

'CUK MARCHING TOWARDS EXCELLENCE DESPITE CONSTRAINTS'

Registrar, Central University of Kashmir (CUK), Prof. (Dr.) Muhammad Afzal Zargar shares the challenges, achievements and plans of the university in an interview with Rifat Mohidin and Roushan Illahi



What are the main challenges you have faced since taking over as the Registrar of Central University of Kashmir?

The major challenge is that of having our own permanent campus. Everything would change once we would be having our own permanent campus. In a state or in a city, which is a tourist destination, it is always difficult to get the best accommodation on rent basis and we are facing the same difficulty. That is the reason we are not in a position to expand; this is the major challenge in front of me. Not having a campus of our own is hindering our progress. Although we are trying to give all facilities at the rented places but the sense of belonging is missing. I do acknowledge that my students will be feeling the same thing, the feeling of university is not there, and that feeling of university will come only once we have our own campus, our own playgrounds, our own buildings.

Second major difficulty I am facing is that we have not been able to add manpower over the last one year due to some technical problems. With the result, on one hand I am trying to give facilities, decentralize, making the departments more and more powerful, but I am not able to do that properly due to technical hiccups. We are managing it with whatever manpower we have available.

The third challenge in front of me is to provide the quality education. We are having three universities in Kashmir, the challenge for this university is to be different; it has to provide education with a difference. At the same time the education has to be qualitatively better. Since we are a new university, at this juncture we can adopt new things, adopt new innovative mechanisms. We are interested to

launch innovative courses, which are skill based and have a good market value so that students are able to get jobs easily and contribute towards the economy of the state.

How has been CUK progressing towards its stated objectives?

It will be an exaggeration to say we have been able to realize all our objectives, but we are progressing towards achieving real objectives of the university. We are operating from rented buildings and are facing many difficulties, but with the efforts of teachers we have been able to ensure quality in academics. We do have a problem of not having our own campus currently because there are some political issues and if that is settled I am sure in couple of years the university will have its own campus.

CUK came into existence in 2009. In 2010 it started its real academic work. In the first year we added a few departments but as of now we have 11 departments. Our main objective is to have a pan-India feeling both in teaching as well as student set up. We have been able to get teachers from all parts of country. Although ours is a

From the Chief Editor



Holding End Semester Examinations on time has been one of the commendable achievements of our University, given the recent flood fury in Kashmir Valley. Central University of Kashmir is progressing at a good pace but much more needs to be done to meet national and international standards. To ascertain more on that front, *Samanbal* interviews Registrar of the University.

The department of Convergent Journalism, CUK has taken an important initiative of sending students of final semester for the Winter Internship programme. The department has received full cooperation from various media organizations of the valley.

In the month of December, the whole world was shocked to witness deadliest attack on the army public school in Peshawar, Pakistan. The attack evoked widespread outrage and condemnations poured in from all over the world. The gruesome attack killed more than 145 people mostly school children. *Samanbal* expresses heartfelt condolences to the families of the victims and has compiled a timeline of similar events that shook the world in this issue.

Samanbal team earnestly hopes that New Year brings peace, happiness and prosperity to all.

Happy reading and best wishes for the New Year!

Asif Khan

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national level common entrance test (CUCET) but unfortunately we have not been able to attract students from different parts of the country. Ultimately the goal of CUK is to provide quality education in its all-India character.

The establishment of CUK campus at Ganderbal has been subjected to delays. What are the main reasons behind the delays?

We are facing problems at Ganderbal campus. We have tried to develop good rapport with the people in the campus area, but there is an issue on political front, which we are trying to resolve. Everything is ready with us, the money is ready and the master plan for the campus is also ready. But on ground we face some hostility from the villages that surround the campus. Basically, they have been promised jobs by the government but that has not been honoured so they are hell-bent on not allowing us to start the work. We are trying to build bridges with them. We are trying to convey to them that jobs are not the only thing that university is going to provide. There are a number of things that university is supposed to provide which will change the economy of that locality. Having a university in the in the first place would mean a lot to them. We are trying our best to develop good relations with them. There has been some progress on that front also. Very soon we will be cutting the ice and start the construction work at the campus. With regard to the pre-engineered structures, the university has promised it and it will be in place. We still have six months left, as our deadline was nine months. The work has already been started. And I think in the next session we will be operating from the Ganderbal campus.

How much damage did the university suffer in the recent floods and how did you cope with it?

Ours was the only university to be hit by the floods in Kashmir. The CU campus at Sonwar was under more than 18 feet of water. The floodwaters had reached second floor also. The transport section, the estates section and the purchase section were the worst hit. At the other campuses we lost a huge stock of books, furniture and other items. Law department and the university library (housed in the ground floor of the Nowgam campus) suffered maximum damages. According to rough estimates the university suffered losses to the tune of around one crore rupees. We have constituted a damage assessment committee, which is yet to come up with actual figures of losses. But, hats off to my teachers, administrative staff and to my students. In one and a half week we were able to resume our operations. In first week after floods the cleaning work was initiated by our Vice Chancellor himself and others from administrative and teaching staff followed suit. The damaged infrastructure was

taken out in the compound and cleaning of the rest of the portion was done. So we were able to clean most of the campuses with the efforts of all. Within one and a half week we started the academic work. I salute the students who were eager to come after the devastating floods. Everyone came. Ours is the only university, which conducted examinations on time. We had second and fourth Saturdays of the month as off days but after the flood all of us volunteered that we would make it as a working day so that students do not suffer.



Did university provide any help to students and staff members who were affected by floods?

We identified the students who suffered losses due to floods. Around 191 students figured in the list and they have received monetary help from the university. For the university teachers and non-teaching staff, we have got some donations from our worthy Chancellor. We also have a non-university fund, which we are going to distribute among other students who are in need of it and to the employees whose properties have been damaged due to floods.

What has been the progress of the university on academic front?

On academic front it is one of the best universities in the state. Despite being in an infancy stage, our university is highly competitive in both academic and extra-curricular activities. In 2015 we will be seeing a major expansion of the university.

The universities place a lot of emphasis on research. What has CUK done in this direction?

Till 2013 CUK had only two departments offering PhD. Only four scholars were pursuing research, but now we have added on that front. We constituted the school boards for improving the research scenario of the university. We also constituted central research cell comprising of Deans and HOD's of different departments. This cell will be monitoring the research works in the university. We have also started to fund our teachers for research. We have invited proposals from the teachers and we have spent Rs 10 lakhs in this regard. Seven teachers have been identified who will be funded for research. We are changing the research environment of

the university as a whole. Earlier we had two- Management and English, now we are adding three more departments including Education and Law. Exams for them have been conducted and the list also has been finalized.

Can you list some of the steps taken by the university to improve the work culture?

Work culture is one of the most important things of the university or any organization. There are two things to improve the work culture: the university atmosphere has to be feasible so that everybody feels like to participate in the university activities. So the climate in the university has to be participatory. For that we are trying to give every facility to students as well as other members of the university so that they feel like taking part in all activities.

As per the directions of Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) we are starting the biometric system of attendance. The attendance alone is not important; attending a job without much of output is of no use. But biometric system will ensure punctuality.

To make the operations easier in the university we are also soon starting e-governance project to minimize the nuisance of paper or file work.

What steps has university taken for placement of students?

For counseling and guiding students we didn't have a placement cell at the university earlier. If there was a placement cell it was at departmental level, which didn't have the finances with them to invite industrialists from different parts of the country for placement of students. This month only we have been able to constitute Central Placement Cell wherein the representatives or nodal officers from all the departments are members. Ultimately for placement we have to have an interaction with the industry, for that we constituted another cell University-Industry Interface Committee (UIIC) so that it will be having members from placement cell as well as members from industry so we will be having 12 or 13 members in this



committee -half from university half from industry. These industry people will help us in finding jobs for our students. Plus we are also including these industry people into our board of studies so that our courses are focused in such a way that they are industry based and tomorrow they can get accommodated in good places. We have initiated all these steps so that placement of students is encouraged. For those students who have already passed out, the university has made an alumni cell. It is run by these pass outs, university will be conducting workshops and conferences for them so that they can express their problems and university will help them in getting placed.

How is university preparing for NAAC accreditation?

We have already submitted our letter of intent to NAAC. We are waiting for their response. We might be getting zero on the infrastructure front, as we don't have our own building. But on other fronts we have a number of things that we can boast about good student-oriented practices. We have laid special focus on student centric activities.

Educational Institutions are expected to foster goodwill and understanding with various stakeholders, including civil society. How has university gone about it?

Maintaining liaison with civil society is important for the university. Our Vice Chancellor has been very keen that we have to reach out to civil society. Ultimately the job of higher education is that it has to be a teaching, learning and extension process. When we talk of teaching and learning, we have to take all this to the community level as well. Whatever we share in the teaching-learning process it has to be extended to the community. Taking projects related to health and education is important so that the university is able

to highlight the problems of common man. A person who passes out from higher education he has to be responsible and has to look into the problems of society and university can play a part in it.

What have been the main accomplishments of CUK in your tenure?

I cannot attribute everything we have been able to accomplish to my tenure. Whatever we have been able to do has been possible with the overall supervision of our Vice Chancellor and the teamwork of all administrative people and academicians who have contributed to it. On academic front it has improved dramatically, on research part we have been able to initiate research degree programmes. If we look at the annual reports of 2013 and 2014 you will see there is an improvement in the rate of publications, type of books that my teachers are writing now. We have been able to provide the state-of-art facilities to our employees. We have been able to equip our employees with capacity building programmes and we have opened up the seminars and conferences for teachers not only to go out but also to conduct them in the university. The numbers of conferences and programmes has increased. We have been able to make academic bodies work, we have constituted a number of statutory bodies during 2014 and overall we are in a position to maintain good pace.

Where do you see CUK ten years down the line?

Our goal is to see this university reaching national and international standards. For that all the stakeholders have to work tirelessly to make this university one of the best known universities. We are having one advantage with us that the university is located in this beautiful Valley and onus lies on us to make it such a kind of university that it is open to people from all across the globe but we have to raise our bar to that level.

What is your take about the status of higher education in Jammu and Kashmir?

The status of higher education in the state has been improving over the last few years although there are difficulties vis-à-vis manpower and finance. I have witnessed the plight of higher education in other places; the status is much better here. The output of higher education is also good. We have a productive manpower although we have to work a little harder to improve it further. But the potential of students at higher education level is really remarkable. They get accommodated across the country in good places.

Any concluding remarks

May Allah give us strength to make this university attain the national and international status. All the stakeholders need to contribute for it. The university cannot be run alone or it is not a single person's property. We all have to put in our best efforts.

STUDENTS IN THE LINE OF FIRE

Wafa Bari

Over 130 students were killed in a deadly *Tehreek-e-Taliban* attack on a Peshawar school on December 16, 2014. The attack, deadliest in Pakistan's history, evoked strong and widespread outrage.

The assaults on educational institutions have seen a sharp increase over the past decade. The University of Maryland's Global Terrorism Database, which lists more than 125,000 terrorist attacks around the world since 1970, has recorded a sharp uptick in terror attacks on schools since 2004.

Here's the timeline of the most deadly attacks on the educational institutes in the world:

Bath School disaster (May 18, 1927)

The Bath School disaster was a series of bombings in Bath Township, Michigan, USA, on May 18, 1927, which killed 45 people, 38 of them school children and injured 58. Most of the children were of second to sixth grades attending the Bath Consolidated School. It was perpetrated by Andrew Kehoe, the school's board member. He set off three bombs in Bath township. Kehoe later killed himself and the superintendent by blowing up his own vehicle. The bombings comprised the deadliest act of mass murder in a school in U.S. history.

Ma'alot massacre (May 15, 1974)

On May 15, 1974, the 26th anniversary of Israeli independence, three Palestinian terrorists, disguised as IDF soldiers, who infiltrated Israel from Lebanon, entered an apartment in Ma'alot in the Galilee killing a family, including a four-year old boy. They then stormed the town's Netiv Meir elementary school. The terrorists kept 115 Israelis hostage, including 105 children hostage who were on a class trip to Ma'alot in Israel and threatened to murder them all unless Israel released 23 Palestinian terrorists from prison. The IDF attempted a rescue operation, but the terrorists opened fire on the children and threw hand grenades killing 26 children and 4 adults. Dozens more were wounded.

Ecole Polytechnique massacre (December 6, 1989)

The École Polytechnique Massacre, also known as the Montreal Massacre, occurred on December 6, 1989, at the École Polytechnique in Montreal, Quebec, Canada. Claiming that he was "fighting feminism", 25-year-old Marc Lepine, shot dead 28 people, killing 14 women, before committing suicide. Calling the women "a bunch of feminists," he began his attack by entering a classroom at the university, where he separated the male and female students. His suicide note claimed political motives and blamed feminists for ruining his life.

Dunblane massacre (March 13, 1996)

The Dunblane massacre was a multiple murder-suicide which occurred at Dunblane Primary School in the Scottish town of Dunblane on 13 March 1996. Armed with two 9 mm pistols and two .357 Magnum revolvers, Thomas Hamilton, an unemployed former shopkeeper and Scout leader, walked into Dunblane Primary School near Stirling in Scotland and killed 16 children and a teacher. This tragedy led to the banning of handguns in Britain. It remains the deadliest single targeted mass homicide on children in the history of the United Kingdom.



Bath School disaster



Ma'alot massacre



Ecole Polytechnique massacre



Dunblane massacre

Erfurt massacre (April 26, 2002)

Robert Steinhauser, a 19-year-old expelled student of the Gutenberg Gymnasium School in the east German city of Erfurt, went on a shooting spree on April 26, 2002, killing 16, before killing himself. The victims comprised 13 faculty members, 2 students, and one police officer.

Beslan massacre (Sep 1, 2004)

Members of Chechen leader Shamil Basayev's Riyadhin al-Salihin group took more than 1,200 school children and adults hostage on Sep 1, 2004, at School Number One (SNO) in the town of Beslan, North Ossetia (a republic in Russia's south). They demanded the recognition of the independence of Chechnya at the UN and Russian withdrawal from Chechnya. At least 385 hostages were killed; including 186 children with a significant number of people injured and reported missing. The event led to security and political repercussions in Russia. It is marked as the bloodiest massacre of children till date.

Virginia Tech massacre (April 16, 2007)

The Virginia Tech massacre was a school shooting comprising two separate attacks about two hours apart, on the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University campus in Blacksburg, Virginia, US. The perpetrator, Seung-Hui Cho, killed 32 and injured 17 people before committing suicide. It was the deadliest shooting massacre by a single gunman in US history.

Al-Batiha School attack (December 04, 2012)

A mortar slammed into a ninth-grade classroom of al-Batiha school in al-Wafideen camp, in the northeast of Damascus on 04 December, 2014, killing nine students and a teacher as the civil war closed in on President Bashar Assad's seat of power. It blamed the attack on terrorists, who are fighting to topple the government in Syria.

Al Quds Open University attack (July 29, 2014)

In the month-long war between Israel and Hamas, Israeli missiles hit the north Gaza branch of Al Quds Open University on July 29, 2014 attack. 22 people were killed, apparently students. The university founded with assistance from UNESCO, also suffered from serious damage. This was the second attack on the institution. Palestinian universities and educational institutions have a history of being the target of Israeli strikes.



Peshawar school massacre (December 16, 2014)

On 16 December 2014, 7 members of the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) disguised as Army men conducted a terrorist attack on the Army Public School in the Pakistani city of Peshawar. They entered the school and opened fire on school staff and children, killing 145 people, including 132 schoolchildren, ranging between eight and eighteen years of age. A rescue operation was launched by the Pakistan Army's Special Services Group (SSG) Special Forces, who killed all seven terrorists and rescued 960 people. The Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) described it as revenge for Operation Zarb-e-Azb, the Pakistani military's military offensive in North Waziristan that started in summer 2014.

Experts stress on hygienic preparation to avoid harm

The consumption of sun-dried vegetables was known to increase in Kashmir during the winters, especially during 'Chilai Kalan'-forty-day harshest period of the season. But over the years, the vendors of dried vegetables have witnessed a slump in the number of customers.

On chilly winter mornings, group of women dressed in the traditional cloaks 'pheran' spread their baskets laden with dried vegetables on the pavement of famous Amira Kadal bridge to earn their living.

Sara Begum, 45, starts her day in this fashion and calls out for prospective customers. "I work hard throughout the summer to grow and dry up all the vegetables in my home and in this part of the year come here to sell and earn my living," said Sara who sells fresh vegetables in summer and dries some part of it for winters.

"It does not fetch me enough but I am contented."

Sara said the demand for dried vegetables has gone down over the years.

Ali Mohammad, who sells dried vegetables in Gonikhan market at a shop, is also of the opinion that the demand has declined. "Earlier people used to buy these foods at the onset of the winter in bulk and used it throughout the season but now people seldom buy it," he said.

The traders say that in not so distant past the demand for dried vegetables would go up considerably during winters.

"People would enjoy the dried vegetables and dried fish in cold weather. But now with the availability of fresh vegetables in the market, their demand has declined," they said. Ghulam Muhammad has been selling dried vegetables and dried fish on his handcart for last twenty years. But he is planning to switch over to some other business or job.

"It is not profitable anymore. Earlier people used to purchase huk-tsun (dried vegetables) ahead of winter and store it as there used to be shortage of vegetables in winter due to cold weather and closure of highway," he said. "But now vegetables are available throughout the year and also there is a myth that these dried vegetables are not hygienic and can cause diseases."

Earlier many housewives would dry up vegetables and store them for consumption in winter months. Left for drying, chains of chilies or gourd could be seen hanging from the windows of houses in summer.

Peas, gourd, chilies, turnip, fish are all suitably cut, washed and left for drying and stored.

When the heavy snowfall closed the Srinagar-Jammu highway, cutting it off from other parts of the country, these dried food items were the only source of food in this region. With better connectivity, Valley gets supply of fresh vegetables throughout the year.

Changing lifestyle and food habits of people has also resulted in decline of dried vegetables.

Experts are of the opinion that these foods are safe provided they are hygienically prepared and stored.

"These foods are advisable in permissible limits and if stored well in special air-tight containers. If air goes in these bags it can induce growth of white colored fungus known as nitrosamines that are carcinogenic," said Dr Showkat Zargar, Director of the premier hospital Sheri-Kashmir Institute of Medical Sciences (SKIMS).

Stressing on the need for proper handling of vegetables and introduction of new technology in preparing dried vegetables, he added: "Here primitive methods are still used for preparing dried vegetables that makes growth of fungus very easy."

Following latest technology their nourishment can be retained long and they can be used throughout the season.

"In West people also use dried vegetables and fruits but they keep its nutrition protected by means of technology; we don't have that at our homes so the food needs to be prepared in clean conditions and then stored at places away from moisture."

Despite availability of fresh vegetables, some people prefer to eat dried vegetables in the winter months and relish their taste.

"My mother used to cook dried peas and I loved them. Now I purchase them and try to cook the same way my mother used to, but it lacks that taste," said Parveena Hassan, a school teacher.



As the Muezzin's voice breaks the cold dawn, scores of cars make a beeline to a narrow lane in Jamallatta mohalla of Aali Kadal area in downtown Srinagar where only a small window with an even smaller chimney marks a small restaurant.

Aijaz Ahmed Bhat, who runs the small restaurant, specializes in one and only thing on the menu, Harissa.

The Kashmiri Harissa is a recipe of mutton, spices, herbs and rice traditionally stewed overnight in a clay pot buried in the floor of the shop.

First the rice is skimmed till it turns into a smooth mush. The rice concentration is then mixed with meat and cooked rigorously. After addition of different spices including garlic, the mixture is kept in an earthen pot for 5-8 hours. A small oven fired by the wooden kindling placed under the underground pot provides it with a steady heat required both in the preparation as well as serving of the delicacy.

Inside the dark shop Aijaz serves a steady stream of customers. Amid the sizzle of hot oil meeting the meat, he says, "We have been making Harissa since generations and there is nothing else I would rather be doing."

A kilogram of Harissa costs anything around Rs 700-1000 in the city, depending on where you buy it from.

But most of customers in the shop- almost all exclusively men - prefer to eat the delicacy at the shop itself.

At Aijaz's shop, a kilo of harissa can set you back by 800 rupees.

"Making Harissa is an art. It is cheap if our hard work and cost behind Harissa making is taken into consideration. We mostly have to use firewood to prepare Harissa which costs around thousand per quintal. Besides spices are also costly."

Harisa was brought to Kashmir - like so many other

imports - from central Asia.

Historian Fida Hassnain traces its roots to the Chak period.

But Zareef Ahmad Zareef, a noted Kashmiri poet and an expert on Kashmir's cultural history, traces the roots of Harissa to the Mughal period.

"Mughals used to boil sheep feet known as Pacha to make a kind of Harissa. It was during Afghan rule of Kashmir that Harissa was formally introduced in its present form in the Valley. At that time economic condition of Kashmiris was so weak that they could not afford to relish Harissa. They boiled turnips as they were cheap as alternative to Harissa,"

Zareef said.

For poverty stricken Kashmiris, Harisa remained out of bounds for most. Only after the socio-economic conditions improved did people start relishing the delicacy.

Zarief says eventually two Harissa shops were opened at Aali Kadal and Saraf Kadal in Shahar-e-Khaas (downtown Srinagar) which used to be thronged by customers.

Slowly, new shops sprung up all over the city but the crowds haven't lessened anywhere.

