

**FOURTH ANNUAL CONVOCATION
20th February 2010**

**THE WEST BENGAL NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF JURIDICAL
SCIENCES**

REPORT OF THE VICE CHANCELLOR

Professor Dr. M.P. Singh

Professor Dr. Andre Beteille, Emeritus Professor of Sociology, University of Delhi, a leading educationist and the Chief Guest at this Fourth Convocation of the University,

Hon'ble Mr. Justice K.G. Balakrishnan, the Chief Justice of India and the Chancellor of the University,

Hon'ble Members of the General Council, Executive Council, Academic Council and the Finance Committee of the University.

Hon'ble Judges, Hon'ble Ministers, Distinguished Guests, Esteemed Parents, Dear Colleagues, Other Members of the University Community, Recipients of Degrees and Medals, Dear Students, Ladies and Gentlemen.

1. On behalf of the General Council and Executive Council of the West Bengal National University of Juridical Sciences and on my own, I deem it my privilege and honour to extend to you all, the most cordial welcome on this special occasion, the Fourth Convocation of the University.
2. It is our good fortune that Hon'ble Professor Dr. Andre Beteille has so graciously accepted our invitation to be the Chief Guest on this occasion. Sir, your presence here today expresses your deep concern and commitment to education and scholarship including of course the discipline of law, which is widely known and acknowledged.
3. I extend a similarly warm welcome to Hon'ble Mr. Justice Balakrishnan, the Chief Justice of India and the Chancellor of our University. We are deeply grateful to you, Sir, for agreeing to preside over the Convocation, in spite of your extremely busy schedule and several commitments.

4. Ladies and Gentlemen, the Convocation of a University is a defining moment in its history. Established in 1999 through the West Bengal National University of Juridical Sciences Act, 1999, the University became operative at the dawn of new millennium in the year 2000. I am happy to report that within a decade the University has established the reputation of being a premier law university of the country and is well known abroad.
5. At the occasion of this Convocation I must record a special word of gratitude to our eminent former Chancellors whose inspirational guidance and wise counsel has been crucial in making the University what it is today.
6. We remain grateful to the Government of West Bengal for situating the University at this prime place in the city of Kolkata and for the generous financial contribution towards the construction of its academic and hostel complex and completion of this auditorium. While we have received the full cooperation of the Government and people of West Bengal in every respect, we express our special gratitude to the former Chief Minister of West Bengal, Late Shri Jyoti Basu for his vision and the initiative to establish this University. His successor and current Chief Minister Shri Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee and his team, to whom the University remains always grateful, have supported that initiative with equal zeal and commitment.
7. The UGC has recognized the University under Section 12-B of the UGC Act for financial grants. It has recently sanctioned the establishment of a Computer Centre at the University and has also assured development grants under the Eleventh Plan. There is also a definite possibility of receiving access to electronic journals and other database with assistance from UGC-Infonet through Inflibnet. We are grateful to the UGC for extending this valuable support to the University.
8. A great deal of credit for placing the University amongst the best law universities in the country goes to Professor N.R. Madhava Menon, the founding Vice Chancellor of the University who nurtured and guided the University in its initial stage, selected its location and got the campus constructed and completed. His successor and my immediate predecessor, Professor B. S. Chimni, carried forward that legacy and had the privilege of holding the First Convocation of the University in the year 2005.

9. I also record with gratitude the contribution and support to the University from a distinguished group of judges, lawyers, academicians and civil servants who either as members of our governing bodies, such as the Governing Council, Executive Council, Academic Council and Finance Committee, or otherwise have given the University immeasurable support over the years.
10. From its very inception the University has undertaken its responsibility towards teaching and research seriously devising the best possible arrangements of schools and centres. Through these arrangements national and international research projects have been completed in due course in the past and some are still in progress. Since July 2009, we have been conducting a post-graduate diploma in business laws focused primarily at business executives. Similarly we have just completed a report on the jurisprudence of federalism for the current Commission on Centre-State Relations, Government of India.
11. The University has also undertaken from the very beginning training activities. It has over the years conducted successful workshops on a range of subjects for members of the judiciary, senior police officers, public prosecutors, NGOs and civil society.
12. The University has also established four centers devoted to conducting research and training in specialized areas. These being the Centre for Human Rights and Citizenship Studies (CHRCS), the Centre for Studies in WTO Law (CSWL), the Centre for Women and Law (CWL), and the Centre for Consumer Protection and Consumer Welfare (CCPCW). The Ford Foundation endowment established a Chair in Human Rights and Citizenship Studies, which has been occupied initially by Professor Upendra Baxi and later by Mrs. Justice Ruma Pal, former Judge of the Supreme Court. During her tenure Mrs. Justice Pal organized several lectures with the involvement of distinguished national and international visitors, a Regional Workshop on the Human Rights of the Differently Abled Persons in collaboration with the National Human Rights Commission and a Workshop on Media and Human Rights. By seeking donations, she has also created excellent infra structural and research facilities created for the Centre and added to it required teaching, research and secretarial staff. Besides participation in teaching of regular courses on human rights at the graduate and post-graduate levels, the Centre has run in the past and plans to run in future certificate and diploma courses in human rights for different target groups. A successor to Mrs. Justice Pal is likely to be appointed soon for carrying forward the Centre's legacy.

The Centre for Studies in WTO Law cooperated with WTO Secretariat to host a Regional Seminar on Dispute Settlement Understanding for delegates from Asia and the Pacific countries. The Centre for Women and Law has been active in generating debate around gender issues and carrying out sensitization activities.

13. The University has also been able to attract a few endowments for organizing annual lectures and other academic activities. Under the endowment in the name of Shri K.C. Basu eminent scholars including Noble Laureates such as Professors Amartya Sen and Joseph Stiglitz have delivered lectures on the interface of law and economics. Similarly, under the endowment in the name of Dr. D.D. Basu, jurists like Shri F.S. Nariman, former Chief Justice Venkatchaliah and Professr Dieter Grimm have delivered lectures on issues of public law.
14. In the year 2008 the Union Ministry of Human Resource Development also established a Chair in Intellectual Property Rights law at the University. Professor Shamnad Basheer, an internationally known scholar in this fast emerging and expanding branch of law, is occupying the Chair and has already held a variety of activities under its auspices. In particular, he organized a conference on a recent bill by the government seeking to regulate intellectual property protection by Universities and publicly funded institutions. Owing to the information generated by the conference and various other protests by the Indian scientific community, the government is now making large scale changes to this Bill.
15. Since the last convocation a year ago, we have also been able to get very able faculty at the level of Professors and Assistant Professors, who are nationally and internationally known for their academic credentials. With the vision and support of the new and the existing faculty, the University has not only improved the quality and content of teaching and research, it has also brought several remarkable changes in the curriculum and pedagogy. The faculty has also contributed to legal research by participation in national and international research and teaching projects, by independent publications, and by advising law and policy makers. They have also received national and international honours, including prestigious scholarships for higher studies and research. Currently three of our young Assistant Professors are working for their PhD on scholarships received from universities in three different countries and a fourth one is pursuing his second LLM in USA as Fulbright Fellow.

16. During the past year, the University also appointed a Registrar and a Librarian in the rank of professors.
17. I am happy to report that the Legal Aid Cell of the University has been active in spreading legal literacy and in providing free legal aid to citizens. The University students along with the faculty have been regularly holding legal literacy and legal aid camps in different parts of the State of West Bengal. Recently, the Cell also organized a workshop for the networking of legal aid programme of different law schools in the State of West Bengal. The Cell is also planning to take up the cause of under trials unlawfully detained in Kolkata prisons.
18. Along with teaching and production of teaching materials for the students, the University also promotes legal research and its publication. Besides the faculty and students publishing independently elsewhere, the University regularly brings out two law journals, namely, the *NUJS Law Review* and the *Juridical Review*. The former is a quarterly while the latter is annual. Both journals are of an international standard. Within less than two years of the *NUJS Law Review*'s publication an international agency has rated it as the best legal journal of India as well as of Asian region. While the two journals publish research papers received from any corner of the world, they promote research for publication by the faculty and students of this University.
19. The faculty deserves much credit for the high quality of legal education offered to the students of the University. With a view to promoting comparative scholarship and exposing students and faculty alike to new ideas, the University has also taken the initiative to invite scholars from leading universities abroad. In recent years and months, scholars from universities and institutes such as the Institute for Advanced Study Berlin, Max Planck Institutes of Germany, University of Rio de Janeiro Brazil, Ghent University Belgium, Warwick University, Leeds University, Ottawa University, University of New South Wales, the University of Frieburg, the University of Leipzig, the European University Institute Florence, the National University of Singapore, the City University of Hong Kong, University of Sydney, DePaul University College of Law USA, University of Toronto, University of London, Singapore Management University, International Human Rights Organizations, and international law firms have visited the University and taught our students.
20. The University has also entered into Memoranda of Understanding with over one dozen foreign universities in the East and the West with whom different academic and exchange

programmes are in progress and young students and research scholars from universities abroad are regularly visiting the University for different durations.

21. In collaboration with the University of Leipzig and the International Red-Cross Committee the University also held two international conferences respectively on Law and Cultural Diversity and International Humanitarian Law in the years 2007-2008 in which the leading scholars from different parts of the world participated. In November 2009 we held a three day UNCTAD sponsored international conference on WTO Dispute Settlement. Again, in December 2009 we held a workshop on Poverty and Development in collaboration with the University of Oslo, Norway.
22. In the past year the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) established a Chair of Professor of Law from Germany for which a professor was also appointed who for some reason could not join. Search is on for the appointment of another person to that post.
23. From June 10 to 20, 2009 the German Academic Exchange Service also invited a delegation of the Vice Chancellors of three National Law Universities, including NUJS, to visit prominent universities and research institutes and higher courts for exploring the possibilities of academic exchange and research. The German Academic Exchange Service also supports the short visits of four and more weeks of German scholars to lecture in Indian Universities. Under this programme a German professor, Professor Dr. Helmut Goerlich, is currently with us and another Professor is expected to visit us in August - September this year.
24. On 11 November 2009 a delegation of Directors from three Max Planck Institutes visited the University and explored possibilities of intensive collaborative research with NUJS. The process of institutionalizing this collaboration is underway.
25. The reputation of the University owes much to the many laurels won by students in various Moot Court competitions, international debates in India and abroad, and their publications and presentations at the international level. Apart from having represented India in the Jessup and other international and national Moots, in July 2009 they also hosted the annual meet of the International Law Students Association for the first time in the country. The students have also organized international parliamentary and other debates and initiated and conducted national level essay and fiction writing competitions.

26. The students have also made their mark in International conferences by presenting papers and publishing them in national and international law journals. They have also authored books and monographs.
27. Several students of the University have been awarded prestigious scholarships and awards including the Rhodes scholarship and four annual scholarships awarded only to NUJS students for the summer course of the Touro Law School. They also receive several other scholarships in universities abroad for further studies and research.
28. In order to further increase the international exposure of our students, the University is moving towards establishing partnerships and exchange programs with foreign academic institutions. Already such arrangements have been made with about a dozen of Universities amongst which the students from Germany have been regularly visiting while students and research scholars from other countries, including China, have also been visiting from time to time.
29. The high quality of our students has also been established by the cent percent placements of all the batches of graduates. While a substantial number of them have joined law firms and corporate houses, many have also engaged themselves with court-based litigation practice either by establishing their own law firms or by joining the senior members of the bar. Several students have gone for higher studies abroad and have joined the academia either in India or abroad.
30. Major credit goes to the administrative staff of the University in its efficient running. We hope to create a work culture in the University that allows the faculty and students to pursue the goals of higher education without hindrance.
31. In the end let me emphasise that the West Bengal National University of Juridical Sciences aims at the creation of its own distinct identity in the family of institutions of legal learning through teaching, research, publications and innovations in learning techniques and curricula. Its distinct identity is being *inter alia* created through establishing a university culture that takes pride in promoting democratic practices, openness, rule of law and social justice and by orienting the faculty, the students and the administrative staff towards upholding those values in words as much as in action. In particular, the University will strive towards

taking the lead in generating India specific research and scholarship that conforms to the best international standards.

32. The University also aims at keeping quality legal education within the reach of everyone who deserves it by keeping fee levels affordable and by instituting sufficient number of scholarships for the deserving candidates. While a few scholarships have long existed for graduate and post-graduate studies, beginning academic year 2009 – 10 ten per cent of all students shall be granted scholarships based on need cum merit basis .
33. Now comes the extremely pleasant task of offering warm felicitations and congratulations to the young women and men who are receiving their degrees and medals of distinction today. My dear young graduates, on behalf of the University, I wish you every success in your personal lives and professional careers and in your future role in building a just society through the rule of law. I trust and hope that your bonds with this University will grow stronger with each passing year and that you will contribute to it through its second decade in every way possible. With these words, I close my Report.
34. Respected Chancellor, Sir, I now have the honor of requesting you to declare the Convocation open.