

Speech for the Honourable Governor for 27th Foundation Day of Assam University, Silchar on 21st January,2020

Vice Chancellor of the university Prof Dilip Chandra Nath ji, Deans, Registrar, Heads of Departments and Centres, Faculty Members and other members of the University Administration, Persons from the Media and most important of all – my dear students.

It gives me immense pleasure to be here with you all today on the auspicious occasion of the 27th Foundation Day celebrations of Assam University, which I gather has been taking giant strides towards achieving its avowed objective of disseminating and advancing knowledge in different branches of the Humanities and the Social Sciences, the Natural and Pure Sciences, Information Technology and so on.

The foundation day of an institution, I believe, should make it cogitate on what it has achieved so far, whether it has lived up to what has been expected of it and what it should do in the future for progressing steadfastly towards that ultimate goal of achieving excellence in different spheres of academic activities. In the context of Assam University, what can be obviously seen is that it has experienced tremendous growth in many areas, developing into a dynamic institution, evolving from a humble beginning and becoming

a major educational hub in Northeast India. I am sure the university is thinking of building further on its strong foundation.

What all institutions should realise in today's context is that in their pursuit of excellence what is required is courage and fearlessness for all great universities across the world exemplify the fact that greatness and timidity do not go together well, as the Kothari Commission Report of 1966 had also pointed out. The courage and fearlessness has to be shown in facing boldly and countering the many challenges in front of higher education in India ranging from the big challenge of training human resources for national growth to reducing inaccessibility to higher education and the inequality therein.

Another significant challenge which must never be lost sight of is with regard to keeping alive the spirit of enquiry and criticism which was the hallmark of the great ancient Indian universities. Nalanda and Takshashila, which we always invoke to sing paeans of praise for our ancient education system. In this context, it is important for Assam University and all other institutions of higher learning in India to assiduously imbibe the ideas laid down in the New Education Policy of 2019. Very significantly, the New Education Policy emphasizes that higher education institutions should have the "autonomy to innovate" on matters of curriculum and assessment and that they should integrate their academic plans with the institutional development plans and fund student clubs and activities. In addition,

the universities have also been advised to set up support centres for students from disadvantaged backgrounds. This is very important in the light of the government's aim to address issues of inequity in higher education.

I am sure Assam University has an equal opportunity cell. Proper steps should be taken to strengthen its functioning. Also, steps should be taken for a proper integration of the arts and humanities with STEM – science, technology, engineering, mathematics – subjects. This is something that the New Education Policy stresses upon in no uncertain terms. We should be pondering more upon how course structures could be made more imaginative and flexible offering opportunities for multiple useful entry and exit points. I am sure the Rashtriya Shiksha Aayog (National Education Commission) which will replace the Central Advisory Body on Education, as has been envisaged in the New Education Policy, will usher in a much-needed fresh puff of breath for higher education in India.

In conclusion, I would like to congratulate Assam University for dedicating itself to creating and disseminating knowledge in different branches of academics, and would like to wish the university fraternity the best of luck as it endeavours to open new vistas of research.

Thank you,

JAI HIND