in view, the need for extension of the Physics and Chemistry blocks is now acutely felt. The Humanities block is also to be extended to provide adequate space for the Centre for Himalayan Studies and the Nepali Academy, as well as for the employment-oriented courses which we have planned to introduce as early as possible. In our development proposals for the sixth plan period, we have envisaged these extensions.

One of the means by which research activity could be intensified in any University is by providing opportunities for continuous interaction among scholars and eminent researchers. Members of the post-graduate teaching faculty as well as research scholars and fellows and teachers from under-graduate colleges are thus encouraged to participate in seminars and conferences in India and abroad. Attempt was also made during the year to organise extension lectures in the University departments. Of the distinguished scholars who visited the University to deliver lectures and conduct discussions under the extension lectures programme, I would like to mention the names of Prof. J. N. Mohanty, Professor of Philosophy at the University of Oklahoma, Prof. V. Y. Kantak, Professor of English, Baroda University, Prof. V. K. Verma, Professor of Geology, Delhi University, Professor Rama Rao, Professor of Law, Madras University, Prof. R. R. Daniel and Prof. M. V. Srinivasa Rao from the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research, Bombay, Prof. Ashok Ghosh, Head of the Department of Zoology, Calcutta University, Prof. A. K. Chandra and Prof. G. S. R. Subbarao from the Indian Institute of Sciences, Bangalore, Prof. S. K. R. Bhandari from the Department of Management Studies, Banaras Hindu University, and Dr. P. Chattopadhyay, Director of Research, Institute of Cost and Work Accountants.

Extension lectures apart, there were several academic programmes of relevance to special studies and research which were organised by the University departments during the last year, of which the more important should be mentioned. Under the auspices of the Department of Political Science there was a two-day all India Seminar on 'Centre-State Relations in India.' The working papers presented at the Seminar will be available to the public in print. With the help of a financial grant from the UGC, the Department of Political Science also organised a Refresher Course for teachers from colleges on 'Some New Dimensions of the Study of Political Science.' Participants were addressed, besides the internal faculty, by six guest speakers including Dr. B. N. Mukherjee, Joint Director, Council of Social Development, New Delhi, Dr. Mohit Bhattacharyya from the Indian Institute of Public Administration, Prof. R. R. Chakravarty from Burdwan University, Dr. Amal Mukhopadhyay from Presidency College, Calcutta, and Principal Prasanta Kumar Ghosh of Hooghly Mohsin College. Shri Jugantar Chakravarty and Dr. Saroj Mohan Mitra visited the Department of Bengali and spoke on the significance of publishing the hitherto

unpublished writings of late Manik Bandopaddhyay. Earlier, Prof. Janardan Chakravarty and Prof. Jibendra Sinha Roy delivered two lectures on 'Ramayaner Prachinattwa O Akritrimata' and "Kallol Yug" respectively. Prof. Haraprasad Mitra was invited by the Department of Bengali to speak on "Adhunikata O Rabindranath." In the Department of Philosophy, Prof. D. P. Sen delivered two lectures, one each on "Samkhya-Yoga" and "Intuition in Indian Philosophy." Prof. Ashok Ghosh spoke to the members of the Centre for Life Science Studies and allied departments on "Cytophysiology of Avian Adrenal Medulla". In the Department of Geography and Applied Geography, Dr. V. K. Verma spoke on "Some Geomorphic Studies in the Central Indian Gondwana Basin" and "Certain Aspects of Marine Terraces of South Californian Pacific Coast". The Department of Commerce organised special lectures on the "Role of Cost Accounting Profession in India" by Mr. P. K. Bose, Director of Studies of the Institute of Cost and Works Accountants, on "Current trend in Gold prices" by Prof. I. K. Chatterjee of Kalyani University, on "Rationale of Public Enterprise" by Prof. S. K. R. Bhandari, on "Management Audit" by Dr. P. Chattopadhyay, on "Effect of Income Tax Law on Corporate Amalgamations" by Mr. S. Bhattacharyya, an eminent Tax-practitioner from Calcutta, and on "Techniques of Sampling as used in Behavioural Sciences" by Dr. S. P. Mukherjee from the Department of Statistics, Calcutta University. Prof. M. S. Rao from the Tata Institute, delivered a course of six lectures on "Air Shower Physics" in the Department of Physics. Special lectures organised by the Department of Chemistry included one on "Metal Bignandies and Related Complexes" by Prof. S. P. Ghosh from Patna University, two lectures by Prof. A. K. Chandra, one each on "Force Concept in Chemical Binding and Molecular Shapes" and "Molecular Orbital Theory of Chemical Reactions" and a lecture on "Recent Researches on Prostaglandins and their Analogs" by Prof. G. S. R. Subbarao.

A particular academic programme introduced last year consisted of "Teachers' Seminars at regional Centres". The first series of these seminars at nine regional centres was organised in February, March and April 1978 with a view to eliciting the views and suggestions of teachers of under-graduate colleges on the new syllabi for degree courses which had been drafted earlier in view of the 10+2 year scheme of Higher Secondary education. The suggestions received from teachers in the respective subjects were considered by the Committees of Under-graduate Studies before the syllabi were finalised. Beginning last month (February 1979) a second series of college teachers' seminars have been held in which topics newly incorporated in the under-graduate courses could be discussed by teachers with the help of guest-speakers from other institutions. These seminars, like the first series, have been organised as week-end programmes at regional centres, providing an opportunity to college teachers in every subject to interact among themselves and with selected experts on the new dimensions of the prescribed syllabi which have come into effect this year.

In this context, I would like to make a special mention of a Seminar organised by Loreto College, Darjeeling, on "the Modern Methods of Teaching and Research in History". The resource persons at this seminar included Dr. J. N. Sarkar, former Head of the Deptt. of History, Jadavpur University, and Prof. Barun De, Director of the Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta, besides faculty members from the University Department of History. I am sure other colleges will take similar initiative on their own to organise seminars. I understand that the seminar at Loreto College was possible because of financial assistance from the UGC, for which again the initiative had been taken by the College authorities.

I had spoken last year of our intention to introduce short (6 months or one-year) employment oriented courses for graduates of this University with a view to improving the prospects of their employment as well as self-employment. A special Seminar was organised in September last year to draw up the line of approach to the introduction of such courses. Two working groups are now preparing the outline of courses which could be introduced here taking into account the feasibility of servicing the courses, available facilities and resources, and potential avenues of employment in this region. We are expecting that financial grants will be available for this programme from the UGC and the State Government during the sixth plan period. Some of these courses to be initially tried will be science and technology based, and some will be economics-commerce based. The post-graduate diploma course in Tea Technology is awaiting clearance from the All India Council of Technical Education. It is understood that the detailed scheme submitted by us has been approved in principle by the Post-Graduate Board of the AICTE along with another scheme submitted by the Government Engineering College, Jalpaiguri, which emphasised the engineering aspects of Tea Science and Technology. A Committee of Inspection will make specific recommendations and it is possible that a new Centre of Tea Technology and Research will be established in North Bengal. We hope that steps in this behalf will be expedited.

Normal pursuit of academic and research work presupposes the existence of not only minimum facilities in the form of library and laboratories but also satisfactory living conditions. This University is located about six miles from the nearest town of Siliguri. As a seat of learning, it may be said to have an ideal location. Unfortunately, however, we do not have adequate residential accommodation in the Campus for the teaching and non-teaching staff. We need more staff quarters for teachers, officers and other non-teaching employees. Moreover, the staff quarters now occupied by many Class III and Class IV employees are just one-room tenements which should be replaced by family quarters. Of late the

problem of accommodation of research scholars and fellows has particularly become very acute. The number of research scholars/fellows has nearly doubled over the last three years. Their number is now 90 and it is likely to go up to 100 in a couple of years. With a small amount of scholarship, the research scholars/fellows cannot afford to hire private accommodation at Siliguri; indeed it is not possible for them to get accommodation even if they could afford high rent. Besides, researchers in the science departments are often required to be in the laboratories early in the morning and stay on till late in the evening. For all these reasons, they should have proper accommodation in the Campus. We hope necessary financial grants will be sanctioned by the UGC and Government for the construction of additional staff quarters and a Hostel for research scholars/fellows for which estimates have already been prepared. Extension of students' hostels will also be needed in the near future.

I must mention here that though capital grant is the first pre-requisite for buildings or any other constructional work, there are several other factors which often cause unnecessary delay in the actual works. During the last one year we have had experience of such delay in the execution of work orders although funds were available and in spite of our best intentions. Let me cite one instance. For quite some time now, resident students, research scholars and teachers as well as campus dwellers have been passing through extreme difficulties as regards regular water supply due to inadequate storage facility. We were thankful to the Government for sanctioning a special grant for the construction of an overhead R. C. water tank with a storage capacity of 40,000 gallons. The work is pending with the local Directorate of Public Health Engineering for some time, and it is only a month back that we have been informed that work will soon start. However, with the creation of additional storage capacity, the existing narrow pipe-lines will have to be replaced so as to ensure supply of water to the extended teaching and administrative buildings, students' hostels and residential blocks. The estimated expenditure of laying new pipes and replacing the old ones is fairly high. Without another block grant from Government it would be impossible to make use of the new water tank. Even then the work may have to be taken up in phases, Storage and supply of water are also linked up with the help of deep tubewells or alternatively by means of sufficiently large ring wells.

Another continuing problem with us has been the maintenance of power supply. Here again, there has been considerable delay in commissioning the standby diesel generator set in spite of a financial grant sanctioned by the Government. Fortunately, I can report that the control panel and wiring have just been completed in accordance with the technical specifications of the State Electricity Board. We hope to get the transformer installed by the SEB at the earliest. What with technicalities

of the work involved, contractors' predilections, and scarcity of expertise at our end to handle the job, the delay has been there inspite of whatever possible initiative and effort that could be brought to bear on the work and despite technical advice from the SEB.

Apart from living conditions on the Campus, the imperative task of developing games and sports has been all the time before us. For the first time last year, the Sports Board of the University decided to organise inter-college tournaments of games at zonal centres to facilitate larger participation of college students. Teams formed on the basis of performance in inter-college events were sent to several Inter-University tournaments. Coaching camps for football and volleyball players were organised in the University. We are exploring the feasibility of having a full-fledged sports pavilion in the Campus, details of which remain to be worked out.

Healthy activities are not only important for students; teachers and employees living on the Campus are also in need of healthy recreation. In the development proposals for the sixth plan period, we are including the estimates for construction of a Community Centre with provision of space for holding popular lectures; reading room; projection of film-strips, indoor games and a canteen. I am glad to mention that inspite of limited facilities and resources, it has been possible for the Campus Cultural Recreation Committee to organise a number of programmes conducive to the development of informal relations among all sections of the University community. The Committee organised an open air musical programme to celebrate the birth anniversary of Rabindranath, a programme of folk songs of India by Shri Mrinal Banerjee and party, and a magic show. The Women's Association have also been very active throughout the year. A charity show was held early last year with a dance drama of Tagore on the stage. Disciples of Acharya Vinoba Bhave who were on a 'padayatra' were invited by the Association to speak on 'Unity in Indian Consciousness' and 'Women Power and Brahma Consciousness'. An art competition for children, an exhibition of arts and crafts of campus dwellers and two cultural functions were also organised by the Women's Association during the year. Besides, the Association took the initiative of organising a sports meet for the children of the campus as a part of the programme connected with the declaration of 1979 as the International Year of the Child.

Some members of the Explorers' Club of the University participated in a trekking expedition following the bank of the river Rilli through dense jungle and climbing a stretch of 3 Km of steeply sloping terrain. The Research Scholars'

Association organised the birth anniversary of poet Sukanta, debate and recitation competitions for students and a table tennis tournament open to students, teachers, employees and other campus dwellers. The Post Graduate Students, Association besides organising a Seminar on the language policy, were active in co-curricular fields organising inter-class sports, debating and recitation competitions.

The University Community in their humble way contributed towards the relief of the people who were affected by the devastating floods in west Bengal during September-October 1978. Street collection was made by organising a 'padayatra' in Siliguri. The teaching staff, research scholars/fellows, students, officers and the non-teaching employees also contributed and the total amount collected was donated to the Chief Minister's Relief Fund. In the same context, I would like to mention that a 'Blood Donation Day' was observed at the Campus last year. It was sponsored by the Students' Health Home of Calcutta. A Large number of members of the University community donated blood on that occasion. An Eye Operation Camp was also set up here with the generous initiative and help of Dr. Pinaki Ranjan Roy, the famous ophthalmologist of Malda.

While I have given you an outline of the activities pertaining to academic programmes, games and sports, I should also tell you about the University's involvement with the programme of adult education and literacy in this region. The National Adult Education Programme was formally launched all over India on 2nd October 1978. In a number of colleges in North Bengal meetings of teachers and students were organised on that occasion and plans of action were worked out. Some of the colleges have since identified the location of one or two adult education centres in the vicinity. These colleges have been assured of and received financial assistance for that purpose. However, the number of such colleges is still very small. The reason why many of the colleges have not responded to the idea needs probing. If there are difficulties, we should be able to remove them. For the task is ennobling as well as beneficial and it does not require much thinking to realise that illiteracy and ignorance of a large majority of our people are bound to act as a drag on social and economic development sooner or later.

May I be permitted now to recall that I had concluded my last report with a note of optimism. This was because of a large measure of understanding and cooperation which I experienced from all sections of the University community since I took charge. I would like to conclude again with a note of optimism this year because I believe whatever efforts have been initiated for development and progress of this University during the last year has been possible due to a continuing spirit of mutual understanding and goodwill on the part of all sections of the staff, students, teachers and research scholars. I hope that our efforts will remain unabated.