Rangpur University Launched

Asrar Chowdhury

RANGPUR is the cultural capital of North Bengal. It is the home of the Bhatiyali and Bhawaiya folk songs. Rangpur has produced Begum Rokeya, a pioneer and exemplary figure in the education of women of this country. In spite of all this, Rangpur never had a University to nurture and take forward the rich cultural heritage it has enjoyed over the Centuries. Only very recently did that dream come true.

In 2001, the then Prime Minister, Sheikh Hasina laid the foundations of Rangpur University of Science and Technology. However, later on the establishment was cancelled. It was not until August 2007 when Dr Fakhruddin Ahmed, Chief Advisor of the Caretaker Government, agreed in principle to establish a full fledged university in Rangpur. Professor M Lutfar Rahman was appointed the first Vice Chancellor on 20 October 2008. Two days later Dr Hossain Zillur Rahman, the then Education and Commerce Advisor to the Caretaker Government formally inaugurated Rangpur University. Professor M Alauddin Mia was appointed Registrar later. The short term objective of Rangpur University is to create an academic institute that serves the needs of Northern Bangladesh. The long term objective is to establish the university as a centre of learning par excellence. The university seeks to attract students from all strata of the society. The Campus of Rangpur University is situated to the East of the Carmichael College on 75 acres of land. At the moment, the University is functioning in two buildings of the Rangpur Teachers' Training Institute at Dhap. The authority expects to move to the permanent Campus in two years.

The university started with two faculties and six departments. The Departments of Bangla, English, Economics, and Business Administration are under the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences. The Departments of Mathematics, and Computer Science and Engineering are under the Faculty of Science and Technology. 18,000+ students applied for 300 seats in the first admission test that was held in November 2008. Fifty seats were allotted for each of the six departments.

Rangpur University was formally inaugurated on Saturday 28 March 2009. The Education, Social Development and Political Advisor to the Prime Minister, Professor Alauddin Ahmed inaugurated the programme as the Chief Guest. Professor Nazrul Islam, Chairman of University Grants Commission, was the Special Guest. Professor M Lutfar Rahman, Vice Chancellor of Rangpur University, chaired the programme.



Members of the civil society of Rangpur by now have raised approximately Tk 10 Lakh to establish a scholarship for female students after the name of Begum Rokeya. During the inaugural ceremony, Parliament Members who spoke also declared donations and scholarship and RDRS promised to support the education of a good number of students. Professor Alauddin Ahmed, Advisor to the Prime Minister also announced a yearly grant of Tk 25,000, while Professor Nazrul Islam, Chairman of the University Grants Commission contributed a month's salary to the fund. Professor Rezaul Huq, Convenor of Rangpur University Implementation Committee earlier declared that after his death, his personal library will be gifted to Rangpur University.

The inaugural ceremony was divided into three parts. Professor M Lutfar Rahman gave the inaugural speech of the Inaugural Session. Dr M Najmul Huq of Bangla Department, Rangpur University; Professor Amirul Islam Chowdhury, Syndicate Member; Professor KM Elahi, Syndicate Member; Chowdhury Khalequzzaman of Rangpur University Support Foundation; AKM Abdur Rouf Manik, Mayor of Rangpur Pourashabha; Anisul Islam Mondal, MP; Abul Kalam Azad, MP; and Abul Mansur Ahmed, Convenor Rangpur District, Awami League were among the speakers in the First Session. Professor Nazrul Islam and Professor Alauddin Ahmed gave their speeches as the Special and Chief Guests respectively. The Second Session included a series of speeches. Professor Amirul Islam Chowdhury talked about university education and society. The next speaker was Rangpur's favourite son, Anisul Huq, a leading litterateur, who talked on the influence of North Bengal in the culture and heritage of Bangladesh. Ms Anwara Haider of HASAB spoke on drugs and AIDS. The Third Session included a cultural programme. The cultural programme included dance and songs. Keeping true to the roots of Rangpur the cultural programme did not forget to include Bhatiyali and Bhawaiya songs. The newly admitted students also participated as well as a leading local musical group.

As a beginning it is very pleasing to know that the name of Rangpur University will soon officially become Begum Rokeya University, Rangpur. The choice could not have been more apt.