

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH BENGAL

29th ANNUAL CONVOCATION



Address by

R. G. Mukerjee

Vice-Chancellor

RAJA RAMMOHUNPUR

15th March, 1997

Hon'ble Chancellor Sir, Respected Professor Muchkund Dubey—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 is my proud privilege to welcome you all to this 29th Annual Convocation of the University of North Bengal. I am grateful to our revered Chancellor, Shri K. V. Raghunatha Reddy, for kindly presiding over this ceremony. I thank you very much Sir.

It is a matter of great pleasure for all of us to have Prof. Muchkund Dubey as our Chief Guest. After completing a very successful career in the Indian Foreign Service, he is now Professor in the Jawaharlal Nehru University and is also the President of the Council for Social Development. His scholarship, coupled with his vast experience in international developments and close association with the changing global scenario, has earned him a distinct position in the Society. A very hearty welcome to you, Dubeyji.

I am extremely happy to report that today we are going to award the first D. Litt. degree of this University. Hearty congratulations to the scholar. During the period covered by this 29th Convocation, 31 scholars have qualified for Ph. D. degrees, 20 students have successfully completed M. Phil course in different subjects. I wish them all success in life.

Performance of students at the various examinations in the last year is noted below :

Undergraduate Examinations of 1995		No. of Students who passed the Examination.
A.	(i) B. A. Honours	1202
	B. A. Division	0805
	B. A. Pass	3146
	B. A. One Subject	0281
	B. A. Special Honours	0150
	B. A. (Law) Pass	0029

	B. A. Pass (Ext. )	...	...	0411
	B. A. Division (Ext. )	...	...	0105
(ii)	B. Sc. Honours	...	...	310
	B. Sc. Division	...	...	332
	B. Sc. Pass	...	...	231
	B. Sc. Special Honours	...	...	005
(iii)	B. Com. Honours	...	...	099
	B. Com. Pass	...	...	658
	B. Com. Division	...	...	495
	B. Com. Special Honours	...	...	001
	B. Com. Pass (Ext. )	...	...	032
	B. Com. Division (Ext. )	...	...	013
B.	B. E. Examination (Class )	...	...	131
C.	LL. B. Examination (3 years )	...	...	189
	LL. B. Examination (5 years )	...	...	040
D.	B. Ed. Examination :			
(i)	B. Ed. Class	...	...	724
(ii)	B. Ed. Pass	...	...	046
E.	Dip. in Physical Education	...	...	020
F.	Lib. & Information Science (1995 )	...	...	043
G.	M.B.B.S. Examination (1992 & 1993)	...	...	043
H.	B. D. S. (1994 & 1995 )	...	...	031
I.	Post-Graduate Examinations (1994) :			
(i)	M. A. Class	...	...	311
(ii)	M. A. Class with Division (including Ext. )	...	...	095
(iii)	M. Sc. Class	...	...	115
(iv)	M. Sc. Class with Distn.	...	...	044
(vi)	M. Com. Class	...	...	045
(vii)	M. Com. Class with Distn.	...	...	008
(viii)	M. Com. External	...	...	Nil
(ix)	M. Sc. Class (Darjeeling Govt. College )	...	...	028

(x) M. Sc. Class with Distn. (Darjeeling Govt. College )	...	...	006
(xi) M. C. A.	...	...	031
(xii) D. C. A.	...	...	010
(xiii) M. A. (Public )	...	...	125
(xiv) D. O.	031
(xv) P. G. D. T. M. (1996)	020

J. Diploma in Cultural Tourism and Management (1996)	024
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The academic activities of the Post-Graduate Departments and Centres have continued as usual. The notable achievements are presented below.

Arts and Commerce :

The Department of Bengali has organised a seminar on "Modern Bengali Poetry". The Department felicitated the noted scholar of Bengali literature and language, Professor Bhabatosh Datta, and could successfully organise special lectures by a number of established scholars in the field. The faculties in the Department of English have participated in a number of national level and international seminars, published four articles, and Dr. Suhash Roy Moulick of this Department has published a scholarly book. A distinguished scholar I. B. Rai has visited the Department of Nepali and spoken on "Modern writing and Criticism in Nepali literature". Dr. Bhimkant Upadhyaya has been awarded the "Sainyadhaj Nanda Kumari Puraskar" for his scholarly work. The Deptt. has also published a journal in Nepali, jointly with the N. B. U. Nepali Academy. The Deptt. of Economics has organised seminars and discussions on "Union Budget, 1996". Teachers of this Deptt. have participated in a number of seminars and workshops. The Deptt. could also arrange a talk by the noted economist Prof. Prabhat Patnaik who spoke on "the State of Economics Education today". The Department of Political Science organised yet another Refreshers Course. The faculties in the Deptt. of Sociology have kept themselves academically active over the past one year. Two of them have brought out two books and the faculties have published five research papers in journals and books. Prof. Ranjit Bhadra visited several universities in Italy on Indo-Italian Cultural Exchange

Programme ; Dr Sanjay Roy and Dr. Namita Choudhury were invited as visiting fellows at the Centre for Urban Economic Studies, Calcutta University. Noted indologist Prof. Sukumari Bhattacharjee delivered the Benoy Sarkar Memorial Lecture on "the Status of Women in Ancient India". The Department of History organised a national seminar on "Religion and State in India" and successfully organised special lectures by some reputed scholars from Bangladesh. With rare consistency the Department of Philosophy has held eight departmental seminars and organised special lectures by two noted philosophers, Prof. Rudolf Brandner of Germany and Prof. Shivesh Ch. Thakur of USA. The faculties in the Centre for Himalayan Studies have participated in nine national and international seminars and symposia. The Centre has published the current issue of the "Himalayan Miscellany" and prepared a report on the Eastern Himalayan Region. Besides, the Centre has organised three special lectures and has done some useful documentation work.

Science Faculty :

Over the past one year the Department of Physics has organised a workshop on "Inhomogeneous Cosmological Models" and a symposium on "Conceptual Problems in Relativity and Cosmology". The faculties are at present engaged in conducting two major research projects, and five of them have visited some important academic institutions in the country and delivered lectures. Prof. R. Dabrowski and Dr. K. Czuprynski from Institute of Chemistry, Poland, visited the Deptt. with an idea to launch collaborative research in Liquid Crystals. Prof. S. Mukherjee has been awarded the Senior Associateship of IUCAA, Pune. Dr. Banani Adhikary has received the second prize in the "Young Physicist" Competition conducted by IPS, Calcutta, and Sri Subham Majumdar stood first in the GATE. Dr. Swapan Ghosal of this Deptt. visited the Imperial College, London, and Prof. S. Mukherjee visited the University of Natal, South Africa. The Deptt. of Chemistry has organised three seminars. Three of its members have delivered lectures in various academic institutions. Besides, the Deptt. has set up a paid Analytical Service Division to cater to the needs of the industries and tea gardens of this region. Dr. Basudeb Basu of this Deptt. has visited Lund University in Sweden on a research associateship awarded by the Swedish National Science Research Council. The faculties in the department of Mathematics have to their credit a number of

research articles and one of its members has attended an workshop. Besides, the Deptt. has organised the Third International Conference on Vibration Problems. The Department of Botany has been running a CSIR-sponsored research project and its members have published 12 articles. The Deptt. has also successfully organised a National Symposium on "Diseases of Economically Important Plants of Eastern India and their Management". The Zoology Department has a book to its credit. Dr. Ananda Mukherjee of this Deptt. has visited Cornell University of the USA and has received the National Associateship Award. The Deptt. has organised a seminar on "Perspectives of Biotechnology in Animal Research in India" and organised a special lecture by Prof. Ratanlal Brahmachary of Indian Statistical Institute. The faculties in the Centre for Life Sciences have three books and 38 articles to their credit. Besides, they have participated in 16 seminars or workshops at the national level. The Department of Geography and Applied Geography has organised a guest lecture. The members of this Deptt. are running four research projects and they have attended a number of national and international seminars. The Department of Computer Science and Applications is currently conducting a research project; members of this Deptt. have published ten papers and have participated in a number of seminars and presented papers there.

Other Departments and Associations

Deptt. of Library and Information Science, despite having no regular teacher, has been running a self-supporting Bachelor degree course in the evening. This has been possible primarily because the officers in the University Library have volunteered to share this extra burden. This Deptt. has observed the Teachers' Day by organising debates, lectures and cultural programmes and has produced a wall magazine namely "Batayan".

The Centre for Adult and Continuing Education has, as usual, been busy organising academic programmes and various types of interactions with the wider society. Among other programmes the Centre has organised a seminar on "Women and Environment", and a number of workshops on subjects with high social relevance such as "Installation of Smokeless Ovens", "Kitchen Environment and Disposal of Garbage", "Quality of Potable Water", and on "Population Education and Sustainable Economic Development".

As a part of extension activities the Centre has launched a "Health Awareness Campaign" in the neighbouring areas, organised a 12-day seminar on "Field Operational Training" in collaboration with the State Resource Centre and the Jalpaiguri Zilla Saksharata Samiti.

While the university is the seed-bed of higher education, knowledge and enlightenment, the surrounding areas and the districts of North Bengal are plunged into poverty, illiteracy and unemployment. Since its launching in the early eighties the Centre for Adult and Continuing Education has been playing a significant part in the movement for the liquidation of illiteracy in the districts of North Bengal. Following the U. G. C's guidelines the Centre, in recent years, has expanded its sphere of activities by launching training programmes in the non-conventional subjects such as DTP, Book Binding, Tailoring, Mushroom Cultivation and Sericulture, all of which have opened up new employment opportunities for the unemployed youths and women of this region. While the Centre is thus reassuring its relevance the fate of the employees and the programmes launched are hanging in the balance since we have not yet received the necessary approvals from the UGC and the State Govt. for the continuation of the Centre.

University Science & Instrumentation Centre (USIC) has been keeping a constant vigil over the health of the computer systems and has been rendering a great service to the academic and administrative departments by upgrading their computers with latest technology. Besides, the Centre has organised an Indo-US workshop on Radiation Physics with participants from the U. S. and Europe. The Head of this Centre has undertaken a collaborative research project with Pittsburg University.

Professor Nurul Hassan Centre for Management Studies has been given a new shape. Under its overall supervision, the self-financed job-oriented courses on (i) Tea Management and (ii) Cultural Tourism and Management have turned out two and three batches of students respectively. Success of these two courses has surpassed our expectations.

The University of North Bengal Library accessioned 2766 books and bound periodicals during the period under report. The total collection of the Library is 1,15,640. The Library subscribed 540

periodicals of which 260 are foreign publications. Receiving a grant of Rs. 6.50 lacs from the U. G. C., the University Library has joined INFORMATION AND LIBRARY NETWORK CENTRE (INFLIBNET) this year in order to have wider access to books and journals.

Measures are being taken to diversify and elevate the standard of services rendered by the University Health Centre. Modernisation of the University Press is also in process.

Keeping aside resource problems, the University Sports Board has been playing its vital role in the promotion of sports activities at the college and university levels. As usual, the Sports Board successfully organised Inter-College Tournaments in Table Tennis, Badminton, Football, Athletics and Cricket. Besides, the university participated in the Inter-University Tournaments in the disciplines like Table Tennis, Badminton, Football and came out with remarkable performances.

The University Teachers Council has successfully organised a cultural programme and a seminar on "Higher Education in West Bengal".

North Bengal University Women's Association plays a highly significant role in promoting social mixing among different sections of the university community by organising colourful programmes throughout the year. To this end the Association organised, as in other years, various competitions for the campus children, and a fate for the campus dwellers. It has also shown its concern for the distressed by raising a relief fund for the flood affected people. The Association has also been running a Library and a Music School for the children on the campus.

This year the nation is paying its tribute to the great patriot Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose on his birth-centenary. I am glad to report that the Executive Council of this University has taken a timely decision to celebrate this memorable occasion in a befitting manner. A modest beginning was made on the 23rd of January, the 100th birth anniversary of the uncompromising leader and fighter, through patriotic songs and a seminar with participation of all sectors of the University community. In the evening the main buildings were illuminated in a colourful manner. The proposed year-long programmes include installing Netaji's statue on the

campus, observing INA Day through a one-day seminar, and a national-level seminar inviting academicians, INA personnel, eminent political thinkers and journalists. Publication of a Centenary volume with articles from important personalities on the life and times of Netaji is also on our agenda.

I would now like to place before you some of the major problems faced by this University. Perhaps the most urgent academic problem of our University is the irregularity of session, a hangover of some dislocation in the past, causing irreparable loss to our students. It is a matter of some satisfaction that considerable improvement has been recorded this year in respect of publication of results in the Under-graduate level, thanks to the determined effort by the officers and staff of the examination department and cooperation from large number of teachers. For the post-graduate section, a three-year academic calendar has been adopted as a means to restore normalcy of session. I am confident that with the support and help of all concerned the University will come out of this impasse in the near future.

In the coming year, this University, as all the others in the State, is going to face the arduous task of changing the duration of its pass degree course from two to three years. I feel that the existing system of 2-year pass and 3-year honours courses has its own justification. Still, a consensus of opinion has been reached in this State in favour of the switch-over for the sake of following the national pattern. The process of reviewing the curricula, syllabi and regulations, assessing the additional resource requirements for this conversion has already started. The UGC has also called for abolition of private examination system. The academic bodies of this University, however, felt that this system was very helpful for a large number of students with moderate means and suggested that this should continue until a State Open University comes up. It is indeed gratifying to note that our Chief Minister has already announced the State Government's decision to set up the Netaji Subhas Open University.

Phenomenal expansion of primary and secondary education in this State during the last two decades has created tremendous pressure on the higher education system. There is widespread demand for opening new colleges and introducing new subjects. With the State Government's concurrence, affiliation has been granted to two new

colleges and twenty eight new subjects in the last session (Hons. 21, Pass 7). But this would touch only the fringe of the problem. With its commitment to shoulder the entire financial responsibility, the Government is finding it impossible to cope with the increasing aspiration of the young boys and girls and their parents. Apart from causing disappointment, this stress on resources is also telling upon the standard of teaching in the overcrowded colleges. Serious doubts about the teachers' performance, work culture and professional ethics have been expressed from different quarters. The teachers' organisations themselves have taken resolutions and adopted programmes to tackle this problem in order to prevent further tarnishing of the image of the teaching community.

As the individual universities are trying in their own way to resolve the issues noted above, the energetic functioning of the State Council of Higher Education has lent a new vigour to their endeavour. With a view to partially meeting the needs of the honours graduates who do not find scope for further studies, the Council is exploring the possibility of introducing post-graduate teaching in selected affiliated colleges. Different sub-committees have been formed to look into the problems of research and development, resource mobilisation, examination reforms, academic calendar and last, but not the least, teachers' accountability. Acting as a think-tank, this new agency, under the dynamic leadership of our Minister of Higher Education, has started providing a well-planned and coordinated approach towards the major concerns in this field.

On the score of resources—financial, physical and manpower—the University's position is far from comfortable. In several teaching departments, the number of posts is grossly inadequate to cope with the need of growing specialisation. This obviously is a great hurdle to the maintenance of standard of post-graduate teaching and research, not to speak of its enhancement. It pains me to report that we could not fill up any of the posts granted by the UGC in the 8th Plan because the State Government's concurrence did not come. When venturing into new emerging areas is imperative for the University, we hesitate to take any step in that direction for fear of biting what we cannot chew. We understand the State Government's limitations and would like to see the UGC bear full responsibility for new posts. But the issue should be resolved without further delay so that the minimum development of the University is not affected. However,

We are thankful to the State Govt. for the regular release of maintenance grant that covers 97 to 98 percent of the University total budget. But release of the meagre support from the UGC has been unusually delayed causing great hardship for us. The UGC is contemplating a new mode of releasing quarterly grants. Let us hope this will bring us some relief.

The basic question, of course, centres round the total quantum of allocation made by the Central Govt. for higher education. As pointed out in the UGC's document "Policy Frame and Programme relating to proposals for the Development of Higher Education in the 9th Five-Year Plan, the nation's demands on the educational system have grown phenomenally. It warns that "Neglect of this most important national wealth, human resources, through the neglect of the educational infrastructure and its identified deficits, including higher education which is the cutting edge of development, will imperil these national goals" (of sustainable development with equity and social justice). Recounting earlier experience, the document states "The impact of withholding of resources has been adverse with respect to the fulfilment of the objectives of the Plan. It has meant that Universities, colleges and individual teachers do not receive the necessary funds for the qualitative support of the programme, not to speak of the natural demographic increase in the relevant age group". In this perspective it throws the basic issue in the following words: "As we move to the 21st century, it is the country's policy option to decide whether the complex university system, built over 5 decades since India's independence with tremendous investment of both human and material resources, is to be adequately supported so that it is able to play a key role in the world through its major presence in the various world institutions—educational, economic and professional—and be able to face the competition unleashed by a new world economic order, or decline for want of necessary support which has characterised it for over half of the last decade of this century". We emphatically endorse the national demand and hope that the Commission will be successful in its mission of persuading the Central Government to accept it because in the Policy Document "The Challenge of Education" of 1986, the Govt. had asserted "If investing in education is costly, not doing is costlier". (Para 4.70)

Coming to the question of distributing the available resources

among the universities, the special locational features of our University have to be remembered. The North Bengal University serves no fewer than six districts of West Bengal and also the neighbouring state of Sikkim. This entire area is marked by inadequate industrial and infrastructural development. It cannot be denied, therefore, that this University deserves priority in the matter of financial support. This was sharply focussed in the Convocation speech given by the illustrious thinker Prof. Bhabatosh Datta (19th Convocation, 1986). Moreover, in the last Annual Conference of Association of Indian Universities, resolutions were adopted demanding priority for the universities located in this region.

All this has emboldened us to hope that we are going to get greater justice from the UGC in the coming Plan which, incidentally, is the last Plan of the century.

While making this legitimate claim, we are not forgetting the need for introspection. True, during the last few years we have had the rigorous training to work under conditions of severe resource crunch. But that experience may not have cleansed us fully of slackness and wasteful habit. In order to be worthy of our claim, let us shake off any little lethergy or tardiness that may be there in the matter of using scarce national resources. Given the harmonious relation of constructive cooperation prevailing among the different sections of people in our campus, I am confident of our capability to meet society's expectations, provided necessary support is not withheld.

Thank you.

R. G. Mukerjee
Vice-Chancellor.