Chandannagar College starts centre for heritage studies

TARUN GOSWAMI

It has also decided to set up a museum on India's freedom movement, only of its kind in a college in the country. Eighteen freedom fighters were either born in Chandannagar or stayed here. Rashbehari Bose was born in East Burdwan district but his father later moved to Chandannagar in 1894 and from here he used to rule the pan India revolutionary movement. He set up the Indian National Army and later made Subhas Chandra Bose its commander-in-chief in Japan. Sri Aurobindo stayed in Chandannagar and from here he left for Puducherry, where he stayed till he breathed his last in 1950.

The Centre is engaged in conducting a survey of architectural heritage across the district and plan for their renovation and preservation. Heritage walks are being organized to create awareness among people. The building, which has received heritage tag from the West Bengal Heritage Commission, is more than 200 years old and this will house the museum. The renovation of another heritage building inside the campus is going on in full swing where a guest house will be set up. An exhibition on the life and work of Sri Aurobindo was held from 24-27 November, 2022 to commemorate his 150th birth anniversary. It was organised by Chandannagar Barasat Gate Cultural Association in collaboration with the college.

The college offers a certificate course on heritage studies. It also offers a certificate course on heritage tourism in collaboration with Murshidabad Heritage Development Society. As the tourism sector is coming up fast in India, the course is job friendly and has received overwhelming response from the students.

Chandannagar College is probably the only college in West Bengal that has gone totally paperless. There are no notice boards in the college and all information is sent to the teachers and students on their cell phones. Reminders are given so that they do not miss any information like examination schedule and other important announcements.

The College has bagged ISO 9001: 2015 for Quality Management System, ISO 14001: 2015 for Environmental management System and ISO 50001: 2018 for Energy Management System.

We often hear about corporate social responsibility, the college has started a unique concept on Institutional Social Responsibility (ISR) to do social outreach programmes.

The college is working on a project with Purbasha Eco Helpline Society, led by Mangrove Man Umashankar Moldol and planted Mangrove saplings along the banks of river Hooghly near the famous Chandannagar Strand to check soil erosion. The college has also initiated Know Your Ganga Project. It has signed an MoU with Estuarine and Coastal Studies Foundation, Howrah, to carry out research related to coastal and estuarine studies related to river Hooghly.

The NSS unit of the college, comprising students, is providing education to the underprivileged children of Prabartak Aponalaya Children's Home. The NSS unit is also working for the welfare of the underprivileged elderly people in and around the college in collaboration with the NGO Sangbed.

The college has started a unique project called Joyful learning. The department of education of the college is the nodal body and is providing education to the students of eight primary schools under the Chandannagar Municipal Corporation (CMC). Around 150 students of the college, who are associated with the project are given training through workshops by 30 faculty members of the college who function as mentors and guide the students who offer coaching.

"The mission of Chandannagar College is not only to provide education to the students but also to make them aware of the environment and society. When they work for the children of the homes or the primary schools or the elderly people, their love and responsibility towards the society goes up. At the end they come out as effective citizens of the country."

Set up in 1862, the college has travelled a long distance. It is the only educational institution in the country which has remained closed from 1908 to 1931 as the British government thought that it was the centre of revolutionary activities.

The new look of the college has been given by professor Debashis Sarkar, principal of the college, who took over in 2017. Here no one finds the poster of any political party inside the college campus. The college offers 19 subjects and the classes are held in two campuses. There is a modern canteen where the quality of food is excellent and a gymnasium. The students are given training in karate and self-defence. The college has set up a bridge between the past and the present by setting up a non-formal Sanskrit education centre, under the aegis of the Central Sanskrit University, ministry of education. "Our purpose is to develop the all-round personality of the students and we have add-on courses. We try to ensure that the students keep the college campus green and clean. There is rain water harvesting and solar panels have been installed to make the college campus green," said Professor Sarkar.

Amrit Kaal with foundational literacy and numeracy

UMESH PATIL

In 2022, India completed 75 years of being an independent nation and the whole country celebrated this occasion as 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav'. Prime Minister of India Shri Narendra Modi outlined his vision for India to become a global superpower by the time we reach 100 years of independence in 2047. These 25 years, also termed as the 'Amrit Kaal' is a significant period in the development story of India, and the work that is done by us today will directly impact the hopes and aspirations of the people of the country.One key area in which commendable work is being done to realize the vision of Amrit Kaal is the Education Sector. The development of the economy of any country depends on its workforce, which needs to be equipped and skilled to help the country grow at a fast rate. This was recognised by the government through the introduction of the New Education Policy 2020, with the aim of drastically reforming the education system to benefit our children. This will directly result in a positive outcome in a few years, when these children become part of our workforce in the next 25 years and become the protagonists of our nation's development story.

One of the key tenets of the policy is the emphasis on primary education and early learning. While primary education was universalised by the efforts of the previous government, the NEP 2020 is the first education policy which lays out a holistic and elaborate strategy for imparting quality education for our children, right from the Pre-primary level. As part of the same, foundational literacy and numeracy (FLN) has been prioritized as one of the most important aspects of the policy. The NEP 2020 envisages every child to obtain proficiency in Foundational Literacy (ability to read with comprehension) and Numeracy (ability to solve basic mathematical operations such as addition and subtraction) ideally by Grade 3, and not later than Grade 5. This foundational learning forms the basis of all future learning. Only once the child learns to read, s/he can read to learn. Without this basic skill, any future learning across different subjects would be very difficult. To this effect, the NIPUN (National Initiative for Proficiency in Reading with Understanding and Numeracy) Bharat Mission was launched in July, 2021, with the goal of achieving 100 per cent FLN Proficiency for children of Grade 3 in India, by 2026-27.

Over the past two years, Covid-19 has disrupted schooling, and normalcy is only just beginning to return. This has resulted in a significant loss of learning levels of children. Students and teachers adapted in a commendable manner to the new phenomena of virtual schooling, but the transition was not perfect. One of the main takeaways from the difficulties of the past two years should be that while the virtual education and distance learning served as a savior for many students and helped them remain somewhat in touch with academics, the low level of immersion, technical issues and digital divide means that it cannot serve as a replacement for learning in school and must be looked at something that can instead supplement conventional classroom learning.

The most recent picture of the learning levels of Indian children was provided by the National Achievement Survey (NAS) 2021, which is the first pan-India assessment of the learning achievements of school students' post-COVID. Across classes 3, 5, 8 and 10, over 34 lakh students from 1.18 lakh schools were sampled for NAS in language, mathematics and other subjects. As compared to NAS 2017, a significant decline was observed in the scores of children across all grades. For example, in class 3 the average dropped from 67.2 per cent (NAS 2017) to 64.6 per cent (NAS 2021) in Language and from 64.2 per cent (NAS 2017) to 61.2 per cent (NAS 2021) in Mathematics. The results of the survey are now being used to understand the learning gaps and determine the necessary interventions in education policies, teaching practices and learning; especially the foundational learning mission. As part of this initiative, the foundational learning study 2022 was conducted last year, which is one of the largest studies around foundational learning skills in the world.

As students have now resumed schooling, it is possible that we will observe some degree of heterogeneity and disparity in learning levels amongst even students of the same class, depending on how much they were able to effectively study during the virtual schooling period. By focusing on something as fundamental as FLN, the government is attempting to overcome this very challenge. This is a unique and time sensitive opportunity during which FLN can help prevent the expansion of the gaps which are caused due to this heterogeneity and help all children cope up with the uniform curriculum in schools.

These are just the short term gains of prioritizing Foundational Learning, but its impact on the society in the long-run is one of the ways in which can prepare the next generation to lead India in the Amrit Kaal. The acquisition of FLN skills will naturally result in greater inclination towards learning and a greater retention of students in school. This will help reduce the drop-outs which are seen in the higher levels. By creating a strong base through FLN, we are not only addressing the issue of dropouts in school, but also making an intervention which will pay dividends in the long run. Investment in education yields the maximum return, for individuals and society at large. It will empower our future generations to participate in contemporary economic activities, thereby increasing our standard of living and also contributing to society. Education and economic growth are proportionally related to one another and by focusing on Foundational Learning, we can build a strong base for us to achieve the 'Aatamnirbharta' which India aspires to attain.

The benefits and positive impact of FLN-focused initiatives on the education system can be observed if we take the case of Kenya. Tusome ('Let's Read' in Kiswahili) was launched by the Government of Kenya in collaboration with other organizations to increase learning outcomes for 7 million children in grades 1, 2, and 3. The program focused on four key interventions proven to improve literacy outcomes: enhancing classroom instruction, improving access to learning materials, expanding instructional support and supervision, and collaborating with key system-level literacy actors. This resulted in students making substantial reading gains in grades 1 and 2, in both Kiswahili and English, with the proportion of learners who can read fluently in English more than doubling, from 12 per cent to 27 per cent. The proportion of non-readers decreased from 38 per cent to 12 per cent. Similarly, in Kiswahili, the proportion of non-readers in grade 2 decreased from 43% to 19% while the proportion of fluent readers increased from 4 per cent to 12 per cent. These results, collected between the baseline and midline through an external evaluation, are evidence of Tusome's positive impact on learning outcomes of Kenyan children.

The NIPUN Bharat Mission follows a similar trajectory and focuses on these key interventions for increasing FLN proficiency. It is also the vision of the Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi Ji that every child in India attains foundational skills as soon as possible. Additionally, the effectiveness and relevance of the NEP 2020 depends largely on the success and attainment of these basic learning skills. As we now enter the Amrit Kaal, it is prudent that we continue the push for FLN proficiency and achieve the targets in a mission mode. In 2023, India has also assumed the presidency of the G20 Global Working Group and with Foundational Literacy and Numeracy being one of the key agendas of the Education Working Group, it is a golden opportunity for us to showcase our efforts around Foundational Literacy and Numeracy to the world. The idea is quite clear - We must invest in our most valuable resource, i.e., the young children, for they are the ones who will be the future of our country and will take it ahead.

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PLUS POINTS

Entrepreneurial ecosystems

The Hunter Centre for Entrepreneurship at Strathclyde Business School in Glasgow, UK is partnering with the Centre for Social Entrepreneurship of Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS), Mumbai, India to support entrepreneurial ecosystems in rural India. The project is funded by the British Council through its Going Global Partnerships: Industry-Academia Collaborative Grant 2022-23.

A substantial population of India resides in rural areas with little exposure to entrepreneurship. This programme aims to bridge this gap by building the capacity of youth from rural and remote geographies to create and grow entrepreneurial ventures around grassroots innovations.

Strathclyde Business School with its expertise in Entrepreneurship-For-All and social entrepreneurship will support curriculum development. Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai, India through its incubation centre, TISS Incube Foundation, has strong networks in rural India and grassroots enterprise development capabilities to engage in capacity-building activities. MyLab Discovery Solutions Private Limited, Pune, India will support the participating youth with technology mentoring through its strong pool of highly qualified technologists and innovators.

This project will focus on two regions of rural India to start with – namely rural areas of Pandharpur in Maharashtra and rural areas of Durgapur in West Bengal. Sreevas Sahasranamam, associate professor at the Hunter Centre for Entrepreneurship, and lead of this project said: "we are looking to engage with local entrepreneurship support organizations such as Atal Community Innovation Centres to deliver this project. We aim to build local capacity and develop a train-the-trainer model in rural communities that will allow the ecosystem to self-sustain and grow". The project also has a strong UK-India knowledge exchange component. Strathclyde will be hosting a roundtable discussion on the topic 'Building entrepreneurial ecosystems in rural markets' in mid-2023 which will see the participation of experts from both India and the UK.

Sport data analytics course

A new Masters course in sport data analytics has been launched at the University of Strathclyde, UK.

The course has been designed to meet the growing demand in the sporting industry for professionals skilled in the analysis, interpretation and presentation of complex data. It will equip graduates with the skills and experience required to enter a rapidly-expanding sector.

Data has been increasingly used in recent years, in team and individual sports alike, to enhance performance, strategy and training. The programme is offered by the school of psychological sciences and health. It is being led by Dr Xanne Janssen and Dr Allan Hewitt.

Dr Janssen said: "Technological advancements have increased the quantity and quality of data that is collected. Our programme aims to provide students with a strong applied understanding of quantitative and qualitative analysis, data processing and visualisation,feedback and reporting methodologies and how to collect and manipulate large, complex data sets.

Students on the course will have the chance to gain real-world experience through partnerships with a range of professional sports organisations. They will engage with guest lecturers and current professionals in the field of sports data analytics, providing valuable insights into trends and best practice.

The MSc in sport data analytics is taken over 12 months full-time or 24 months part-time. The deadline for applications is August 2023.

MSc mechatronics & automation

The University of Strathclyde, Glasgow is inviting applications for its MSc mechatronics and automation course starting in September 2023.

Robots and automated machines can work 24 hours a day, in hazardous places and are much more accurate and consistent than any human. The exciting world of mechatronics and automation engineering has the important task of bringing these machines to life, maintaining them, fixing them when they malfunction and designing and building new models.

Mechatronics and automation are becoming an increasingly important discipline in today's digital society. Consumers and society have benefited tremendously from new products which have been designed applying mechatronic principles. These intelligent products include: mobile phones with mechatronic features, intelligent robotic vacuum cleaners, intelligent wheelchairs. The course is aimed at graduates from relevant courses, who wish to study mechatronics and automation as their chosen career those currently working in mechatronics and automation who wish to enhance their theoretical grounding and practical skills

WHAT TO STUDY

You'll take a combination of compulsory classes, three optional classes and a group project; MSc students also undertake an individual project.

INDUSTRIAL EXPERIENCE

In the group projects, you'll work with fellow students and an industrial client to address a practical problem. You'll gain direct industry experience to add to your CV, develop skills, manage a project through to completion and practice working in a multidisciplinary group, preparing you for collaborative work throughout your future career.

Examples of major projects include:

Haptic sensing & display for telepresence, VR and design – an investigation and design of simple haptic sensing and display system

Periscopic & Flexible Camera Extension – design and building of a camera or camera extension.

Eligibility - Normally a first-class or second-class honours degree (or international equivalent) in a science or engineering discipline. IELTS (Academic): 6.5 overall (no individual band less than 5.5)

Fee- £24,450 for international students for 2023/ 24