

First Six Monthly Report on Sikkim University (15 October 2012-14 April 2013)

1. Review of the University Programmes and Policies

A University Review Committee was constituted with Prof. A. C. Sinha, National Fellow of ICSSR and an authority on Sikkim as the chairperson, senior academics, Department of Higher Education (Govt. of Sikkim) officials, college principals and civil society members with two main objectives: (i) to increase the GER of the University, and (ii) to fill up 66% teaching posts lying vacant. The committee met on 7-9 February and its recommendations were placed in the Academic Council meeting held on 9th March 2013 and Executive Council meeting held on 17th March 2013. The highlights of the final decision on the Committee's recommendations are as follows:

- i. The University decided to revert to UGC nomenclature for various posts instead of the existing, MNC-type, designations.
- ii. The University decided to rename some of the departments according to the name of the degree granted and also for better academic clarity and focus.
- iii. The University decided to start all those subjects that are taught at the colleges so that the economically poor students of Sikkim need not go out of the state for higher education. This has been done within the existing XI Plan allocations only. With this one of the longest demands of students and civil societies of Sikkim has been fulfilled.
- iv. The University decided to change its admission policy with the aim of enhancing the GER on which the MHRD has been laying a great deal of emphasis. Instead of conducting admission tests all over India and SAARC capitals that cost the University about 58 lakhs every year and leaves more than 65% seats vacant, the admission will now be based on cut-off marks, appropriate subject background, and marks obtained in the qualifying degrees.

2. Drafting of the First Ordinances

The University had drafted a few stray Ordinances during the past five and a half years but the same suffered from various inadequacies. Therefore the Vice-Chancellor himself drafted a set of 46 Ordinances on the basis of the UGC Model Ordinances and North-Eastern Hill University Ordinances. The Ordinances have been duly approved by the Academic Council and Executive Council and are awaiting the approval of the MHRD and assent of the Visitor.

3. Land for Campus

The state government handed over 265.94 acres of land on 25th January 2013 and has committed itself to hand over the remaining 34.06 acres of land very soon. The state government has almost completed the road construction up to the campus and has approved the power and water

connection projects for the campus. The resettlement of some donor families is also expected to be completed soon.

The University is in the process of appointing Project Management Consultant for campus development. The first meeting of the Building Committee took place on 20th of April to decide on the erection of boundary wall to secure the campus land, installation of power station and appointment of architects for campus design.

4. Conceptual Plan of the Campus

The conceptual plan of the campus has been prepared by the Vice-Chancellor not only keeping in mind the limited build-up area available in a hilly terrain and the requirements of a fully residential 21st century university campus, but also minimizing damage to the local ecology.

At present the University is receiving feedback of the faculty members and officers for further improvisation of the conceptual plan, which will be further modified after discussion with architects appointed for the purpose and other experts.

5. Appointment of Non-Teaching Staff

The appointment of many non-teaching staff had to be kept in abeyance by the University since early last year on account of protests by students of the state against the University's policy of appointing such staff.

The University has resumed the process of selection of non-teaching posts in phased manner.

6. Visit of the BCI Inspection Team

The visit of the inspection team of the Bar Council of India was due for almost 5 years now, which had made the final year students of BA-LLB programme jittery about their future, as non-recognition of their degrees by BCI would mean that they would be deprived of all opportunities due to them as law graduates. The students were almost on the path of open agitation on this issue.

The University pursued the matter in all seriousness from November 2012 itself and was finally successful in bringing the inspection team led by Advocate Apurba Kumar Sharma not only for the Department of Law and Legal Jurisprudence Studies in Sikkim University but also Sikkim Law College, Burtuk on 19th of April 2013.

7. Foundation Stone

The foundation stone of the University was laid on 16th of April 2013 by Hon'ble President of India Sri Pranab Mukherjee in the gracious presence of His Excellency Sri Balmiki Prasad Singh, the Governor of Sikkim & Chief Rector of Sikkim University, and Hon'ble Chief Minister of Sikkim, Sri Pawan Chamling.

8. Plans for the Next Six Months

The plans for the University in the next six months are as follows:

- i. While the emphasis of the first phase of reform during January-June 2013 was on increasing the access of the students of Sikkim to higher education the University seeks to focus on improving the quality of higher education in the second phase of reform, which will start in July 2013. The focus on quality will include thorough revision of the syllabus, constructive use of students' feedback, drafting and implementing the policy for encouraging the participation of young faculty members in various seminars/workshops/refresher courses etc., and using microteaching techniques to help the teachers improve their teaching skills.
- ii. Secure the campus land with boundary wall, complete the planning and blue print of the campus, initiate the installation of power station, undertake land development work, etc.

Vice-Chancellor
Sikkim University