

Our respected Chancellor, His Excellency, Shri Mayankote Kelath Narayanan, Honourable Chief Guest Professor Prabuddha Nath Roy, who is now the Chairman, West Bengal Pollution Control Board and formerly the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Academic), University of Calcutta, esteemed recipient of Doctor of Literature (Honoris Causa) Degree, Dr. Girish Karnad, the versatile genius in the fields of literature, drama, creative art, Director and Actor, esteemed recipient of Doctor of Literature (Honoris Causa) Degree, Professor Pranab Ray, the noted historian in the field of local history, temple architecture and local culture, esteemed recipient of Doctor of Science (Honoris Causa) Degree, Professor Binayak Dutta Roy, the noted Physicist and a prominent teacher and researcher in the field of Nuclear Physics and other related areas, my esteemed previous Vice-Chancellors, Honourable members of the Court and the Executive Council of the University, Faculty Members, Officers and other staff members of the University community, recipients of Degrees, Medals and Prizes, distinguished guests, representatives from the media, Ladies and Gentlemen.

I deem it a great privilege to welcome you all to this Fifteenth Convocation of our beloved University on behalf of the Vidyasagar University and also on my own behalf.

I am particularly grateful to our Chancellor, Honourable Shri Mayankote Kelath Narayanan, who had an illustrious career in the Police and the Intelligence Services, who was the National Security Advisor to the Prime Minister of India, who has taken over as the Governor of the State of West Bengal on January 24, 2010. With his vast experience in the field of national security we look forward to his taking an effective role in this extremist ridden State, who has already shown keen interest in the affairs of the University as our Chancellor and has kindly assured me necessary guidance, help and support in tackling the problems of this University because of its locational situation when I met him on 22nd March, 2010.

I extend, on behalf of this University, a very special welcome to Dr. Girish Karnad who earned a Rhodes Scholarship while studying at Oxford and who obtained Padma Sri Award as early as in 1974 and Padma Bhusan Award in 1992 and who has received numerous such awards before and after that for his phenomenal contributions in various fields of creative art like Playwright, Actor, Director and Screenwriter. Dr. Karnad has held administrative positions also in the field of creative art like the Director of the Film and Television Institute of India, President of the Karnataka Nataka Academy and the Chairman of the Sangeet Natak Academy of Performing Arts in 1988-'93. He has also obtained Sahitya Academy Award in 1994 and the Jnanpith Award in 1999. He acted as the Visiting Professor and Fulbright Scholar in Residence at the University of Chicago in 1987-'88. The University feels honoured by honouring him with the Degree of D.Litt. (Honoris Causa) for which he is eminently suitable.

The University is also pleased to offer D.Litt. (Honoris Causa) to Professor Pranab Ray who was a renowned teacher of Sanskrit in the Sanskrit College, Kolkata

and who acted as the Secretary to the Vangiya Sanskrit Siksa Parishad. Besides being engaged in teaching, Prof. Ray has shown his keen interest and has contributed through original writings in the fields of ancient architecture, terracota and stone sculptures in temples and mosques and in the field of iconography. Being an illustrious son of the District of Midnapur, Prof. Ray has made phenomenal contributions in the field of local history, as far as the district of Midnapur in general and the sub-division of Ghatal in particular are concerned. The University feels proud to offer its highest honour to one of the persons who belongs to this area.

Professor Binayak Dutta Roy was a Professor of Physics at the Saha Institute of Nuclear Physics and has acted as Visiting Professor at the Stevans Institute of Technology, New Jersey, USA, at McGill University, Montreal, Canada and at the University of Central Florida, Orlando, USA. Prof. Dutta Roy's research contributions are in the fields of Particle Theory, Nuclear Physics, Quantum Optics and Medical Physics. He continues to be active in teaching and research long after his formal retirement. As a mark of recognition of his scholarly contributions, the University is offering its highest honour of D.Sc. (Honoris Causa) to Prof. Dutta Roy.

Ladies and gentlemen, one year has elapsed since we last met at the Fourteenth Convocation of this University. During this period, I am happy to inform you our University's progress report would evidently command appreciation from those who are concerned with the interest of the University. Thus in the last session (April 2009 - March 2010) 45 students - 16 from the Faculty of Arts and Commerce and 29 from the Faculty of Science were awarded Ph.D. Degree in respective disciplines. On the other hand, 4701 students received their Master Degree both in regular and distance modes. Undergraduate Degrees (both in Honours and General Courses) were awarded to 14092 students. In addition, the number of successful candidates in B.Ed., B.P.Ed., BCA, LL.B., Vocational and Paramedical Courses were 1092, 141, 20, 68, 46 and 87 respectively.

It gives me much pleasure to apprise this august audience that very recently our University has taken steps to introduce a postgraduate course in Santali, thanks to the financial assistance sanctioned by the Government of West Bengal. 31 (boys 25 and girls 06) ST students have been admitted into this course. An additional grant of Rs. 1.75 lakhs has also been sanctioned by the State Government for purchasing books and journals. It is at the same time gratifying to note that the UGC has sanctioned funds for establishing a Women's Study Centre in the University under XI Plan period. The establishment of the Centre has fulfilled a long cherished dream of the University and will go a long way in playing a proactive role on the part of the University in addressing the problems of Women and in activizing them. Also, the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) has approved the MBA Course from the session 2009-2010.

In pursuance of the UGC Guidelines, the University has revised its Regulations relating to the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) in Arts and Commerce and Science with effect from the session of 2009 - 2010.

In the last session our University has granted affiliation to Purba Medinipur B.Ed. College, Chaitanyapur and Deshapran College of Teacher Education, Contai, Purba Medinipur for introducing B.Ed. Course there.

The steady flow of research grants from various funding agencies like UGC, DST, DBT, CSIR, DRDO, ICMR, ICSSR and others have enabled our research scholars, teachers and the academic departments as a whole to pursue their R & D activities in respective disciplines, recognizing thus the standard and qualities of research work of our academic community. Thus in the last academic session the UGC has sanctioned Rs. 37.5 lakhs (for the Department of English), Rs. 54 lakhs (for the Department of Chemistry and Chemical Technology), and Rs. 75 lakhs (for the Department of Physics and Techno-Physics), under its Special Assistance Programme (SAP). The Department of Economics with Rural Development also received research grants of Rs. 3 lakhs and Rs. 2 lakhs from the DSE and DPP, Government of West Bengal, respectively.

Faculty members who have in the last session received research grants from different funding agencies referred to above are: Dr. Braja Gopal Bag (DRDO: Rs. 5.87 lakhs) of the Department of Chemistry and Chemical Technology; Professor Debidas Ghosh (DST: Government of India; Rs. 5 lakhs; and Rs. 13.2 lakhs; and ICMR, New Delhi: Rs. 1.82 lakhs); and Dr. Sankar Kumar Dey (UGC: Rs. 9.43 lakhs) of the Department of Bio-Medical Laboratory Science and Management; Shri Abhisek Chakraborty (UGC: Rs. 1.85 lakhs) of the Department of Remote Sensing and GIS; Professor Susanta Kumar Chakraborty (EIA Consultancy Research Project: Rs. 3 lakhs; WBPCB: Rs. 4.17 lakhs) of the Department of Zoology; Dr. Kuntal Chatterjee (DST: Rs. 19 lakhs) of the Department of Physics and Technophysics; Dr. Amal Kumar Mondal (UGC: Rs. 7.25 lakhs), Dr. Asis Kumar Nandi (UGC: Rs. 1 lakh) of the Department of Botany and Forestry; Professor Prakash Chandra Dhara (DST: Government of India: Rs. 16.83 lakhs) of the Department of Human Physiology with Community Health; Professor Bikas Ranjan Pati and Dr. Keshab Chandra Mondal (CSIR: Government of India: Rs. 10.36 lakhs; DIPAS/DRDO: Rs. 9.93 lakhs); Dr. Debdulal Banerjee (UGC: Rs. 5.9 lakhs); and Dr. Pradip Kumar Das Mahapatra (UGC: Rs. 3.43 lakhs) of the Department of Microbiology; Professor Falguni Chakraborty (DCSSI: Government of West Bengal: Rs. 2.30 lakhs); Dr. Kaushik Sankar Bose (DFID Project: Rs. 0.50 lakh); and Dr. Sudip Datta Banik (ICMR: New Delhi: Rs. 2.95 lakhs) of the Department of Anthropology; Dr. Basudev Mandal (UGC: Rs. 1.45 lakhs and RKVY Project: Rs. 1.76

lakhs) of the Department of Aquaculture Management Technology; Dr. Raj Kumar Kothari (UGC: Rs. 5.26 lakhs) of the Department of Political Science with Rural Administration; Professor Sachinandan Sau (DRDC: Rs. 0.50 lakh) of the Department of Economics with Rural Development; and Mr. Tagar Lal Khan (UGC: Rs. 0.80 lakh); and Professor Arindam Gupta (UGC: Rs. 5.21 lakhs) of the Department of Commerce with Farm Management.

Apart from receiving research grants, our faculty members have been invited to collaborate with other research institutes both within and outside the country. They have also been awarded fellowships by those organizations. Professor Debidas Ghosh of the Department of Bio-Medical Laboratory Science and Management has been invited for collaborative research by Government of Tanzania, Africa. Dr. Slawomir Kaziol, a Polish Academy - INSA Fellow visited the Department of Anthropology to do collaborative research work with Dr. Kaushik Sankar Bose of the Department of Anthropology of our University. Dr. Kuntal Chatterjee of the Department of Physics and Technophysics has been invited to participate as a Visiting Scientist in a famous global project on Nano Science by the Institute of Physics, Academia Sinica, Taiwan. Dr. Surajit Ghosh of the Department of Physics and Technophysics and Dr. Debdulal Banerjee of the Department of Microbiology had been awarded post-doctoral BOYSCAST Fellowship to do research on Nano Science at the University of Central Florida, USA and at Montana State University, USA, respectively. It may be mentioned here that Dr. Banerjee has rejoined the University and has been acclaimed as "the hardest working and most dedicated BOYSCAST Fellow that I have ever hosted", by his supervisor, Professor Gary Strobel. Dr. Sudip Datta Banik of the Department of Anthropology has been nominated as a Fellow, International Council of Nutrition, North America. He has also been awarded post-doctoral Fellowship in the Department of Human Ecology, CINVESTAV at Mexico.

In other fields, our faculty members have been credited with their performances by respective institutions. Dr. Pradip Kumar Das Mahapatra of the Department of Microbiology has been acclaimed and awarded "Environmentalism of the Year Award 2009" by the National Environmental Science Academy, New Delhi. I am really glad to inform the distinguished guests that a film, "Assamer Pathe Megheder Deshe" directed by the Department of Mass Communication and Videography, was selected for screening at the festival section of the Tenth International Social Communication Cinema Conference held in February 2010 at Nandan, Kolkata.

Besides, our teachers have participated and presented their Papers in different International Conferences and Seminars. Thus, Professor Kartick Chandra Paul of the

Department of Commerce with Farm Management presented a Paper on “Personal Carbon Trading: A Cutting Edge Over Carbon Tax” at the Twenty First Asian - Pacific Conference on International Accounting Issues held at Las Vegas, Nevada, USA from 22 to 29 November, 2009. He also acted as the “Moderator” in the Research Forum on “Environmental Reporting Issues” in the same Conference. Professor Ujjayan Bhattacharya of the Department of History presented a Paper on “Floods, Local Economy and the State in Bengal 1770 - 1820” in the First World Congress on “Environmental History” held at the University of Roskilde, Copenhagen, Denmark from 4 to 8 August 2009. Shri Gautam Chando Roy of the same department presented his Paper on “Adult Attitude towards Children in a Colonial Situation: A Study of Bengali Juvenile Literature of late 19th and early 20th Centuries” in the Biennial Conference of the Society for the History of Children and Youth, held at University of California, USA during 10 to 12 July, 2009. Dr. Braja Gopal Bag of the Department of Chemistry and Chemical Technology was invited to deliver a Lecture in the International Symposium at the 6th Singapore International Chemical Conference (SICC-6), held in Singapore from 14 to 18 December, 2009.

Within the country too, our teachers and officers attended quite a good number (18) of International and National Seminars/Symposia/Workshops/Conferences. On their parts, the academic departments had held similar types of seminars and conferences. The Department of Commerce with Farm Management hosted an International Seminar on “Indian Financial System and Global Scenario” in collaboration with the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR), New Delhi on March 10 & 11, 2010. The Department of Bengali also held an International Seminar “On Tagore, By Tagore” on March 29, 2010. Our Research Scholar Association (VURSA) also organized another International Seminar on “Renovation and Rejuvenation of Higher Education through Research Across Disciplines” on March 3 & 4, 2010 at the University campus. A DBT-sponsored Refresher Course on “Application of Bioinformatics on Modern Biology” for College and University teachers was organized in the Department of Microbiology, in which 26 teachers in different disciplines belonging to the Faculty of Science, participated.

For the benefit of the students and also for imparting them higher quality of education, Visiting Professorship/Fellowship were offered to many distinguished scholars and teachers (05) in numbers, belonging to different disciplines in the State, in the last session. For the same purpose 19 Extension Lectures in different departments were delivered by the experts in the respective fields.

Our students have also made us feel proud. A good number of students have passed NET, SET, GATE, JEST and other competitive examinations. The students of the Department of Mass Communication and Videography had, in collaboration with a TV Channel, "Amar Channel", covered "Durga Puja Parikrama" and "Syama Puja Parikrama" in the last year. They have also brought out a Lab-journal, Samakal.

Besides regular courses, our experiments with teaching and learning process through distance mode have been met with a great success. The Directorate of Distance Education (DDE) of our University has become acclaimed all over the country by many educationists. Our DDE is also one of the pioneers Institute, and it perhaps stands second to none in the field of higher education through distance mode, particularly in the subjects belonging to the Faculty of Science. In the last session the University granted affiliation to the following institutions: Camelia School of Business Management for conducting MCA Course; AMIK Institute of Science and Management, Durgapur, and CARREOGRAPH Institute of Management Studies for conducting MBA Courses under Distance Learning Programme. DDE has also accorded permission to different undergraduate colleges where Environmental Science is being taught as one of the compulsory subjects. The students, who have passed their postgraduate examinations, have been qualified for in different competitive examinations like NET, SET, GATE, GRE and others. For its satisfactory performance our DDE has been sanctioned with a grant of Rs. 40 lakhs for further implementation of different distance education programmes by the Distance Education Council (DEC). The Council in addition has granted the DDE another sum of Rs. 4 lakhs for the purchase of books for the DDE students. On the other hand, Science laboratories for the Departments of Zoology, Botany and Environmental Science, and Library and Computer Centre with LAN facilities have been established in the Directorate. Kiosk has also been established for the benefit of the DDE students.

Since its inception our University Central Library has gradually been developing in its size and in the number of users and resources and quality of services. The house-keeping activities are fully computerized, and as far as the automated library system in West Bengal is concerned, ours would be ranked as one of the best. A Centre for Digital Resources Service has already started functioning from where any bona-fide library member could get access to more than 5000 online e-resources, in addition to a well organized archives of the old years' question papers, Ph.D. theses awarded by our University, faculty publications, etc. A study room has also been set up for the members to enable them to consult various types of books on different competitive examinations.

The UGC Infonet Programme has considerably progressed through our Computer Centre. Direct Optical Fiber Link with BSNL and Internet connections with a total of 04 MBPS Bandwidth have been established for more quality Internet services. Campus-wide LAN and Internet facilities are being extended to new buildings, residential areas as well as the students' hostels. More than 240 new computers have been purchased in the last year for further consolidating ICT based education. Number of computers, Internet users, computers having LAN and Internet facilities have been increased considerably. The University Computer Centre has again developed new websites/software for affiliated colleges and has been maintaining the old sites. It is at present engaged in developing new software for University internally. As its outreach activities the Centre has conducted many certificate/diploma courses for University and College teachers/officers and staff training/awareness programme in the last session. In addition, the Centre has organized a National Seminar on "Data Mining and Decision Support" in March, 2010. The Computer Science Department has similarly organized one Workshop and one Seminar within this period where a large number of computer professionals joined.

So far as the activities of the NSS are concerned, in the last session 127 units were activated involving 12,639 volunteers. Attempts were also made to involve more volunteers in the Special Camping Programme and the NSS Cell had been able to organize 68 Special Camps involving 3400 volunteers during the period between April – December 2009 in addition to undertaking normal programmes including programme on AIDs and HIV, Immunization and Pulse Polio, Social Forestry, Science-awareness, Environment Protection, Literacy and Health and Hygiene. The NSS volunteers donated in the last year 273 units of blood. 10 NSS volunteers of our University participated in the Pre-Republic Day Parade held at Guwahati. Two volunteers similarly participated in the Republic Day Parade at New Delhi. A few other volunteers took part in the World Aids Day organized at Kolkata on 1st December, 2009.

Our Medical Unit has been serving the University community in a commendable way. Students, teachers and other staff get medical advice and emergency medical treatment whenever required. The Unit also provides homeopathy consultancy services and medicines. Different health awareness programmes are organized by the Unit. On different occasions like University Sports and cultural festive and Convocation, the Medical Unit offers its emergency services to the persons concerned.

The University has a Placement Cell which has been functioning since 2007-2008 session. Both "Off-campusing" and "On-campusing" have been organized for the

students of various academic departments. In the last session, 10 such campusing have been organized, of which 04 are “On-campusing”.

Regarding cultural activities, our University organized Inter-Collegiate Cultural Meet on 3 and 4 November, 2009 in the University campus. About 23,540 students from 22 undergraduate colleges and 12 postgraduate departments of the University participated in different events of the Meet. The Cultural Team of the University also took part in the East Zone Inter-Varsity Youth Festival held at Manipur University during 2 to 6 December, 2009 and also, in the National Inter-University Youth Festival held at M. D. University, Rohtak, Haryana. Smt. Sreyasree Sukul and Smt. Sagarika Ghosh won ranks in classical and semi-classical vocal songs and creative and classical dance respectively in both the festivals. Sri Bidesh Basu and others stood Second in Installation Work in both the Meets.

In the field of Sports, the University organized Inter-College Football Tournament (20 August - 10 September, 2009), Inter-College Kho Kho Tournament, both for boys and girls (12 - 13 November, 2009), Inter-College Kabadi Tournament (7 December, 2009), and Inter-College Volleyball Tournament (15 - 16 December, 2009) at the University campus. On the other hand, our students had participated in the Inter-University Football Tournament held at Kalyani University (20 - 30 November, 2009), Inter-University Cricket Tournament held at Burdwan University (25 - 30 November, 2009) and Inter-University Volleyball Tournament held at Benaras Hindu University (4 - 9 January, 2010). They also represented our University in the Inter-College and Postgraduate Athletic Meet at the University campus (27 - 29 January, 2010).

We feel very happy to report to you that the UGC XI Plan Visiting Team, which visited our University last year, has finally allocated a liberal sum in favour of the University to consolidate its research and development activities. Compared to 2.97 crores, which we received during the X Plan, the University has received a total amount of 13.31 crores as General Development Grant and as Grants for various Merged Schemes. The University has taken the preliminary steps to judiciously utilize this Grant. I am also very happy to report to you that, on the basis of the UGC's recommendations, the University has submitted a Proposal for obtaining concurrence of the State Government for the creation of 35 new teaching posts. We are very hopeful of receiving such a concurrence from the State Government. This will help us in strengthening our teaching and research work and in providing better academic services to our students. We are similarly hopeful about the creation of 29 new non-teaching posts for the University by the State Government, a proposal which has been pending before the State Government for the last several years.

There has also been a considerable expansion in the physical infrastructure of the University during the last one year. The second phase expansion of Silver Jubilee Bhavan is almost complete. Construction of a new PG Girls' Hostel with UGC Fund is going on in full swing whereas there has been a full utilization of State Government Fund for vertical extension of PG Girls' Hostel for ST Students. Construction of Pavilion for Sports Complex with UGC Fund also is almost complete. We are also happy to report that we have received an administrative approval for Rs. 6.5 crores from the State Government. We intend to undertake expansion of Library Building and the construction of the whole Second Floor of the Humanities Building and the laying of internal roads within the campus with the help of this Grant. This whole work will be done through the PWD of the Government of West Bengal. The XI Plan Grant from the UGC will go a long way in creating a new Students' Canteen, a new Administrative Building, the addition of First Floor in the Einstein Building, the addition of First Floor in the Silver Jubilee Building, further consolidation of facilities in the University Sports Ground, including the expansion of the Pavilion, and the creation of a new Hostel Building for non-teaching employees. A work order involving more than 7 crores of rupees has been placed for the construction of the Auditorium of the University. Work is going on in full swing. It is satisfying to point out here that this whole money will be contributed to the University by the Directorate of Distance Education, Vidyasagar University.

Honourable Chancellor Sir, distinguished participants and dear students, the World we are living in the 21st Century is the World where knowledge has become the most important human resource. India has declared the goal to establish a knowledge society with the aim of developing skilled manpower which will play a vital role in the globalized economy today. For that purposes our educational structure in general and higher educational structure in particular has to suitably reorient itself in order to achieve the three declared goals, viz. expanding the base of higher education, ensuring equity and equal access to education for differentiated sections of the community and ensuring quality in higher education so that our educated persons can play a proper role at a global scale.

The Ministry of Human Resource Development of the Government of India deserves congratulations of the efforts it has been taking for initiating debate, discussion and dialogue for making structural changes in higher education to force the new situation. In recent years, three such documents have been made available, viz. the National Knowledge Commission Report, the Yash Pal Committee Report and the draft legislation on the proposed National Commission for Higher Education and Research.

The first two documents, particularly the second one, constitutes the base on which the proposal for a completely reoriented NCHER is proposed to be constituted.

But a detailed examination of the proposed law leaves many questions unresolved. Many people wonder whether it will lead to a situation of further bureaucratization and over-centralization in the field of higher education, whether the heterogeneous and plural character of our society can be adequately reflected through such an over-arching body and whether autonomy in the sphere of higher education and the revamping of the resource base of the State Universities - which constituted the two pivotal areas of recommendation of the Yash Pal Committee - have been adequately addressed in the proposed legislation.

It is true that the existence of multiple regulatory bodies in the field of higher education needs immediately to be done away with as it is adding to chaos and confusion. It is also true that there is absolute lack of transparency in the functioning of some of these regulatory bodies. But the question is whether a Body consisting of seven persons at the top, who will remain absolutely free from any 'external control', can really act as a substitute Body. One can seriously consider, whether the UGC, after proper reorientation and revamping should continue to function as the apex body. The proposal to appoint Vice-Chancellors from a single All-India Panel as prepared by this single all India body, also may appear to have formidable operational difficulties, apart from the fact whether the creation of such an All India Panel fits in well with the federal structure of our polity. It is good that the proposed NCHER is open for national debate and we are looking forward to the emergence of a consensus in the area.

All the talk about the restructuring of higher education centres round the concept of autonomy. But autonomy does not mean either absolute independence or lack of accountability. In the context of University autonomy, what the Gajendra Gadkar Committee said [UGC Report on the Governance of Universities and Colleges (1971)] is still relevant. We quote from the Report, "The concept of University autonomy is often misunderstood. It is not a legal concept, not even a constitutional concept. This concept does not question that in a democratic society like ours, legislatures are ultimately sovereign and have a right to discuss and determine the question of policy relating to education ... University autonomy does not suggest that the Universities are a state within a state and law unto themselves. The concept of University autonomy, however, means that it would be appropriate on the part of democratic legislatures not to interfere with the administration or University life, both academic and non-academic. The claim for autonomy is made by the Universities not as a matter of privilege but on

the ground that such an autonomy is a condition precedent if the Universities are to discharge their duties and obligations effectively and efficiently ...”

Before I conclude, I extend my warm welcome to all the recipients of Degrees and distinctions at today’s Convocation. Your University Degree is a passport to face and meet the challenges of life in the larger society. Achievements in life are always driven by vision and goals. You have to work hard and with determination to realize your full potentials. The University, your alma mater, will always be by your side. My best wishes to you all.

Once again, I convey my deepest regards and thanks to all those who have assembled here to make the Fifteenth Convocation a success.
