

Vice-Chancellor's Report

His Excellency, Shri S.K.Singh, the Governor of Rajasthan and Chancellor, Vardhaman Mahaveer Open University, Prof. Gowher Rizvi, Vice Provost, University of Virginia (U.S.A), First Lady Smt. Manju Singh, distinguished guests, members of media, the faculty and staff of the University, my dear students, ladies and gentlemen.

I feel privileged to welcome you all to the Fifth Convocation of the University. I feel gratified that for the last three years the University has been regular in organising its Convocation, thereby fulfilling its academic and institutional obligation. I am delighted to welcome all the distinguished guests present on the dais who are celebrities in their respective fields of activity, be it governance, education or social service. His Excellency, Shri S.K.Singh is a renowned diplomat and Civil Servant who illustriously served in different capacities both within the country and abroad. An alumni of Cambridge, he is well versed in several languages. Prior to his becoming the Foreign Secretary, he was India's longest serving Ambassador to Pakistan (1985 to 1989). He was ambassador to many countries including Jordan, Lebanon, Cyprus and Afghanistan besides representing India at several notable International bodies like the U.N., its several specialised agencies, G-77 and International Atomic Energy Agency. It is my good fortune to have the honour to work under such a luminary.

Our Chief Guest Prof. Gowher Rizvi is a world acclaimed social scientist, a development expert, an academic trainer and an institution builder utmost committed to the cause of disadvantaged and marginalised segments of the population particularly in the developing countries. He has

published over 150 scholarly and policy articles and is the author and editor of numerous books. He has held many academic positions including professorship at University of Oxford and Warwick. He was Director at Asia Society in New York (1994-95), Director, Ford Foundation at New Delhi (1998-2002), and Director of Ash Institute for Democratic Governance at Harvard Kennedy School (2002-2008) before joining the present position as the Vice Provost for International Programmes at the University of Virginia in August 2008. We feel privileged to honour him with the degree of Doctor of Letters (*honoris causa*) in this Convocation. Ladies and Gentlemen, I am sure you are all as anxious as I am to hear the Convocation Address to be delivered by him in a short while from now.

Our guest of honour Smt. Manju Singh has been very kind and affectionate as the First Lady of the state. She takes keen interest in the education of women, differently abled and disadvantaged section of the society. We feel honoured by her gracious presence.

As I retrospect the two and half years of my tenure, I am reminded of Charles Dicken's famous utterances, "**It was the best of times; it was the worst of times....**" When I joined we had 39 courses 20,000 students and 18 teachers. Now we have 82 courses 50,000 students and 18 teachers. From Distance Education Council's guidelines, the amount of work we are doing requires 118 teachers but we are having only 18 teachers. Since the Fourth Convocation of our University which was held on May15, 2008 we have progressed as per our plan.

Academic Programmes on Offer

I am happy to report that the University has successfully launched all the academic programmes that I had mentioned in my last report at the time of the Fourth Convocation. Today the

University has 82 academic programmes on offer right from B.A/B.Com (Preparatory) to M.Phil. and Ph.D. I am equally happy to report that most of these programmes have been developed by the University itself. The Academic Council, in its last meeting held in the previous month, has accorded its approval to the proposal for launching three new Certificate Programmes in Osteopathy, Soft Skills and Legal Awareness for Indian Citizens.

An equally significant aspect of academic development is the periodic revision and up gradation of the already launched academic programmes. The University was successful in introducing the duly upgraded academic programmes of Bachelor of Education and Bachelor of Journalism during 2007-08 and 2008-09. We are currently upgrading the Masters Programme in Political Science with more choices for students to choose from such courses as Politics of South Asia, State Politics of Rajasthan, Security Studies and Human Rights. Thus, the University is simultaneously pursuing the available options of new programmes for the students while revising and upgrading the existing ones.

Enrolments

The University has registered a cumulative figure of 45,718 students (January and July 2008 batches combined) since I reported last year. If admission figure of January 2009 is included, the figure crosses 50,000. In 2006 the figure was just 20,644. On that count, the University has registered a growth of over 30,000 students during the span of 2 years and 6 month. This year as soon as the University signs the MOU with Rajasthan Knowledge Corporation Ltd. (RKCL), Jaipur, an institution committed to the spread of Computer Awareness in the state, the enrolments with the University will substantially increase. We are conscious of the rising numbers of students and are resolutely committed to duly cater to their academic needs.

Notable Innovative Efforts

- 1) The University is successfully carrying out its understanding with the Rajasthan Mission on Livelihood (R.Mol.), Jaipur. We continue to provide certification to the chosen 10 short duration programmes being run by the Mission in the State of Rajasthan. We hope to further expand the number of programmes run by the Mission during 2009.
- 2) We have consolidated our partnership with the RKCL, Jaipur. The University is all set to provide certification of the RKCL run short duration Computer Programme. Training for online examination and evaluation will materialise at the Headquarter and Jaipur and is scheduled the coming week. Thereafter, the examination for the students will be held.
- 3) Our website is up graded and we have started providing *online grievance redress facility* on our website (www.vmou.ac.in)

Student Support Services Network

The student Support Services Network continues to be intensified as before. The number of study centres has risen to 106. If we add up the RKCL Gyan Kendras where our Computer Application Course is being run and further add up the R.Mol. run Vocational Training Centres, the number of Study Centres and the specialised study-cum-training centres significantly goes up to 1,496 for the academic session 2009-10 (106 our own Study Centres + 1350 RKCL GKs + 40 R.Mol. Vocational Training Centres.)

The support services options continue to be diversified. The University Newsletter MEERA continues to disseminate useful information to the students. The Alumni Association of the University further backs up the cause of student support services. Our Website has been

expanded to provide useful information related to admission and examination to the students. We are preparing to place background information material like syllabi of various academic programmes, copy of Internal Assignments and question papers of the preceding two academic sessions on our Website to better facilitate the vital flow of information to our students.

Material Production and Distribution

As reported last year, the increase in the academic programmes on offer naturally increases the work quantum of Material Production and Distribution in the University. We are continuing with our policy of printing one consolidated volume for each course to better facilitate the printing and distribution work at the unit. The University printed a total of 5 lakh books during this year which includes 349 different titles of books.

Evaluation and Certification

The cumulative biannual registration number of the examinees was 51,319 in 2008 as against 31,510 in 2007. The increase in the number of academic programme necessitates setting up of some 397 question papers for the first biannual examination scheduled for June, 2009. The projected number for the second biannual examination of December 2009 shall exceed the 500 mark. This genuinely displays an intense, round the year involvement of the examination section with the examination work. If the Entrance Examination for MBA, B.Ed. and RTA Test are further added up the involvement gets further intensified. Moreover, the University shall award certification to the R.MoL. run vocational programmes and the RKCL run Computer Application programmes. This will involve certification to some 1000 proficient

students in addition to the regular, round the year examination work. For this Convocation, a total of 6 research students have qualified for the award of Ph.D. Degrees while 23 students have been adjudged as qualified to be awarded Gold Medals in their respective examinations held in December 2007 and June 2008.

The Library Resources

The University library facilitates reference services to our faculty and research students. Its collection of multi-disciplinary volumes has exceeded one lakh during 2008-09. Last year, the reported figure was 87,700 volumes. The number of journals and periodicals has exceeded 200. Last year this number was 195.

The University continues to strive for automation of the library processes. Connectivity with LAN has been duly accomplished. The entire automation work shall be completed by December, 2009.

Staff Training and Development

STRIDE (Staff Training and Research Institute of Distance Education) was established in the year 2000 to monitor and execute staff training and development work pertinent to the University. STRIDE organised more than a dozen training events during 2008-09. These training events had renowned national experts from different disciplines as resource persons. These training programmes benefitted a total of 629 course contributors, counsellors, chief coordinators and co-ordinators associated with the University.

Other Pertinent Macro Concerns:

The University is consolidating its role towards knowledge creation and dissemination. More importantly, we strive for providing knowledge with opportunities for self-perfection through self-transformatory initiation such as awareness of Gandhian Methods, Nonviolence and Conflict Resolution.

The University has significantly carried out the networking through optic fibre cables during 2008. The work provides for connecting 300 nodes to ensure connectivity between the computers. Two computer labs have been set up – one at the Regional Centre, Jaipur and the other at the EMPC Building located at the Headquarter. The lab at Jaipur has been established with 30 computers having broadband connectivity on all of them for facilitating the students of Functional English Programme besides assisting the regional centre in carrying out its day to day official work. The EMPC located computer lab is dedicated to the training of the University employees through STRIDE.

The University is committed to intensify the computerisation work by eventually linking all the study centres with it. The work shall be carried out in a phased manner.

Along with computerization, the perennial human wisdom is also being assiduously catered to. The Second Annual Gandhi Lecture was held at Jaipur in January 2009. An eminent philosopher and activist from USA, Prof. Douglas Allen was invited to deliver the lecture on *Gandhi in the Time of Terror* and His Excellency Shri S.K.Singh presided over the function. A conference on *Reconceptualising Security in South Asia* was organised in Oct. 2008 in

which among others, Prof. Hans Gunter Brauch from Germany and Prof. Ursula Oswald Spring from Mexico also participated.

The University is actively providing for development of such infrastructure which would facilitate a more free and comfortable academic interaction. Two existing rooms, one at Jaipur and the other at Kota were converted into first class conference rooms capable of accommodating about 50 participants. At the time of the Fourth Convocation of the University, a foundation stone was laid for the creation of a Conference Room with a capacity of 100 participants. I am happy to report that in the short period of less than one year the construction of the Conference room is complete, fully furnished and ready to be dedicated to the people by His Excellency.

Thus, the University devotedly works to create knowledge, ideas, infrastructure for interaction and technology to aid and support all these creative endeavours. All credit for this all-round progress goes to my teachers and non-teaching staff who, even under adverse circumstances, have never failed to rise above ordinary and have unflinchingly worked to make the University proud. Three cheers for them.

Every university has to fulfil the expectations that the society has from it. The universities essentially exist to check and arrest what Prof. S. Radhakrishnan once described as “the ill breeding of the mind” and to realise the “Supreme Wisdom (*Jnana*)” flowing from “learning (*Vidya*), reflection (*Chinta*) and austerity (*Tapas*)”. It is only through these incessant strivings that education can purposively bring about ultimate freedom – the crux for which the universities perform and through which the universities shine out.

I conclude by once again welcoming you all to the Fifth Convocation of the University. We seek your best wishes to fulfil our stated objectives in all times to come.

Thank you

Jai Hind