

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH BENGAL

28th ANNUAL CONVOCATION



Address by

R. G. Mukerjee

Vice-Chancellor

RAJA RAMMOHUNPUR

20th March, 1996

Hon'ble Chancellor, Respected Professor Aresh Prasad Mitra—
our esteemed Chief Guest of the day, Members of the Court,
the Executive Council and other authorities of the University,
members of the faculties, recipients of honours and degrees, my
colleagues in the University, dear students and distinguished
guests :

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you all to this 28th Annual Convocation of the University of North Bengal held in the renovated convocation pandal, renamed as Vidyasagar Mancha. I was deeply moved by the promptness with which our respected Chancellor, Shri K. V. Raghunatha Reddy, responded to my request and permitted me to arrange the convocation today. Sir, kindly accept my sincere thanks for coming all the way over here to preside over this solemn function.

We are indeed very happy to have in our midst this morning Professor Aresh Prasad Mitra, the renowned scientist, who hardly needs any introduction in the academic world. A recipient of many honours at home and abroad, Professor Mitra has been connected with a large number of international organisations and held several important positions. His presence and his erudite speech have, I am sure, greatly inspired our degree awardees and young students. I, on behalf of the University, extend to him a hearty welcome.

Since the last convocation, Ph. D. degrees have been conferred on 46 scholars, 28 students have successfully completed M. (Phil) courses in different subjects. I congratulate them and convey my best wishes for their bright future.

This convocation covers two years—1993, '94 for the Under-graduate degrees, and 1992, '93 for the Post-graduate courses. Performance of students at the various examinations in these two levels is given below :

A. Under-graduate Examinations of 1993 & 1994

No. of students who passed the Examination

(i) B. A. Honours	—	2001
B. A. Division	—	2284
B. A. Pass	—	6516

	B. A. One Subject	—	0557
	B. A. Special Honours	—	0423
	B. A. (Law) Pass	—	0013
	B. A. (Law) Division	—	0049
	(ii) B. Sc. Honours	—	0511
	B. Sc. Division	—	0689
	B. Sc. Pass	—	0423
	B. Sc. Special Honours	—	0009
	(iii) B. Com. Honours	—	0263
	B. Com. Pass	—	1614
	B. Com. Division	—	0893
	B. Com. Special Honours	—	0009
	B. B. E. Examination (class)	—	0257
	C. LL. B. Examination (3 years)	—	0134
	LL. B. Examination (5 years)	—	0050
	D. B. Ed. Examination :		
	(i) B. Ed. Class	—	1386
	(ii) B. Ed. Pass	—	0106
	(iii) B. Ed. Compartmental	—	0022
	E. Dip. in Physical Education	—	0039
	F. B. Lib. & Information Science (1994)	—	0040
	G. M. B. B. S. Examination 1992 & 1993	—	0074
	H. Post-graduate Examinations, 1992 & 1993		
	(i) M. A. Class	—	0856
	(ii) M. A. Class with Distn. (including External)	—	0165
	(iii) M. Sc. Class	—	0212
	(iv) M. Sc. Class with Distn.	—	0087
	(v) M. Com. Class	—	0088
	(vi) M. Com. Class with Distn.	—	0016
	(vii) M. Sc. Class (Darjeeling Govt. College)	—	0053
	(viii) M. Sc. Class with Distn. (Darjeeling Govt. College)	—	0015
	(ix) M. C. A.	—	0039
	(x) D. C. A.	—	0016
			<u>19894</u>

As in the past, the different Post-graduate Departments and Centres have been carrying on their academic pursuit with commendable zeal and dedication.

The Department of Bengali has been busy holding a number of seminars and special lectures. The two-day seminar to commemorate the birth centenary of Bibhutibhusan Bandyopadhyay and the U. G. C. seminar on 'Two hundred years of Bengali Drama' deserve special mention. The Department of Nepali has organised a seminar and two special lectures on 'Modern Nepali Drama' and 'New trends in modern criticism'. The department has given extra effort to revamp the activities of the Nepali Academy which is going to publish shortly a Nepali Journal and an Anthology of Nepali Short Stories. Organising special lectures by guest speakers has been a regular feature of the department of Philosophy. The volume of the Departmental Journal published in honour of Prof. S. K. Sen, who retired from the department recently, has won wide appreciation. The department of Economics has been throbbing with research activities. Besides holding a National Seminar and a University level workshop, the department has completed a series of socio-economic surveys of several areas, including one on Tea Gardens of Darjeeling District. On a request from the Planning Commission, a report was prepared by Professor M. Dasgupta, on behalf of the department, on 'Problems and Prospects of Economic Development of North Bengal'. The unique achievement of the department of Political Science has been the holding of three 'Refreshers Courses' for teachers with the U. G. C.'s assistance even though this University has not yet been able to set up an Academic Staff College. Two very important seminars—one on 'Tribal Culture and Environment' and the other on 'Social Transformation in East and North East India'—have been organised by the department of Sociology and Social Anthropology. The department also arranged 3 special lectures, including one by a noted German scholar. The department of History has arranged a few lectures by some internationally reputed scholars including Prof. Solberg from the U. S. A. The Akshaya Kumar Maitreya Museum has collected several valuable specimens of stone sculpture from different parts of North Bengal with the assistance of the Customs Department.

The departments and centres under the Faculty of Science have remained academically alert and active over this period. The department of Chemistry has organised a number of seminars and talks. The

workshop on teaching of Chemistry at the Honours and Post-graduate levels was a pioneering effort aimed at improving the quality of teaching. The analytical services offered by this department are gaining popularity. Three research projects financed by central funding agencies are running in the department of Geography and Applied Geography. The department has organised a National Seminar on Environmental Problems and Development. Activities of the department of Zoology have covered a wide field of specialisations. The department has organised a National Seminar on 'Modern Trends in Zoological Researches in India'. Prof. A. K. Chakraborty of this department was honoured with Prof. S. Mukherjee Gold Medal of the Indian Zoological Society for his contribution in the field of Cell Biology & Immunology. The department is now engaged in conducting about six research projects. Research activities of the department of Physics have kept pace with the modern developments in the subject. Seminar talks on topics of contemporary importance have been delivered by well-known academicians from abroad with whom collaborative work is being conducted by the teachers of the department. A project with the financial support of the Department of Science and Technology, Government of India is going on in which scholars from institutions in other states are also associated.

The University Science & Instrumentation Centre (USIC) has been rendering valuable service to different departments by successfully performing the task of upgrading the Computers, maintaining them and also by repairing, fabricating and maintaining other scientific instruments.

Activities of the Centre for Himalayan Studies have raised hopes about its potentiality. During the period under report, the Centre has brought out several publications—books, journals, occasional papers and Area Reports. The Documentation Cell of the Centre has been adding to its collection of books and papers.

Individually, teachers of different departments and centres have kept themselves busy attending conferences, seminars etc. at home and abroad, presenting papers and chairing sessions, and also publishing research articles in learned journals. I refrain from appending that long list.

The Centre for Adult and Continuing Education has remained busy evolving and adjusting its programmes in tune with changing

social needs and directives from central authorities. Total Literacy Campaign has continued in the adopted areas, preceded by necessary socio-economic survey. Several learner motivation and social awareness programmes have been launched. Resource support and monitoring assistance were extended to different District Literacy Societies. Three Continuing Education Courses have been started for women and youth.

Keeping the social needs of the region in view, the University has started a few self-financing job oriented courses. A six-month Diploma Course in Cultural Tourism and Management, the first of its kind in the eastern region was formally inaugurated by the Hon'ble Chief Minister Shri Jyoti Basu. Departments of History, Sociology, Political Science and the Computer Centre are associated with this course. For giving the training necessary professional direction, we have received valuable co-operation from different government officials and business establishments including the Tourism Development officer, Siliguri, the General Managers of Hotel Sinclairs & Hotel Mainak and the Sales Manager of the British Airways. Another such programme is the Post-Graduate Diploma Course in Tea Management introduced in the 1995-96 academic session with a view to grooming up young managers equipped with up-to-date knowledge and skill in different aspects of tea production and marketing. This ten-month course is being run with the help of part-time and guest faculties a large number of whom are directly associated with the tea industry. We believe that the products of this course will singularly suit the needs of the tea industry. I am also happy to report that negotiations have been finalised with M/S. Greenol (Pvt.) Limited in collaboration with whom the University is going to set up a tea garden within the campus. This garden will provide scope for practical field training of the students. The University will also get a share of the sale proceeds of the tea to be produced by the Company in this garden. Incidentally, these two courses have widened the scope of our interaction with the industries whose response has been encouraging.

The department of Library and Information Science has been conducting a self-supporting Bachelor degree course in the evening. In the absence of minimum infrastructure and any whole-time teacher, the department is indeed handicapped. We hope to overcome these

difficulties in the coming days with the assistance and cooperation of the State Government.

The University Library is giving no mean support to its academic activities, despite its not so satisfactory growth rate in terms of new acquisition. However, there has been some improvement recently in respect of subscription to journals. Modernisation of library service through network arrangement has become imperative in view of soaring costs of books and journals. Our library has already introduced certain computer-based services to help researchers. An E-Mail is going to be installed soon, which will link us with the INFLIBNET programme of the U. G. C.

Board of Residence :

A large number of our students reside in hostels in the campus. There are six P. G. Hostels (3 for boys and 3 for girls) which accommodate about 980 students, while 51 scholars stay in the 2 Research Scholars' hostels. A new hostel for SC/ST girl students is under construction.

Sports Board :

I am glad to announce that the newly constructed Indoor Hall (Khela Ghar) has been added to our existing sports infrastructure. The Hall was inaugurated by the Hon'ble Chief Minister, Shri Joyti Basu on the 12th of September, 1995. It is in this Hall that the East Zone Inter-University Badminton Tournament was conducted with great success from October 15—21, 1995. During the period under report, the Sports Board has organised several inter-college and inter-university sports meets with the cooperation of our affiliated colleges and also some fraternal organisations. It also sent teams to participate in many tournaments. The performance of our teams, particularly in badminton and cricket, has been commendable. Our cricket team secured the runners-up position in the last Ajoy Ghosh Memorial Inter-University Tournament. I have great pleasure to report, in this connection, that after a long gap we have been able to award University Blues to our students who earned distinction in various disciplines of sports and games since 1980. In a special ceremony on the 1st of November, 1995, Blues were distributed to 29 players. The success of the Sports Board has to be judged keeping in mind that this University does not have a full-time Sports Officer.

Development Work:

The University had a number of construction projects, both plan and non-plan, at hand. Most of them have been completed successfully. Construction work of the proposed auditorium is in progress. Extension of building of a few academic departments, hostel and the University Guest House is likely to be completed soon. Construction of the Museum building, for which the foundation stone was laid by Shri Buddhadeb Bhattacharyya, Hon'ble Minister for Information & Culture, on 16-12-1995, will be taken up shortly. The long overdue work of raising a boundary wall around the campus is in progress. The state government has decided to acquire Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose's Residence at Kurseong and establish there, jointly with the University, an institute of Himalayan Languages and Culture. We are eagerly looking forward to the privilege of participating in this scheme.

Despite all these achievements, there are areas where our performance has left much to be desired. The most disquietening among these is our failure to follow the academic calendar, especially at the P. G. level. On a few occasions, the schedule of examinations at the U. G. level had to be deferred on ground of floods and other related obstacles. It has become difficult to restore normal programmes ever thereafter. What is most unfortunate is the unusual delay in publishing results of these examinations. While the system has its own weakness, the human lapses have also assumed painful proportions. Some initiative has already been taken, both by the authorities and by the teachers' organisations to find out ways and means to tackle this grave problem whose solution brooks no further delay. May I, on this solemn occasion, appeal to all my colleagues, in teaching and in administration, to resolve to take up the challenge now and here for bringing back normalcy in this respect as quickly as possible.

During the last year and a half, there have been considerable expansion and diversification at the undergraduate level. Seven new colleges have been set up and honours courses introduced in a few more subjects. We welcome this progress and feel that further expansion and diversification will take place in the coming years. What worries us, however, is our increasing inability to cope with the impact of these developments on the post-graduate system. There is

legitimate demand for increase of intake capacity of the different departments and also for introduction of new subjects. With paucity of funds, lack of accommodation and limitation of teaching and non-teaching personnel, we feel helpless. In the overcrowded hostels, services and facilities are almost bursting at the seams. Let us hope that the newly formed State Council of Higher Education would take up the matter with due seriousness and suggest to the State Government appropriate measures to ensure a balanced growth.

Bogged down as we are in somehow tackling the routine problems of the University, we seldom have respite to reflect on the kind of world into which we are sending our young degree-awardees. In a consumerist society with declining moral values, it is difficult to expect a bright future for them especially in an era branded as the period of 'jobless growth'. Moreover we cannot but feel deeply concerned about the future of the education system itself now that privatisation has been accepted as a policy.

Constraints are many, problems are mounting. Yet the University has to survive, grow and meet the society's needs to the best of our ability. For this we would require, to quote from Dr. Ashoke Mitra's speech at the last Convocation, 'intense toughness of the mind and a strong moral fabric'. Let me conclude with the hope that we shall prove ourselves equal to the challenge.

I thank you all.