

Governor's Speech for inauguration of Platinum jubilee celebrations of Gauhati University on 8th January 2022

Esteemed Members of the University Court, the Executive Council and the Academic Council, Vice Chancellor of the University, Professor Pratap Jyoti Handique, Deans of Faculties and Faculty members, Registrar and other officers and staff, invited guests and my dear students.

As Chancellor, it is my privilege to welcome you all to the Inaugural Ceremony of the Platinum Jubilee Celebrations of Gauhati University. This University which represents the collective dreams and aspirations of the people of the region has been a leader in Higher Education since its inception. As it steps into its 75th year, we relive its glorious and illustrious heritage in a manner befitting of the esteem of the institution.

Founded by a generation of visionaries which included Gopinath Bordoloi, Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed, Madhab Chandra Bezbaruah, Bhubaneswar Barua, Krishna Kanta Handiqui and many others, Gauhati University has been known for fine scholarship and strong values, good work ethics and a desire to reach the zenith. The University has public representatives, creative writers, performing artistes, eminent lawyers, scientists, journalists, administrators and legislators among its alumni and this is a fine example for coming generations of students to follow.

Gauhati University today has over 300 affiliated colleges offering undergraduate and postgraduate courses in the faculties of Arts, Science, Commerce, Law, Engineering, Fine Arts, Management and Technology. It has expanded its educational and research interests through several new courses and departments and new Centres for Performing Arts, the study of South and Southeast Asia, the Northeast, and a Centre for Brahmaputra Studies. As we embark into the Platinum Jubilee Year, it is a matter of satisfaction that the University continues to provide excellent education even as it gives policy inputs in geostrategic areas. Its academic exchange programs and partnerships with the Universities of several neighbouring countries continues to be a way

through which the nation's Act East Policy is given concrete shape. As a public university it has a very special role in the journey of the state and the nation. It is a place where the future is being visualized, where affordable education brings students from all sections of society to study and realize their ambitions.

This occasion leads us to the threshold of a new milestone and puts greater responsibility on the institution that the state and the region looks up to for academic leadership and vision. With the implementation of NEP 2020, it opens up new vistas in our education.

Challenges of Higher Education in India and in Assam

Even as we take pride in the achievements of our students and the glorious history of the institution, we must also consider what the future holds for us. The major global crises are also our concern. We need institutions that are proactive in addressing climate change through their research and their practices; provide holistic, good quality education for all its citizens; and are attuned to the surrounding life and society. The right kind of education will help us to realize these goals.

There are many changes appearing on higher education in the country. The New Education Policy focuses on certain key areas that are already emerging as having special importance. The Policy "envisions an India-centred education system that contributes directly to transforming our nation sustainably into an equitable and vibrant knowledge society, by providing high quality education to all." Besides focusing on flexible curricular structures, it considers teacher education as the key to transformation and seeks to make vocational education integral to all education. A National Research Foundation has been envisaged "to catalyze and expand research and innovation across the country", while an equally important intention is "to integrate technology into all levels of education to improve classroom processes, support teachers' professional development, enhance educational access for disadvantaged groups and streamline educational planning, administration and management." These, when implemented, will be far reaching changes with potential to dramatically transform the quality of

education, the goals of students and their employability, and create foundations for high quality research.

The challenge for Gauhati University is to gear itself up to meet the new needs of the future. It will have to blend quality teaching – and this would now mean finding more effective ways for its faculty in the colleges and in the University's postgraduate departments to undergo regular training and programs of self-improvement. This will have to be combined with high quality research for which the NEP has several enabling factors in mind. However, in order to take full advantage of the possibilities that the NEP will open up, the University has to prepare itself. While the University has been doing well and there is a steady rise in its actual growth, it is important to identify the areas where there are shortcomings and address them judiciously. I have no doubt about the competence of the faculty and the administrators but in order to take that leap forward, serious introspection along with hard work are needed.

I look forward to the further development of the University. I am also hopeful of the role the University in meeting the educational needs of the region and also address larger issues facing the nation.

India's primary challenges continue to be *poverty*, and *uneven access to education and healthcare*. The University's graduates are uniquely placed to address these issues. School education needs to be vastly improved and the NEP has offered a clear road map to revolutionize this level. If school education is transformed nationally, higher education is bound to improve much faster and in more relevant directions.

Alongside the question of access is that of quality. Making a curriculum that is both knowledge-oriented and skill- and job-oriented has become a necessity. At the same time it is important to keep in mind that without high quality training and implementation an excellent and relevant curriculum might just remain on paper.

There are several important reforms on the anvil. And many of these issues are being addressed at the administrative and regulatory stages of higher education today. It will be Gauhati University's challenge to

understand, adapt and adequately implement the best of the ideas that are being proposed. Additionally it remains a goal for any educational institution to teach democratic and human values and this is something that Gauhati University is well equipped to take up.

I believe that Gauhati University has a great future. Under its Vice Chancellor's able leadership and the great role of its dedicated faculty members and administration it is poised for a significant transformation. I hope that it will continue to grow, sustain its strengths and position itself as one of the most sought-after destinations for students. I also hope that the university will develop itself as a vibrant centre for exchange programmes and set up collaborations with eminent institutions across the globe.

I congratulate the Vice Chancellor, the staff and the teaching community for their commitment to the cause of higher education.

With these words I inaugurate the year-long Platinum Jubilee Celebrations of Gauhati University today.

Jai Hind