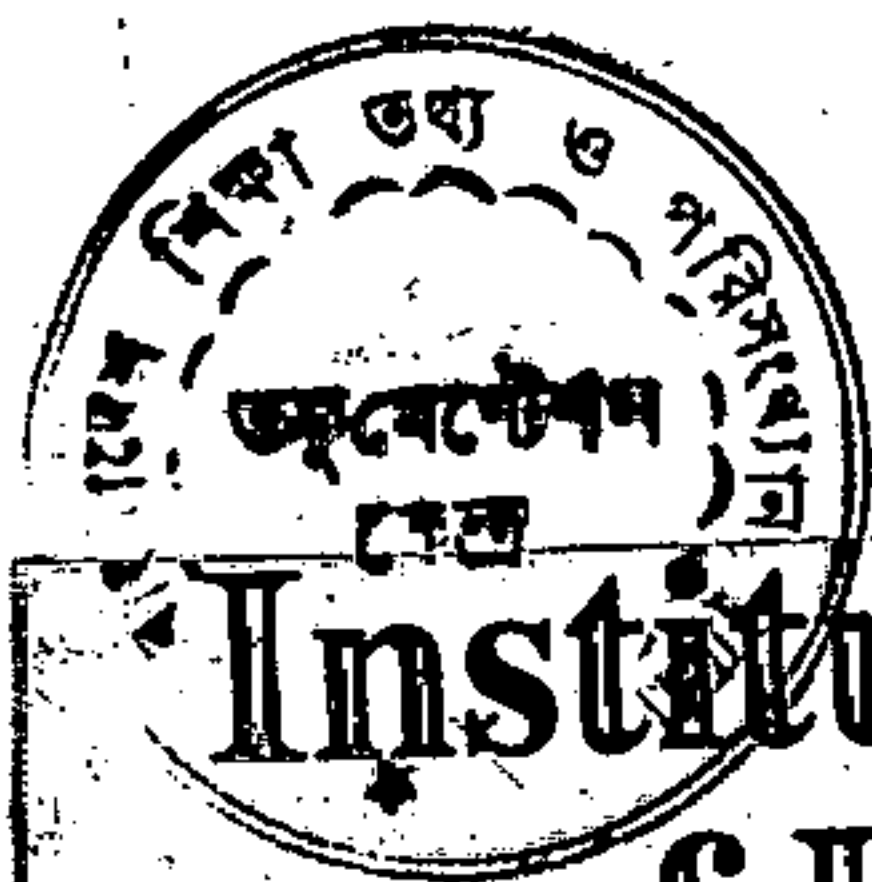


তারিখ 5 FEB 1987
পৃষ্ঠা ৪



Institutionalization of Research of Dhaka University

Prof. Md. Moniruzzaman Miah | Dean, Faculty of Science

HAVING been established in 1920, the University of Dhaka is now 6 decades old. This fairly long period has not always been smooth. While the University had her times of glory she also has passed through several vicissitudes. The high water mark she attained in academic excellence in the first two and a half decades of her existence naturally suffered a decline in the wake of the partition of the sub-continent. By the time she was able to put things in order from the welter of confusion following partition and was ready for a leap forward, there came the war of liberation. Since 1971 a decade and a half have passed by and the University has now stabilised her position in contrast to her staggered existence earlier. However one might ask whether this institution is fulfilling its expected obligations. It needs no mention that the major functions of a University are teaching and research. And in our University the latter has not attracted as much attention as it should have been. At the same time it should be recognised that with nearly 350 Professors and associate Professors on the academic staff list the University's research manpower is fairly adequate. The promise shown by the younger members among the teachers of becoming future academic leaders also appears encouraging. However, we feel that our scholars who have been struggling hard individually to prove their worth needs institutional support for full exploitation of their abilities. Before suggesting how this can be done let us briefly look at the organization of research as it obtains to-day.

The University has several forms in which attempts have been made to institutionalise research. In the first category are the 7 institutes. Most of these were established originally for carrying on specific research programmes, though at later stages their activities have been mixed up with other functions. Then there are the 4 faculty-based centres

of research. The two research bureaus constitute the third group. In recent years some new research centres have also been created. Besides, there are some link programmes with centres of excellence abroad in co-operation with which a few teachers carry on their research activities. Two research centres (the Solid-State Physics and Crystallography) created in the mid-sixties became non-functional after 1972 perhaps because of lack of funding. It should be mentioned however that a good number of research and quality publications have been made by individual efforts of teachers. Now that the University has grown mature and has a considerable number of experienced researchers along with a sizeable number of burgeoning young scholars this oldest seat of learning of the country is well set for making more significant contribution to extending the frontiers of knowledge, if suitable institutional arrangements are made. In the context of our situation what shape such institutions may take?

Here we may note that one of the major reasons for which research production has lagged behind the desired goal, besides inadequacy of funds, is the teachers' pre-occupation with their teaching and examination duties. The alternative is therefore to relieve them of their teaching load and commission them entirely for research. A model exists at the Australian National University where the teaching and the research schools are separate, one from the other. When the Board of Advanced Studies was proposed in our new University laws of 1973 such a situation was kept in view, although, in actual practice it didn't work out for various reasons. In any case, in our situation such separation is practically impossible, nor is it expected to give good results. In the first place the University cannot bear the burden of two sets of academic staff; and secondly, the system is most likely to degenerate to the detriment of both teaching and research. It may be mentioned

here that some of the institutes established earlier have not lived upto the expectation.

We suggest therefore that teaching and research be better combined while at the same time teachers be allowed more time to devote to research. This can be done if some centres for specialised research are established and teachers are seconded to these centres at regular frequency, say, every two/three years. On secondment to a centre, a teacher will be able to undertake a specific research project after the completion of which he would return to his original teaching position. Such a to and fro movement would help him make his lectures more interesting and more stimulating and his research undertakings more rigorous and more meaningful. But then what would be the nature of researches to be undertaken?

To reply to the above one should be able to discern the role a University can play in a developing country like ours. It is now recognised that a University can assume a major role in giving solutions to various academic problems related to developmental processes and in training skilled man-power tailored to the needs of development. It is in the fitness of things that our research programmes, expensive as they are, should have a direct bearing to our social needs. That is the only way to make our existence more meaningful to the society and to justify our claim for more funds for research and development. As the nature of under-development is a multi-faceted one, researches pertaining to developmental problems are therefore of an interdisciplinary character. Again, such problems need speedy solution and should better be handled by a group rather than by an individual.

Should such researches be organised within or outside the teaching departments is another pertinent issue. We do not think that department-based researches can make much headway. Firstly because, as

To begin with we can consider creation of a few extra-departmental centres of research or interdisciplinary research groups, consisting of individuals drawn from existing corps of teachers. Here we are tentatively suggesting a few such areas which can be institutionalised in the shape of research centres or research groups.

Energy

Energy is another area of national importance which needs serious researches. Development planners all agree that level of economic development and level of energy consumption are directly related. More so in the case of food production emphasizing the role of energy study in this country.

Although precise statistics of our energy use are rather hard to come by, according to the estimates of the Bangladesh Energy Planning Project the per capita energy consumption in 1980/81 was only 6.24 gigajoules, which is even less than that of Afghanistan. Available statistics also suggest that we use four times