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Dr. B.K. Das



Danish Revaz



MAHBUBUL HOQUE
An Edupreneur on Mission
to Transform Education in the North East

Sep.-Oct. 2022

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Central Office: DJ-4/9, New Town, Kolkata 700 156 **City Office:** 53B Elliot Road, Kolkata 700 016

Phone: 74790 20076 / 43, **e-mail:** alameenmission@yahoo.com, **website:** www.alameenmission.org

Editor:

Danish Reyaz

Assistant Editors:

Tanwirul Hasan

Saif Alam Siddiqui

Web Editor:

Nazia Parveen

Advisory Board:

Dr. Sayed Zafar Mahmood (Retd. I.A.S)

Dr Majid Khan

Syed Zahid Ahmad

Abdullah Zakaria

Ainain Shahidi

Sayyed Fazal Mumtaz

Correspondent:

Md. Shakeeb Sayem (Kolkata)

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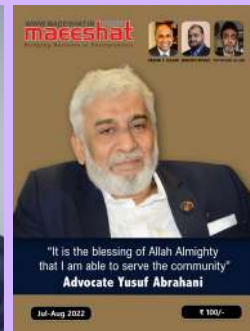
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Danish Reyaz

From The Editor's Desk

The North-East region seems a forgotten part of India, invariably getting step-motherly media coverage. Whatever little coverage it gets, that is often related to insurgency in the region. There is, in fact, much more to the North-East. Besides the picturesque landscapes and nature bounties, the region is rich in linguistic and cultural diversities, has friendlier people, and, most importantly, boasts an impressive literacy rate despite poverty. Over the last two decades, it is also witnessing an educational revolution chiefly led by a visionary Edupreneur, Mahbubul Hoque.

Mr. Hoque runs a battery of educational institutions, from a full-fledged university to colleges, from schools to coaching centres, spread across Meghalaya and Assam, only to ensure the students from far-flung North-East also get the same opportunities and facilities as the other students from the rest of India.

It was in 2014 that I, along with Mohammadur Rahman, the former Vice Chancellor of Aligarh, first met Mahbubul Hoque on the side-line of attending various programs at the University of Science and Technology (USTM), Meghalaya. The large, beautiful university struck me at first glance, but I was even more impressed with Mr. Hoque, its Founder & Chancellor, for his humility besides his many stellar qualities. A perfect host, he invited us over lunch at his home. We couldn't refuse.

Contrary to my expectation of him living in a big luxurious house, Mr. Hoque happened to live in a small rented house. My first impression sitting inside his home was that the

man who could build an expansive university on a 400-acre land was getting by living in a two-room house with slightly aging walls and an old sofa for the visitors to sit on.

I couldn't help but ask, "Why don't you take a better house for yourself?" He replied, "Whatever little amount we are left with after spending on the university goes to look after our staff and colleagues. They are the priority. I can wait." I was awestruck.

I met him on a few more occasion and always found new reasons to look up to him. I began to want this remarkable selfless Edupreneur from the North-East to grace our cover page. But then, a few issues cropped up, and COVID ensued. Nevertheless, after a long wait, we have him featured on the cover page of our magazine in full glory.

Besides the exhaustive cover story, several interviews from the USTM officials also found a place in this issue to delineate Mr. Hoque's incredible story of unrelenting passion and hard work to effect an educational turnaround in the North-East region.

With a prominent focus on Mr. Hoque and his path-breaking success, this month's edition, like always, also covers news, events, and happenings of various natures to provide an interesting read. Here's hoping you will enjoy it.

Happy reading!

Bushra Mateen has proved that girls can do wonders if given a little freedom and attention: Ashfaque Motiwala

Bushra Mateen, a 22-year-old Karnataka girl who became the first Visvesvaraya Technological University (VTU) student to win 16 gold medals, shared her success mantra during a felicitation ceremony held at Pearls Academy, Aurangabad.

“Waking up for Tahajjud prayers also made it possible for me to start my study from the very early morning, allowing me more study hours. Moreover, Tahajjud prayers brought me closer to God, giving me peace and belief. No wonder I climbed the height of success,” said Bushra Mateen, who was the chief guest in the educational program titled “Path to Excellence,” where academicians and people from different walks of life voiced their opinion.

Referring to the audience at AMES KIDS School premises, which also included parents, she said that parents should encourage their children equally to pursue higher education without any gender discrimination.

She recounted how her parents had always stood by her side, lending unconditional support through the thick and thin of her student's life. “They encouraged me to pursue my engineering and excel in it. So, on the

back of my parent's support, I could focus on my goals wholeheartedly, and by God's will, I am now preparing for the civil service exams,” said the Hijabi girl at the podium.

Thanks to her spectacular success, Bushra dispelled the myth in society that a Muslim girl who wears a hijab cannot excel in her studies and can only stay at home for household chores. She believes that nothing is impossible. Self-confidence and

at St Mary's Convent and PU from Pramana PU College in Raichur. While Bushra's father and brother are both civil engineers, her mother is also an educated individual with a degree in Bachelor of Arts.

Mr. Ashfaque Motiwala, the Founder of Pearls Academy and Secretary of Zulekha Motiwala Social Welfare Charitable Trust, said, “Bushra Mateen has proved that girls can do wonders if given a little freedom and attention.”

In his vote of thanks, Nayer Iqbal, principal of Pearls Academy, said, “I am thankful to Bushra Mateen who came from Karnataka to Pearls Academy, to inspire our students. Her propensity to work hard and her religious nature make her a perfect role model for all the students.”

Appreciating the hard work of both Bushra Mateen and Pearls Academy, Danish Reyaz, the Managing Director of Maeeshat Media, said, “Diamonds and pearls are born only in difficult situations. Pearls Academy has established its identity in Aurangabad in a short time and has been inspiring students and youths across the country. Similarly, Bushra Mateen raised the head of the nation with her success while also enthusing lakhs of students to follow in her footsteps.”



determination are the keys to success.

Bushra, a civil engineering graduate of SLN College of Engineering, Raichur, obtained an aggregate cumulative grade point average (GPA) of 9.73 and bagged the first rank in the civil engineering branch as well as in the women's category.

She won 16 gold medals at the 21st convocation ceremony of the VTU on March 10, breaking the university's previous record haul of 13 gold medals. She completed her schooling

12th All India Educational Conference

Passes Resolutions on National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 in Jaipur



By: Abdul Rasheed Agwan,



The successfully conducted 12th All India Educational Conference in Jaipur have unanimously passed several resolutions on National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. The event was organized on the 3rd and 4th of September and attended by hundreds of distinguished scholars, intellectuals, educationists, and academicians from across the country.

The conference delegates broadly discussed and debated the merits and demerits of NEP 2020 and its future impact on the minority and other weaker sections of society.

In two days, several proposals, suggestions, and action plan to make

the most of the new education policy were discussed and passed in the form of resolutions to benefit the minorities and the marginalized educationally.

Here is the full text of the resolutions passed at the conference:

We, the delegates of the 12th All India Educational Conference, appreciate the All India Educational Movement and the Muslim Education Society, Jaipur, for jointly organizing the successful event with utmost hospitality and sincerity.

Following two-day-long engaging deliberations, we have arrived at the following resolutions, which are to be taken care of by all concerned for their



optimum implementation.

The below-mentioned resolutions are passed with the optimism of making the National Education Policy 2020 a better opportunity for Muslims and other weaker sections of the country despite some elements of concern in the document.

1. National Education Policy 2020 (NEP) released in July 2020, will govern and regulate the Indian education system for about the next three decades. This document will be a foremost reference point after the Constitution and education-related laws for those engaged in the field of education. Hence, educationists, school management, teachers, technical experts, activists, parents, and students should realize its vital importance for the future of education in India and make sincere efforts to actualize its pragmatic goals.
2. The delegates visualize many opportunities in the NEP 2020, such

as the concept of cultural diversity in the textbooks, privatization of education, formation of autonomous colleges, the establishment of Special Education Zone, Inclusion Fund, Gender Inclusion Fund, special care of SEDGs including minorities, the flexibility of courses, primary education in the mother tongue, managing madrasa under alternative education system, online learning, the concept of early childhood education through play school and the like. However, these promising aspects can be better availed through awareness, activism, and institutionalized efforts. Hence, the delegates urge all concerned, including themselves, to work to realize these lofty goals of NEP 2020 in the right earnest.

3. The delegates envisage that the NEP 2020 will require enhanced funds to educate weaker sections, including Muslims. Therefore, the community should establish

education funds at every level, effectively use Waqf properties for institutional funds, or divert resources from such unproductive use as pompous marriages, etc., to educate children. At the same time, it should effectively avail government scholarships and other schemes through awareness, advocacy, and other useful programs.

4. The delegates understand that for an effective implementation of NEP 2020, a strong mutual co-operation of Socio-Economically Disadvantaged Groups (SEDGs) at different levels is required. Hence, all stakeholders should strive in realizing this cooperation.
5. In the quest to empower Muslim women, the delegates think it proper to recommend to the concerned authorities that the Waqf properties should also be used for district-level Dastkari training centres to empower wid-







ows, orphans, and other needy women. These centres can be built through MP & MLA development funds and, with the help of the Department of Minority Affairs or, in its absence, through the Department of Social Welfare.

6. The delegates appreciate the incumbent government of Rajasthan for its efforts to better the education of minorities in the state. They also hope that such efforts will continue earnestly in the future.
7. The inputs of the conference make it evident that future education will be technology-driven, and all community institutions should make due efforts to equip themselves for this upcoming challenge.
8. The potential of the artisan class from within the community has been highlighted at the conference. The delegates believe creative and innovative ways to inculcate various useful and productive skills in youths will go a long way in ameliorating their condition. The need of the hour is all-out efforts for skill development at a mass level. In this regard, all concerned are expected to take due steps.
9. The delegates of the 12th All India Educational Conference suggest and request for the formation of a High-Power Committee of academicians, experts, and activists with a representation, preferably the Chairman local Waqf Board and Member Secretary, to identify suitable Waqf properties for the creation of educational facilities and clear them from commercial exploitation. At the same time, the committee will work in the direction of making all India scholarships accessible to needy and deserving students.
10. There is a pressing need for training programs for the large number of students coming out of Madaris-e-Deeni to prepare them to face the modern/contemporary world.
11. The delegates also underline the importance of proper information regarding government policies, budgets, and schemes for minorities' welfare. In addition, timely data from the government is also vital for effectively planning and implementing educational policies in the community.
12. The delegates also feel that NEP 2020 contains some ambiguous cultural terms and ignores a historical continuum of educational traditions. It appears to impose a particular set of educational principles while ignoring their negative outcomes in the past. Therefore, delegates call for due care during the NEP 2020 implementation so that such terms are well interpreted in the wake of the nation's cultural and religious diversity.
13. The delegates suggest to the host organizations and other platforms to generate wider awareness regarding NEP 2020 at the state and district levels so that its benefits are widely availed even by the marginalized at the lowest strata of society.

ADMISSIONS OPEN

NEET LONG TERM REPEATERS BATCH

<p>Mohammed Ali Iqbal</p> <p>NEET Marks 680</p> 	<p>Syed Nizamuddin</p> <p>NEET Marks 675</p> 	<p>Prerana Patil</p> <p>NEET Marks 675</p> 						
<p>Md Noman Hassan HT No. 220410230731 Marks 665</p> 	<p>Vishal Chikode HT No. 220410001639 Marks 665</p> 	<p>Uzma HT No. 220410552463 Marks 656</p> 	<p>Md Aail Khan HT No. 220410448282 Marks 656</p> 	<p>Sujal Biradar HT No. 220410484546 Marks 651</p> 	<p>Shriya HT No. 220410380550 Marks 647</p> 	<p>Gulman Ahmed Zerd HT No. 220410739673 Marks 646</p> 	<p>Mohd Obaidullah HT No. 220410565886 Marks 645</p> 	<p>Hussain Abu Talha HT No. 220410067747 Marks 645</p> 
<p>Saud Faqihuddin HT No. 220410094955 Marks 642</p> 	<p>Raheema Shabnam HT No. 220410309598 Marks 640</p> 	<p>Mohd Abdullah HT No. 220410658221 Marks 632</p> 	<p>Yasir Mohammed HT No. 220410238874 Marks 629</p> 	<p>Alkaaf Bojgar HT No. 220410590998 Marks 627</p> 	<p>Md Arbaz A Rahim HT No. 220410537026 Marks 626</p> 	<p>SK Qamar Fouzan HT No. 220410871167 Marks 626</p> 	<p>Syed Altan Ul Islam HT No. 220410092006 Marks 625</p> 	<p>Abhijeet HT No. 220410427591 Marks 620</p> 
<p>Md Saaquib Ahmed HT No. 220411476229 Marks 619</p> 	<p>Sneha HT No. 220410412581 Marks 617</p> 	<p>Niveditha HT No. 220410583576 Marks 615</p> 	<p>Mohammed Affan HT No. 220410445001 Marks 615</p> 	<p>Shaikh Munawwar HT No. 220410158441 Marks 608</p> 	<p>Mohd Mudassir HT No. 220410687270 Marks 605</p> 	<p>M. Huzafa Manzoor HT No. 220410265867 Marks 602</p> 	<p>and Many More...</p> <p>EXPECTED 450+</p> <p>GOVT. FREE MBBS SEATS 2022</p>	

حفاظ طلباء NEET میں 350 سے زائد نمبرات سے کامیابی حاصل کی ہے میڈیکل سیٹ کے اہل نہیں ہوئے ہیں تو مایوس ہونے کی ضرورت نہیں ہے۔ اگر وہ NEET رپیٹ کرنا چاہتے ہیں تو شاہین ادارہ جات بیدرنے ان کیلئے ایک خصوصی اسکیم ترتیب دی ہے اس اسکیم کے تحت شاہین ادارہ جات بیدر کے ملک بھر کے تمام مراکز پر NEET کی کوچنگ مع قیام و طعام کے مفت دی جائے گی

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Head Office:
Shaheen Nagar, BIDAR.

Al-Ameen Mission to give more than 500 doctors: M Nurul Islam

New Delhi: (Maeshat News Network) Near about 500 medical aspirants will get chance to study MBBS and BDS in the Govt. Medical Colleges from Al-Ameen Mission this year, among which 100

are the girl students. All they have secured more than 550 marks in the National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET) exam. There are also two students who are Quran-e-hafez and now going to study MBBS.

Last year this number was 400.

“It is a great success and all time record in the history of Al-Ameen Mission,” said Al-Ameen Mission founder and general secretary M Nurul Islam.

He reiterated that Al-Ameen Mission was established in 1987 and now it has 72 centres. The educational institute was formed to give quality education to underprivileged students who are unable to continue studies due to the financial crisis. Most of the students who are trained at Al-Ameen Mission come from remote villages.

Islam pointed out that Al-Ameen Mission has around 72 campuses (from 5th to 12th standard). This year’s NEET saw some brilliant performances from Al-Ameen Mission students



(both non-residential and residential).

Among the non-resident students of Al-Ameen Mission, Kushnakur Bhowmick secured the highest marks. He scored 686 out of 720 marks in NEET. His all India rank (AIR)

is 427.

However, among the residential students of the institute, Irfan Habib, son of a modest farmer, Abdul Subhan of Cooch Behar district in West Bengal, scored the highest marks. He scored 685 in NEET this year, his rank is 594 in All India. It should be mentioned that 225 students of the institute have scored more than 600 marks in NEET.

Akhtara Parvin, a resident of Birbhum district in West Bengal, has achieved excellent results among the girl students of Al-Ameen Mission. She has been studying in Class VII since 2015 at the Khalatpur campus of Al-Ameen Mission. “I got 96% marks in the class X board exam and 98% marks in class XII board exam. I got only 480 marks in NEET last year because I couldn’t prepare at home due to lockdown, but this year I got 653 marks with the help of Al-Ameen Mission,” said Akhtara, who was ranked 3915 in All India.

Bearys bags “National Energy Leadership Award” from CII

Bearys Global Research Triangle (BGRT), Whitefield, Bangalore wins the prestigious ‘National Award for Excellence in Energy Management’ by CII for three consecutive years, 2020, 21 & 22 and was declared the ‘National Energy Leader’. Bearys was also commended and won another accolade for the ‘Most useful Presentation’ at the award ceremony.

The awards were presented by Dr. Ashok Kumar, Director, Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE), Ministry of Power, Govt. of India to Mr. Mazhar Beary, Executive Director, in the presence of other eminent dignitaries at a grand award ceremony held at India Habitat Centre, New Delhi.

BGRT, is India’s first LEED Platinum



R & D Park and is globally recognized by both Industry and Academia as an epitome of sustainable development and an exemplary benchmark project. It has become an arche model where

streams of students from pan India, architects, consultants, and fellow developers are visiting the project to see, learn and understand more about sustainable development and its manifold benefits.

‘We, at Bearys feel elated to receive this award and would like to dedicate this laurel to our mentors the late Dr. Prem C Jain, former Chairman, IGBC and the late Mr. Mahendrarajji, renowned structural consultant, New Delhi, who have inspired and guided us along the way. We now rededicate ourselves to our relentless pursuit to promote Sustainable Development &

further the IGBC led ‘Green Building Movement’ in India” proclaims Mr. Syed Mohamed Beary, Founder & CMD.

Why Indo-Americans must speak up on race relations



By Frank F. Islam



As a significant demographic, they must speak out on race relations, engage other minority groups and civil rights organisations, and use our formidable resources to work for racial equality and justice for all in the US.

A viral video showing a woman hurling racial abuse at four Indian-American women outside a restaurant in Plano, Texas, sparked outrage on social media. “I hate you f*****g Indians,” the woman, who was arrested later, shouted. “Oh, these f***** Indians! They come to America because they want a better life. They obviously are not

leading a great life in India.”

The incident happened less than two months after an armed man showed up at the Seattle home of Representative Pramila Jayapal, the first Indian-American woman to serve in United States (US) Congress. In the days leading up to the incident, the Democrat had received a series of threatening voicemail messages, apparently from the same person.

The two back-to-back incidents are the latest in a series of racial attacks targeting Asian Americans. In March 2021, a gunman killed eight people, including six Asian women, in Atlanta.

Even though Jayapal and the four Indian-American women in Texas were unharmed, it brought back the memory of the murder of Srinivas Kuchibhotla in Kansas in 2017. “Get out of my country!” Navy vet Adam Purinton had shouted at Kuchibhotla and his friend Alok Madasani before he shot them (Madasani survived the attack).

Hate crimes against immigrant groups have been rising in the US since 2015, when Donald Trump launched his toxic campaign for president and stoked anti-immigration sentiments. As presidential historian Tyler Anbinder noted,



while in office, Trump “has spread more fear, resentment and hatred of immigrants than any American in history.” A survey by the Pew Research Center, released in May, found that 63% of Asian Americans believe violence against them is increasing. The same survey found that about one in five Asian Americans worry daily or almost daily that “they might be threatened or attacked because of their race or ethnicity.”

Historically, Indian-Americans have been fortunate to be largely spared the worst form of racism that many other immigrant communities, such as Japanese Americans and Chinese Americans, have experienced. Large-scale Indian immigration began only after the passage of the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, which removed barriers that prevented Asians and other non-Caucasian nationals from coming to the US. By then, the landmark civil rights legislation was also in place, outlawing many forms of racial discrimination and offering legal mechanisms to combat them.

Another factor that spared many Indian-Americans from being targets is their affluence. Being the wealthiest ethnic group in the nation, with a household per capita income of more than \$125,000, nearly double the national average, a large proportion of the community lives in the suburbs, where racism is less prevalent.

Less exposure to racism means the community is not as educated about race as many other minority ethnic groups. As a result, a substantial section of the community is unaware of America’s racial history and the struggles that African Americans and other minority groups have gone through in pursuit of the “American dream”. For that reason, a large section of Indian-Americans has stood on the sidelines when it comes to some of the great debates of the past few decades involving race, be it the plight of Dreamers or Black Lives Matter.

It also explains why there is hardly any discussion within the community on the issue of undocumented

immigrants. This is true even though a 2017 study showed that 525,000 Indians were living as unauthorised immigrants in the US, nearly 12% of the Indian-American population. (Only three other countries, Mexico, El Salvador and Guatemala, have more of their citizens living in the US as unauthorised immigrants.)

But things have changed in the past five years. Ironically, the same factors that have inoculated the community — the suburban existence, affluence, and growing influence in the political and business worlds — make Indian-Americans a target for hate crimes. The two recent incidents should serve as a wake-up call. So too, should the hundreds of thousands of Indians who are living in this country as unauthorised immigrants.

Indian-Americans must speak out on race relations, engage other minority groups and civil rights organisations, and use our formidable resources to work for racial equality and justice for all in the US.

INNOVATIVE AND CREATIVE MIHAS AWARDS 2022 WINNERS ELEVATE HALAL ECONOMY



The Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI) through its agency, the Malaysian External Trade Development Corporation (MATRADE) has organised the 18th edition of the Malaysia International Halal Exhibition (MIHAS) 2022 in a hybrid format.

Recognising the creative culture and innovative excellence of international Halal businesses, especially Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), the prestigious 2022 MIHAS Awards ceremony was held at the Malaysia International Trade and Exhibition Centre (MITEC).

In addition to the participation of local companies, submission from international companies were also accepted including exhibitors from Kuwait, Indonesia, Thailand, South Africa, Palestine dan United Arab Emirates (UAE). MIHAS Awards evaluated the spirit of innovation and creativity presented in the form of products, services,

exhibition booth designs and social media platforms dedicated to promote the Halal economy. The categories of the MIHAS Awards comprised of The Best Booth Award, Most Innovative Award (Food and Beverage Products, Non-Food & Beverage and Services), Best MIHAS Promotion via Social Media and the Halal Achievement.

MATRADE CEO, Datuk Mohd Mustafa Abdul Aziz hopes that MIHAS Awards will attract more local and international exhibitors to participate in MIHAS in the future. "This is because the potential of the global Halal industry is huge and it opens the door wide to opportunities for these companies to explore new markets," Datuk Mohd Mustafa added.

Datuk Mohd Mustafa explained, "Through the MIHAS Promotion Award ia Best Social Media, exhibitors have highlighted the creativity and innovation of their products



*Business Forum with the Consulate General of Malaysia in Mumbai
Organised seminar on "Post-Pandemic: Business Opportunities with Malaysia"*

and services by leveraging on social media platforms. This strategy further encourages more Malaysian business to elevate their digitalisation efforts. This is in line with MATRADE's agenda outlined in the National Trade Blueprint 2021-2025, thus promoting a culture of business digitalisation among exporters."

All 1,258 MIHAS 2022 exhibitors were automatically eligible for selection in the Best Malaysian and International Booth Award, while the Best Promotion via Social Media Award and Most Innovative Award, required MIHAS exhibitors to register online to be evaluated.

The submissions for the Best Booth and Pavilion Award were evaluated in terms of creativity and uniqueness of design, presentation and overall appearance.

The selection for the Innovative Award was based on the participating

company's nomination and pitching presentation (conducted physically). A total of 61 entries were received, which includes 37 entries from the Food and Beverage segment, 14 from the Non-Food segment and 10 entries from the Services. The evaluation of submissions in this category focused on aspects of quality and innovation applied in product design or service offerings. The sustainability aspect exhibited by participants in this category also scored highly.

Impactful efforts to promote MIHAS 2022 were recognised through the Best Promotion via Social Media category. This category aimed to encourage companies to use social media platforms creatively in promoting their products, services and brands, and at the same time publicise their respective participation at the MIHAS 2022 exhibition. The effectiveness of social media strategies, the volume of likes and shares, engagement

rate with which reflected responses to complaints or criticisms were responded to and managed, as well as the use of hashtags such as #MIHAS2022 #ChooseMalaysia #MIHASAwards2022 were among the performance indicators of this award category.

The Best Halal Achievement Award was curated to extend appreciation to Halal industry strategic partners and their effort to boost the country's Halal exports at the global level continuously.

The Award winners were evaluated and selected by a panel of judges with various backgrounds and expertise in relevant the fields. The selection of winners is made based on the overall characteristics of products and services including its originality, innovative elements, appearance and Halal quality.



MAHBUBUL HOQUE:

AN EDUPRENEUR ON MISSION TO TRANSFORM EDUCATION IN THE NORTH EAST



By: Danish Reyaz

Mahbubul Hoque, during his student years at Aligarh Muslim University, was a reflective person. When he used to get time out of his study, he would often visit the tomb of Sir Sayed Ahmed and sit there in quietude, showing respect to the great man who founded the world-famous university.

Little did he realize that one day he would himself be known as Sir Syed of North East for his ground-breaking work in promoting modern education in the region that mainstream India often overlooks and neglects.

Mahbubul Hoque is an enterprising man who broke free from his poverty-stricken childhood and went on to secure admission to Aligarh Muslim University (AMU) on merit. But then, after completing his Masters, he said no to lucrative corporate job offers and returned to his native place to work for his people.

Twenty years later, his achievements are downright incredible. He founded the University of Science and Technology Meghalaya (USTM), the first private university in the North East region and by far the best of all his ventures.

It is an 'A Grade' university accredited by National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC), offering the best education in scores of professional courses to thousands of students from eight neighbouring states.

Besides USTM, Mahbubul Hoque, the Founder Chairman of the Educational Research and Development Foundation (ERDF), has established nine other educational institutions, including three state-of-the-art colleges and two CBSE-affiliated schools.





The incredible story of his successful journey as an educational entrepreneur (Edupreneur) we are about to read is a testament to how a human can triumph over all odds with an unswerving spirit of self-belief and hard work to bring about a meaningful change in society.

A Polite and Cultured Man

Mr. Hoque is hugely successful and reputed, yet he is a simple and down-to-earth man. He is also quite religious. He sports an Islamic beard and wears a white kurta pajama pairing it with a shadri and a skullcap.

One might mistake him for being a Maulana, but speak to him, and he will enlighten you with his vision and knowledge as a successful educational entrepreneur while switching back and forth to fluent English during the conversation.

He says, “There is no point in living a luxurious life and showing off. Life and wealth are from the Almighty for doing good deeds and to serve the society for which we are answerable

on the Day of Judgement.”

A cultured man, Mr. Hoque knows how to treat you well without giving you an air of him being highly successful. He is very polite and sincere and as much agog when it comes to talking about everything related to education and institutions.

“Educational development of my region remains uppermost in my mind. You can observe that while I talk,” Mr. Hoque says. We couldn’t differ, seeing how his life is a constant endeavour to bring about an educational revolution in the far-flung region of India.

Early Life and Education

Mahbubul Hoque was born on December 1, 1973, in a remote and nondescript Poorbogul village of Patharkandi in Assam’s Karimganj district. Unfortunate incidents and financial difficulties marred his early life.

When he reached the seventh standard, his father, a Panchayat Secretary,

passed away. While he was in 12th standard, his mother left this world. And worst of all, on a fateful day, his elder brother, who used to help support his education, fell victim to a fatal road accident.

“Those were nightmarish times,” Mr. Hoque recalls, “But I never gave up. Initially I sold home-grown vegetables in local market and later also gave tuition to schoolchildren to finance my education.”

Nevertheless, the bright spot in his financially constrained life was that he was a meritorious student. He passed his matriculation from Karimganj and Intermediate (Science) from G.C. College, Silchar with flying colours.

He came to Aligarh Muslim University with stars in his eyes to obtain the best education. He stayed there from 1993 to 2000, studying with all his heart and soul. He did his BSc (Chemistry) with first class and PGDCA & MCA, securing first class second rank.

A promising career in multinational



companies was beckoning as plenty of job offers were lined up for him. But he had a different plan for himself. He moved back to Assam with his books and one old computer that he had purchased in Aligarh.

Humble Beginning as Educational Entrepreneur

Back in Assam, Mr. Hoque decided to be an Edupreneur. In those days, Computer Science courses were gaining in demand. Since he had a

way with computers in Guwahati, he wanted to start a private IT start-up in partnership. But he received a lukewarm response from the community entrepreneurs.

One of the wealthiest businessmen and community leaders who now owns a political party told him that he wouldn't make any headway as a computer entrepreneur because his wearing of kurta pajama and a skullcap might not go down well with the students and their parents.

Discouraged and disheartened, Mr. Hoque now decided to go solo on his project. He made a start in 2001 with mere Rs 84 in his pocket, four IGNOU-enrolled students, and his old computer that he had brought along from Aligarh. His institution was a rented room at Ganeshguri area of Guwahati. In his initial days of struggle, he lived in the institution, spending his nights sleeping on the office sofa as he could not afford to rent a house for permanent stay.





Once upon a time, the owners of building were also not ready to offer rental house to him. That was just the beginning but after that he did not have to look back.

He started assembling computers and sold 100 of them. With that money, he was now able to set up a 5-computer lab in Guwahati and take the franchisee of Sikkim Manipal University (SMU), a prestigious private university for distance mode education across India.

“Affiliation fee for a Manipal study centre was Rs 2 lakh, which obviously I didn’t have at that time,” Mr. Hoque reminisces, “A gentleman at Manipal, after knowing my Aligarh background and my merit agreed to grant me the affiliation keeping the fee payment pending, which I later cleared in instalments of Rs 25,000 after borrowing from a friend.”

Soon stars started smiling down on

gritty and hardworking Mr. Hoque. The study centre that only had 26 students in its first batch swelled to 35,000 in 2006, becoming the second largest SMU centre in India.

“We received five consecutive Excellence Awards from the hands of India’s star bowler Anil Kumble, who happened to be the Brand Ambassador of Sikkim Manipal University in those years,” says Mr. Hoque smilingly.

Central IT College

The Manipal study centre run by Mr. Hoque is now famously known as Central IT College. With time, it has added many professional courses to attract students from various streams. Besides Computer Science, the Central IT College has Management, Mass Communication, Arts and Humanities, Biotechnology, and Allied Health Services courses.

It has also been selected as the Nodal Centre for the Eastern region to conduct Biotechnology practical. The centre has 600 odd computers in its lab. It is so much enough that Infosys regularly hires this lab to conduct large-scale exams for central government jobs.

His Vision Broadens: Foundation of ERDF

Mr. Hoque had always wanted to serve the community in a progressive way. So, he was not going to rest with the spectacular success he achieved running the Manipal study centre.

He envisioned building multiple educational institutions to tap into the massive potential of the North Eastern students and thus prevent them from migrating to other parts of the country. Back then, the migrating students were shelling out lakhs of rupees for



their education, accommodation, and long-distance travelling.

To realize his dreams, Mr. Hoque established the Education Research and Development Foundation (ERDF) in 2005, under the patronage of which multiple educational institutions, one after another, sprang up at several places in Assam and Meghalaya.

“After I founded ERDF, my dreams took wings. I am now operating at a much bigger and broader scale, helming so many institutions at once. It is challenging but immensely satisfying,” says Mr. Hoque.

Here is a look at the institutions Mr. Hoque has established, espoused by ERDF.

Central Public School, Patharkandi

In a rural area of Patharkandi in the Karimganj district, the Central Public School was established in 2008, the first school by ERDF. The school is CBSE-affiliated and known for providing excellent education to poor

and underprivileged students at an affordable price.

Central Public School, Badarpur

Following the success of the Central Public School at Patharkandi, its second branch was opened at Badarpur in the same Karimganj district in 2010.

The CBSE-affiliated school is spread over 3-acre land and is well-equipped with everything a modern school requires. This school’s objective was similar to the first: to serve students from poor backgrounds belonging to remote underdeveloped areas.

Khairun Nessa Begum Women’s College, Badarpur

Two Central Public Schools in the Karimganj district have contributed significantly to the betterment of primary and secondary education in the region. Meanwhile, there was also a need for a college for women from the poor and marginalized section who often don’t get chance to pursue their education to a higher level due to lack

of opportunities.

So, intending to write a new chapter in women’s education, Khairun Nessa Begum Women’s College, named after Mr. Hoque’s loving mother, came into existence in 2015 in Badarpur. The college is affiliated with Assam University, Silchar.

No Personal Ambition Despite Success

A man who has built so many institutions and continues doing so has no personal ambitions, but an unbounded desire to see the poor and marginalized doing well educationally. His life is a mission to build institutions and play his part in changing the educational landscape of the North East.

“There is no dearth of talent in the North East. The students here are smart and proficient in English because English is the medium of instruction in the whole region except Tripura and Assam,” says Mr. Hoque.

According to him, the only problem



afflicting the region is the lack of institutions for higher education. However, in the last two decades, things have changed. Due to his and others' tireless efforts, quality institutions have been coming up, and it is not only improving the overall educational scenario in the region but also stemming the migration of students to the rest of India in quest of a good education.

Mr. Hoque's commitment to his cause can be gauged from the fact that despite running the Manipal study centre quite profitably, he never aspired to a life of wealth and material comfort. Instead, living in a rented house of two rooms and meagre facilities, he was busy thinking about establishing schools and colleges for the benefit of students.

"I used to earn about 8-10 crores annually from the Manipal study centre since it was doing really well. However, instead of spending the money on frivolous things for personal gratification, I used that to buy lands," Mr. Hoque says.

The practice of buying lands proved to be a visionary move for Mr. Hoque because whenever he decided to found an institution, he already had land for it.

He says, "I didn't have much of the backing of the wealthiest people. I knew whatever I aspired to do could be achieved if only I put the right step forward. Buying lands in advance was one of the right steps of which I am glad about today."

Meghalaya Calling: Establishment of RIST

Dreams have their own destiny and can take you to new destinations where they can fructify. The same has happened with Mr. Hoque as he came to Meghalaya from Assam, chasing a dream.

When Manipal study centre was booming, Mr. Hoque was nurturing a dream to have a full-fledged college of his own. But, somehow, it was not materializing in Assam due to technical reasons mostly. It would have taken him long to make his dream

come true if he had kept waiting.

Professor Samudra Phookan, a well-known friend of Mr. Hoque, suggested he should explore the possibility of establishing the college in Meghalaya instead. The latter was a neighbouring state not far from Guwahati; moreover, the land was cheaper there. The idea appealed to Mr. Hoque. As luck would have it, the Meghalaya government was more than welcoming in giving NOC and providing necessary cooperation to Mr. Hoque.

In no time, in 2009, the Regional Institute of Science and Technology (RIST) came up in Meghalaya, becoming the first engineering college in the state. RIST sprawls over 130-acre lush green hilly land in Baridua, 9th Mile, popularly known as Techno City in Ri-Bhoi district, Meghalaya.

The scenic beauty of the place adds to the attraction for the students, while its sheltered atmosphere is ideal for more focused study. On the other hand, the developed architecture, modern facilities and amenities, and highly competent teaching staff make



RIST one of the best and most sought-after engineering colleges in the North East region.

The college is affiliated with North Eastern Hill University, Shillong, while the courses are AICTE approved. RIST is the largest technical campus in the North East, offering an excellent platform for students to achieve excellence.

Establishing USTM: A Giant Leap

Following the success achieved with the new schools and colleges Mr. Hoque by now had become a well-known figure in the North East. However, he was destined to do something even bigger.

It so happened that once former governor of Meghalaya Shri R.S. Mooshahary, impressed by Mr. Hoque's excellent capability in running and managing so many institutions, asked him to apply for establishing a university. For Mr. Hoque it was a shot in the arm.

"Although something of this nature was at the back of my mind from the beginning, I had not applied thought to it. But coming it from the governor, I felt encouraged and my belief in my ability increased many times," says Mr. Hoque smilingly.

Nevertheless, it was a mammoth task which also required huge amount of money and a massive piece of land. There were roadblocks no doubt but Mr. Hoque persevered.

"We used to land hunting relentlessly so that we can buy a mass of land at cheaper rate considering the limited financial resources we had," says Mr. Hoque.

The hunt came to an end after Mr. Haque could manage to buy a 400-acre land, again a hillock but picturesque landscape amidst exquisite greenery in the Baridua area of 9th Mile in Ri-Bhoi district in Meghalaya. It is the place where the University of Science and Technology Meghalaya, popularly known as USTM, has come along with all its glory.

Mr. Hoque recalls how even the government officials were intrigued when he proposed the land for establishing the university since it was slightly a faraway site from people settlements.

"Although it was a secluded place, I believed it would be excellent for the academic environment. Now the place has developed into a small city, and people from far and wide visit the campus for various reasons," says Mr. Hoque.

USTM Journey So Far

Spurred by governor Mooshahary's suggestion, Mr. Hoque submitted the university's draft to the government in 2007, and swiftly, in 2008, the bill for the proposed university was passed.

However, since setting up a university was the dearest dream of Mr. Hoque he was not in a haste to start it even after getting the nod from the government. Various issues, including financial challenges, were to be taken care of before taking the plunge.



Mr. Hoque took a loan of ten crores from the bank for the construction of buildings and endowment fund. Only after everything seemed all right did USTM begin its journey.

USTM started with only 6 students in the year 2011 before growing into having more than 6,000 students, 22 departments, and 60 courses. Today it is the largest private university in the North East region in terms of total area, constructed space, and number of students.

Mr. Hoque says, “While the university was coming up, several people helped us in whatever way they could. Some helped us with materials, while some, including contractors, came forward to help us financially.” Recalling one incident he says, “One contractor even sold his wife’s gold to offer us some money.”

He further says the staff and students have also helped the university grow.

For example, students even made advance payments whenever there was a financial crunch. At the same time, the staff, on several occasions, agreed on deferred payments. “I have immense gratitude to all of them who have been partners in our beautiful journey,” says Mr. Hoque.

The beautifully laid-out university is divided into several zones and blocks, with various departments, halls, and hostels spread across the sprawling property. Big modern structures, two giant entry gates, wide and clean roads, vibrant gardens, and greenery all around add to the magnificence of the university. One can’t miss getting marvelled at the prodigiously big and state-of-the-art central auditorium with a seating capacity of 3000 persons.

The university premise also houses several colleges a few of the ERDF-backed Institutions are: Professor Qoumrul Hoque School

of Education—an NCTE recognized B.Ed. college named after Mr. Hoque’s elder brother, a BCI approved University School of Law and Research, the School of Business Science, approved by AICTE, a PCI approved Pharmacy College—School of Pharmaceutical Sciences, Meghalaya. Another PCI approved college of pharmaceutical science established under ERDF is, Allama TR College of Pharmacy, Badarpur, Assam. A total of 1200 professionals makes up the workforce under the Foundation, offering services in different capacities.

USTM is gaining in reputation every year, and students’ faith in it is only increasing. In terms of not only results but also research, USTM has been winning many laurels. Mr. Hoque says, “Take the example of the Pharmacy department. Within four years of its establishment, it has 12 patents to its credit.”

Talking about the phenomenal response the university received from the people, he says, “Our good reputation from the Central IT College has worked in favour of the USTM. People understood we are serious people who are committed to providing best education at all costs.”



The most significant achievement of the USTM is that it received the ‘A Grade’ accreditation from National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) in November last year in the first cycle of assessment. “The recognition is a huge validation of our vision and hard work and gives an impetus for the future,” says Mr. Hoque.

In addition, USTM has been ranked among the top 200 universities of India in the seventh edition of the National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF) 2022. It is the only private university from the North East to feature in the list this year.

Mr. Hoque says that he has been fortunate to receive blessings and guidance from eminent academicians of India, including Professor D.P. Agrawal and Professor Ved Prakash, the former Chairman of UPSC and the current- Chairman of UGC, respectively. These people visit the university every now and then and

keep enquiring about its functioning. “When such great people show their genuine concern, I really feel proud of my institution”, said Mr. Hoque.

In 2014, former President Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam Azad spent a whole day in the university during his visit. Mr. Hoque says, “It was a landmark visit. A hugely inspirational figure himself Dr. Kalam buoyed up every one of us to work unceasingly towards the progress of the university.”

Among others, Nobel laureate Kailash Satyarthi and former ISRO Chairman

A.S. Kiran Kumar have also graced the university with their presence.

Mr. Hoque informs that more than 15 Vice Chancellors of different universities in India are directly and indirectly associated with them. Moreover, USTM is a signatory to about 300 MoUs with top Indian and international

institutions for research and other activities.

It’s been only eleven years since USTM began its journey. And in a short time, it has managed to cement its position among the top universities in India, which is an awe-inspiring achievement.

What Makes USTM Unique?

The popularity of USTM lies in its top-quality education, top-notch laboratory infrastructure as well as right environment for the holistic growth of students. But a few novel initiatives also make the university stand out, adding to its popularity further.

Payback Policy

USTM Payback policy has been an exciting initiative that has come in for much appreciation from all quarters. Under this scheme, students clearing national competitive examinations such



as UGC NET, GATE, JRF, etc., are returned their entire course fee.

The scheme has proved to be quite encouraging for the students. This year as many as 99 students have cleared these exams despite the COVID scare.

“The Payback incentive is designed to make our students more competitive and motivated. The innovative scheme is already paying good dividends as the number of successful students are increasing each year,” says Mr. Hoque.

In addition to the Payback policy, Mr. Hoque says those who qualify for the IAS exam are eligible for Rs. 5 lakh cash reward, while the 1st rank holder will get the expensive Mercedes car. This sort of scheme is unheard of in the region and can really boost the representation of the students from the North East in All India Civil Services.

Vision 50 Academy

Vision 50 Academy at USTM is another brainchild of Mr. Hoque. It is designed to provide targeted coaching to meritorious students who aspire to crack the NEET, JEE, and Civil Services examinations.

Vision 50 runs six courses in total, including integrated, foundation, and repeater courses. Hundreds of students selected through the Vision Talent Search Exam (VSTE) enroll in these courses and avail one of the best coaching programs in the North East to materialize their dreams.

In addition, 50 top-of-the-cream students in each stream are given

intensive coaching and mentoring to enable them to crack these exams on the first attempt. These students are entitled to get 100% scholarship to study at the Vision 50 Academy.

Mr. Hoque says, “Vision 50 Academy focuses on meritorious and economically weaker students who are otherwise deprived of the opportunities to excel in their preparation.”

Vision 50 Academy has two other chapters at Patharkandi and Badarpur in the Karimganj district of Assam, where students from the secondary level are taken care of to prepare them

opportunities to shape their careers.

The NEGC lets aspiring students interact with the country’s renowned academicians, educationists, industrialists, and entrepreneurs. Through this, students get acquainted with the emerging needs of different fields to prepare and hone their skills accordingly.

“The Graduate Congress sees participation from about 300 colleges in the region where we explore various activities for three days,” Mr. Hoque says. “For the last two years, due to COVID lockdown, it was not organized. However, it will

likely resume this year, and the spirit of the participants doesn’t seem to have dampened.”

Like NEGC, Mr. Hoque has also initiated several other events connecting the teaching and learning community at different institutions, including USTM. These flagship events include North East College

Principles Conclave, North East Teachers Congress, North East Law Graduates Conclave, the ERDF Talent Fest, etc.

Obligation Towards Girls and Poor Meritorious Students

Mr. Hoque is a gender-sensitive person. He believes women have the as much right to education as men. Like any other educational institution he runs, USTM has 50% reservation for girl students.

“No other university can match USTM



for various competitive examinations.

North East Graduate Congress (NEGC)

USTM, committed to the educational progress of the North East region has been organizing the annual North East Graduate Congress since 2012, aiming to connect youths from different parts of the region on a common platform.

More than 10 thousand students participate in the confluence every year and get a lifetime chance to discuss and disseminate ideas among themselves while exploring various

in gender inclusivity. Currently, 57% of the total students are girls. Even 70% of the teaching staff at the university happen to be women,” says Mr. Hoque proudly.

Besides the women’s representation, Mr. Hoque, having lived a poverty-stricken life himself, is a fierce proponent of the free education of the poor meritorious students. As a result, 20% of students at USTM who are from underprivileged backgrounds are getting free education.

Poor meritorious students are provided free education at USTM and in all the ERDF-sponsored institutions: 15% in colleges and university, while 20% in schools. About a thousand students are receiving free or concessional education in these institutions.

Mr. Hoque says, “I make sure that no meritorious students are ever turned away from our doorstep although they are too poor to afford the cost of their studies.”

Diversity at the Campus

Besides the education quality, diversity in any university is key for students from different communities to feel secure and have a sense of belongingness.

Exposure to diversity is also a great leveller. When students from different castes, communities, and backgrounds mingle, they learn the life lessons of tolerance and respect for others.

Mr. Hoque says, “USTM is kaleidoscope of different culture. And arguably it is the only private university in the country to have students from 36 communities, which

is also a matter of pride for us.”

Mr. Hoque adds that in a time when strife among different communities across the nation has increased, USTM remains a beacon of hope.

Quick Grievance Redressal

The beautiful centrally-located grievance cell inside the campus speaks volumes about the seriousness of authorities at USTM to ensure a pleased and content student base so that they go about their studies without any worries.

Every effort is made to minimize complaint lodging hassle and hasten their redressal. Mr. Hoque says,



“Being a Chancellor, I try to be accessible to all. Everybody can meet me with their problems. Anybody can call me. Plus, there is My Chancellor app through which staff and students can get in touch with me.”

Mr. Hoque further says that every university has some problem, but students at USTM are understanding enough to not go out and speak about their displeasure. “With our sincerity we have earned their trust,” he says.

Unflinching Dedication to Social Causes

Coming from the lower strata of society

Mr. Hoque carries a strong sense of social responsibility. Accordingly, he has taken several steps meant to serve various social causes.

Adoption of Villages

A few years back, we had heard about the parliamentarians adopting villages- an idea that fizzled out with time, however, not in the case of USTM. Under the guidance of Mr. Hoque, each department of USTM has adopted a nearby village to sensitize villagers about the issues related to education, health, and the economy.

The departments are responsible for guiding and conducting training sessions for the villagers, especially women, on these issues. However, the thrust remains to help develop entrepreneurial skills and spirit among them.

“If India has to progress, development must reach to village level. The initiative of adopting villages is only a small part of our endeavour in this

direction.” Mr. Hoque says. “Most of our institutions are in the backward areas and interestingly 80% students studying in these institutions are from remote rural areas.”

I Can I Will Academy

Among several initiatives by Mr. Hoque, I Can I Will Academy is the most laudable one. It is a residential academy for differently-abled persons where they learn various job skills based on their strengths.

“Physically challenged people, because of their disability, lag behind in society. They are in dire need of

help and attention. We have taken a small step to equip them with skills and education to bring them into the mainstream,” Mr. Hoque says.

The special curriculum designed at I Can I Will Academy is flexible for these people. In addition, the curriculum also caters to those who excel in sports and culture. Since these people can't attend regular classes due to the busy schedules of their training and practice sessions, the curriculum comes in handy for them.

Cancer Patient Helpdesk

Besides education, Mr. Hoque is interested in working for distressed patients facing a financial crisis. The needy are helped with money and all coordination to receive the best treatment. In that line, at B Barooah Cancer Institute in Guwahati, a Patient Helpdesk Booth has also been established to help guide needy patients.

Helping the Victims During COVID and Bodoland Violence

When Bodoland violence broke out in 2012, it forced lakhs of people from the minority community to take refuge in relief camps. A total of 35,000 children were affected, of which 13,000 were school-going. At that time, Mr. Hoque rose to the occasion and worked tirelessly for the educational rehabilitation of those hapless children in collaboration with the government, several NGOs, and

Philanthropists.

Likewise, in COVID times, he was actively involved in relief work, helping affected people with food, medicines, and hospitalisation.

Other Welfare Activities

Apart from the above activities, Mr. Hoque is also involved in various other welfare activities such as scholarships and endowment funds to provide shelter to widows and poor unmarried girls and promote microfinance and entrepreneurship.

Also, Mr. Hoque has made provisions

disadvantaged.

The Road Ahead

Due to his indomitable passion, Mr. Hoque has built a staggering number of institutions in a short time, with USTM being the crown jewel. As a visionary Eduprenuer, Mr. Hoque has already set his eyes on the future to take USTM to the next level with several promising plans and initiatives.

Targeting A++ Grade

Hardly is there any university in India which has been accredited “A Grade”

by NAAC in the first cycle. Mr. Hoque says, “However, the accreditation for USTM was not unexpected because we had worked very hard on every parameter to meet the expectations of NAAC from the beginning.”

NAAC is a UGC body meant to assess and accredit higher education

institutions on 7-point criteria, including infrastructure, curriculum and faculty, research and innovations, etc.

Soon after USTM got accredited “A Grade” by NAAC, Mr. Hoque set his eyes on the “A++ Grade” accreditation in the next cycle. And he is confident about it achieving it. Mr. Hoque says that when the NAAC Chairman was visiting USTM for assessment, the latter said, “I don't know what Grade the USTM will get in the first inspection, but I am confident that in



the next cycle the university will be accredited Grade A++.”

Mr. Hoque says, “Before making such a bold prediction, he surely must have seen our unceasing commitment and mission to develop USTM into one of the premier universities.”

Medical College and Hospital

Setting up a medical college is on the cards. USTM’s Zone 5 is a dedicated area in which the proposed medical college and hospital with allied healthcare facilities will come up in the future.

Mr. Hoque says that while education is a must, health is paramount for everybody’s life. Without health education will go waste. Therefore, he is committed to one of his favourite projects of all time, i.e., establishing a state-of-the-art medical college and hospital. It will also add a new paradigm to Mr. Hoque’s entrepreneurship.

While the full-fledged medical college and hospital based on modern science will take a few years to be built, Mr. Hoque plans to start an Ayurvedic college inside the USTM campus next year.

Focus on Research

When it comes to teaching and learning, USTM is doing excellently. Lately, the university has been focusing on research as well. The pharmacy department, followed by the food and life sciences department, is particularly doing well.

However, much needs to be done on

the research front, especially when the university is teeming with fertile brains and equipped with the proper infrastructure and world-class labs.

Mr. Hoque says that when research activities go up, we will also start receiving government funds, which will ease the burden on the fee structures of the courses. “In fact, when the strength of students goes up in the future, we would still like to keep the fee structure the same as now or decrease it rather than increase it,” Mr. Hoque says.

It sounds interesting in the context that USTM already has a low fee structure for the convenience of the

in the north-eastern region, USTM, under the stewardship of Mr. Hoque, is ready to expand its footprints on both national and global levels.

Mr. Hoque has a Vision 2025 roadmap through which he aims to make it one of the best national universities by 2025. The plan is to attract 30-40% of students from the rest of India.

“Every year hundreds of students from the North East go to cities like New Delhi, Kota, Bengaluru, etc. for higher studies or preparing for national level exams, but the reverse doesn’t happen,” Mr. Hoque says.

Mr. Hoque says that the institutions in the North East have developed leaps and bounds over the years. However, they lack publicity in the press, but the same press misses no chance to overplay the insurgency issue of the region.

Therefore, it is our duty, including the political leaders and journalists, to project a positive image of the North East. If that happens, things will change for the better.

Like Vision 25, Mr. Hoque has chalked out a Vision 30 plan that envisages USTM as a global university with world-class facilities and the best educational environment to attract students and scholars from all over the world.

Mr. Hoque says they have been upgrading facilities at per the global standards so that international students feel at home and get the facilities



students, who are primarily from rural backgrounds.

To promote academic research and developmental activities, USTM has signed more than 300 MoUs with several nationally and internationally reputed institutions and universities. They include AMU, Aligarh; JNU, New Delhi; Jamia Milia University, New Delhi; IIT, Guwahati; Dhaka University; UGC Bangladesh; and several Universities in Turkey.

Vision 2025 and 2030

Already the best private university



commensurate with the money they would spend here.

“Our first target is neighbouring countries like Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan, as well as South-East Asian countries. Students from these countries go to other cities in central India whereas we are nearer and can prove to be cheaper option for them,” he says, “However, we need to promote our university in better ways, highlighting the benefits we bring to the table.”

Other Plans for Future

Alongside the USTM growth plan, Mr. Hoque has several projects up his sleeves. He wants to build an array of new institutions as part of his mission to spread education to every nook and corner of the North East region.

His upcoming projects include five B Ed Colleges and ten more CBSE-affiliated schools in distant rural areas. At the same time, he has started working on another dream project—to establish a women’s university in his

native Karimganj district in Assam, proposal already submitted to the Government of Assam for enactment.

Additionally, Mr. Hoque is deliberating on starting an education TV channel and one newspaper each in Bangla and English, emphasizing education.

He has a very strong desire to make a big team of honest and dedicated workers who can transform his plans and ideas to reality. He wants to leave all educational set up for upliftment of the society and wants to see that a motivated team is working for mission education and taking it forward.

Awards and Recognition

In his stupendous journey of Edupreneurship, Mr. Hoque has received umpteen awards from various quarters in recognition of his yeoman’s service to the cause of educational development of the north-eastern region. The latest being the prestigious “**Governor’s Award for Excellence in Public Service -2022**”.

He received this highest and most prestigious award from the hands of Shri Satya Pal Malik, the Governor of Meghalaya, on 26th August 2022, for his pioneering contribution in the field of Higher and Technical Education.

Apart from that, Mr. Hoque is the recipient of the following awards:

Maeshat Edu Doctor Award 2022 from Maeshat Media, Mumbai

Shikshacharya Award 2019 from the Asom Sahitya Sabha, Guwahati, handed over by Shri Tathagata Roy, the Governor of Meghalaya

Visionary Edupreneur 2017 Award by Rethink India, New Delhi, handed over by Shri Manish Sisodia, Deputy CM of New Delhi in the presence of the former President Shri Pranab Mukherjee

Maulana Azad Memorial Award 2016 from Barack Education Society, Silchar, Assam

NEDFi Award 2015 from NEDFi (under Ministry of Finance), Guwahati

Maeeshat Best Edupreneur Award 2014 from Maeeshat Media, Mumbai

Educlusion Award at Re-engineering India Summit-2014, Singapore, handed over by Prof. Thomas L Magnanti, President of Singapore University

Edupreneur Award 2013 by Engineers Watch, conferred by Dr. Shashi Tharoor, Minister of State for Human Resource Development in New Delhi.

Apart from the individual awards, he also takes pride for number of institutional recognitions awarded to USTM, such as, the “Community Excellence Award” by UNESCO, “Green Assam Award” conferred by Dr Noni Gopal Mahanta, Advisor, Education, Government of Assam and several other awards conferred by other prestigious organisations. These awards are a symbol of recognition of Mr. Hoque’s dedication, passion, and commitment to ensuring quality

education to the last mile of the backward regions.

Mr. Hoque says, “Awards are good to keep the motivation going, but nothing beats a smile on the face of a student who is succeeding in life. That is my biggest award and a validation for the work I have been doing all these years.”

Wrapping up

Mr. Hoque is a paragon of hard work and perseverance, motivated with the sole aim to bring about an educational revolution in the remote region of India that has been on the back burner in terms of development for long, thus suffering from rampant poverty.

There is no better way to alleviate poverty than to empower people with education. Therefore, Mr. Hoque has been building institutions, mostly in rural areas of the North East, to make education accessible to the poor and marginalized.

Starting from scratch with no money and manpower, Mr. Hoque today ends up with a battery of top-notch educational institutions, aggressively changing the landscape of education in the North East region of India.

A bright talent from AMU testing the water in the field of educational entrepreneurship instead of latching on to fat corporate jobs sounds unusual but describes the courage, vision, and determination of Mr. Hoque.

Mr. Hoque has successfully demonstrated that educational entrepreneurship is economically viable and a highly satisfying business model that also contributes immensely to the progress of the nation.

The need of the hour is for more people to show courage to be an Edupreneur and be a reason to spread hope and smile to millions of students deprived of proper education to flourish in their lives.



“The Indian academic system is set to unshackle from the past policy barriers and better compete with the world”

Professor Gauri Dutt Sharma shares his views on National Education Policy 2020

The new National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 is here and seemingly the most amazing thing to have happened in the Indian education system in the past few decades. It replaces the 34-year-old education policy that came into force in 1986 and promises far-reaching changes to impact more than 33 crore Indian students for the better. The comprehensive new education policy claims to have taken inputs from all quarters and is announced only after long consultations with all the stakeholders.

Professor Gauri Dutt Sharma, the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Science and Technology Meghalaya (USTM), says the National Education Policy 2020 is convergent with changing needs of the knowledge ecosystem.

Here are the excerpts from his interview given to Maeshat.

The new National Education Policy 2020 has been announced; what do you make of it? How is it different from the previous Education Policies?

Well, it is the 21st century's first National Education Policy and the third since Independence. It aims at remodelling the education system exhaustively- from pre-schooling to PhD level.

It gives an opportunity to promote Indian languages while the earlier policies were skewed towards English. We used to give more importance to English because we did not have much study material in Indian languages. So, out of compulsion, the maturity of mind (up to six years) of our children used to take place, not in their mother tongue but English. Now it is rectified. Students can choose the language according to their interests to better gain knowledge in their formative years.

The new education policy is multi-disciplinary in approach and allows flexible exit and entry options. Besides, the new policy focuses on skill development, practical knowledge, critical thinking, and research and innovation as against

the existing education policy, which is often criticised for being theoretical in nature.

Do you feel the new National Education Policy 2020 will boost skill development learning in the country?

Earlier, skill development education was used to start at the graduation level. However, through the new education policy, skill development learning will start at an early age. It will create confidence among the students when they start working in the industry and implement their creativity to serve society.

Currently, the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship oversees and coordinates all skill development efforts across the country. However, the skill development learning system was informal in the past. People from a particular town or city specialized in a particular skill passed down to them from their ancestors. For example, Lucknow is known for Chikan cloth. Moradabad for brass work. With National Educational Policy 2020 coming into effect, skill development learning will become formal and democratized.

How National Education



Policy 2020 will pave the way for students to carry out their desired courses without restriction?

In one line, I can say that the new National Education Policy 2020 provides freedom to students to choose subjects. There is no stream like Arts, Commerce, and Science now. Students can choose any subjects they want.

With the new policy, it is certainly allowed if a student studying Physics and Chemistry also wants to study Polity or History simultaneously. Fortunately, students aspiring to be doctors won't have to study Mathematics at the 10+2 level unnecessarily. Similarly, engineering students can also study Literature side by side if they secretly desire to be a poet or writer. In simple terms, students can apply their own permutation and combination while opting for subjects.

A one-year research program has been added to the graduation level pushing it to 4 years instead of 3. Moreover, the graduation level allows students to choose whether they want a 1-year, 2-year, 3-year or 4-year course. Depending on how long a course they study, they will be awarded a Certificate, Diploma or a Degree.

The multiple exit options offered to students and the tying up of vocational education with higher education will certainly help improve

India's low Gross Enrolment Ratio.

How will the new National Education Policy 2020 will affect colleges and universities?

Well, there are different categories of universities- Central, State, Private and Deemed. Through the new education policy, these will be termed only universities.

The M. Phil degree is being scrapped. In addition, the college affiliation system is being phased out over the next 15 years so that every college develops into either an autonomous degree-granting institution or a constituent college of a university.

Multidisciplinary Education and Research Universities will be set up in the country at par with the IITs and IIMs. These are scheduled to be set up to introduce multidisciplinary academics.

Plus, since the gates for top foreign universities are opened their presence will force domestic institutions to up their game. At the same time, the norms of education will be standardized and made better in light of each other.

About New National Education Policy 2020

The New Education Policy 2020, approved by the Union Cabinet on July 29, 2020, replaces the 10+2 system with a 5+3+3+4 system, corresponding to ages from 3 to 8, 8 to 11, 11 to 14, and 14 to 18. It focuses on formative years of learning, including Anganwadi and pre-schooling from age 3.

At the same time, M. Phil is done away with. Instead, an extra one-year research program is added to the Graduation level. The new education policy is multi-disciplinary and flexible, allowing students multiple exit and entry options. It will come good on checking the drop-out years.

The Human Resource and Development (HRD) Ministry will be renamed Education Ministry. Also, there will be a single regulator for all higher education. The government proposes to spend 6% of GDP on education, which is significantly higher than the current expenditure of about 2%.

The National Education Policy 2020 comes with many path-breaking changes that our education system badly needs. Even though there are a few drawbacks, like less emphasis on English up to grade 5 and a decisive centralized governing body to control the policy, the merits are far more in numbers.

After implementing the new National Education Policy, the Indian academic system is set to unshackle from the past policy barriers and better compete with the world.

“USTM fills a void of a top-notch university in the region alongside being socially accountable”

Dr. B. K. Das, Pro VC, USTM, Shares His Views on University's Impact on Education in North East

University of Science and Technology (USTM) in Meghalaya bears the distinction of being the first private university in the North East of India. In a short journey that started in 2011, it has achieved many milestones. It is accredited “A Grade” by NAAC in the first cycle. Plus, in the seventh edition of the NIRF 2022 ranking, it features among the top 200 universities in the country.

Dr. B. K. Das, Pro VC, USTM, in an interview with Maeshat, talks about the university's aims and objectives and the impact on education in the North East.

Here are the excerpts from his interview with Maeshat.



Why do students from the North East migrate to other parts of India to gain an education? How does USTM help to contain this problem?

North East, from the beginning, lacked quality educational institutions. So, there used to be a student exodus from the region to other parts of India in search of higher education, including skill-based and job-oriented education. It continued till the establishment of USTM.

The university was established in 2008 by an Act of the Meghalaya government, while admission started in 2011. It is the first private university of immense reputation in the region, which has been steadfastly maintaining academic quality and infrastructure since over a decade after its establishment.

Now students from the North East have USTM in their backyard to pursue their dreams instead of migrating to far-away states in other parts of India. The tide of migration has been checked to a large extent.

What is the objective of your university?

Our main objective is to provide affordable quality education to everyone who is meritorious, including those for whom higher education remains elusive due to their remote location and poverty. USTM fills a void of a top-notch university in the region alongside being socially accountable.

Here at USTM, we mould students through hard work and make them employable graduates and entrepreneurs with a high focus on enhancing their practical knowledge. As a result, parents spending lakhs on their children's education finally have a destination to trust and not send their children outside the North East.

Within a short span of time, your university has achieved fame. How is it going to impact the education system in North East, especially when the region is affected

by insurgency?

About insurgency, it is not much of a problem here. Most of the time, the media blows it out of proportion. All I can say is there is no hostility or infighting within the people of North East. They live peacefully and maintain communal harmony irrespective of caste and creed.

However, our region has been facing the issue of poverty for a very long time, even though the region boasts an impressive literacy rate. The attributing factor to poverty here is the lack of higher education and institutions for it.

USTM has given a boost to education in the North East region. With our university showing the way, several other institutions have come up in the region, which is good for competitive education.

USTM, however, is seeing a trend of old and meritorious students coming from remote areas. Those students from poor and rural backgrounds joining the mainstream institution get the feeling of brotherhood. Here at our university, we emphasize poor and meritorious students and women empowerment.

Hundreds of poor students at USTM are getting free education. More than half of the students are girls and most of the staff, around 80%, are women. It is an inclusive university committed to uplifting society by equipping it with quality education.

What is the unique course offered by your university?

We happen to provide education in more than 60 courses. As far as uniqueness is concerned there are several courses. For an example, we have a new course known as BA Administration and Governance that is exclusive to USTM.

It is a 3-year Undergraduate program designed for the civil service aspirants who can prepare for UPSC examinations side by side pursuing their graduation.

The course includes an optional subject from Sociology, Political Science, History, Geography, or Psychology and all other subjects are covered through four allied papers in each semester covering the latest UPSC syllabus.

Additionally, the course focuses on the communication skill and personality development of students who also go through rigorous preparation for English, GK, and General Awareness.

So, after the completion of the course a successful student is not only armed with a BA degree but also well-equipped and fully-prepared to sit for UPSC examinations, thus saving crucial years of their lives.

What are the future plans of your university?

We are already a top university in the region. Plus, USTM has been ranked among the top 200 universities of India in the seventh edition of the National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF) 2022. By 2025 we wish to attract 30-40% students from outside of the North East.

Similarly, by 2030 we aspire to become a world-class university. Since USTM falls in South East Asia, we want to focus on the neighbouring countries such as Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan and other countries from the region first. We plan to make USTM an affordable one-stop destination for students seeking vocational and technological education of all kinds. Besides all the traditional courses, we want whole range of new emerging courses to be included, Robotics and Drone Technology being one of them.

Any message you would like to give to Maeshat and students?

Thanks for coming to us and taking the wonderful interview. The kind of work you're doing in positive journalism, becoming the voice of the communities living on the margin of society, is commendable.

My message to the students is that Education has no caste and religion. Come here and learn. Through you, I would like to appeal to students from the parts of Northern and Central India or anywhere else to come here and learn in one of the best, most fully equipped, and most beautiful universities amid the lap of nature.

No university can match us in diversity; we have students from 40 communities studying here harmoniously. Plus, the North East is a language hub. We want to secure the future of this beautiful and diverse society through USTM.



“The campus has an inclusive environment without any bias or discrimination toward anyone”

Ms. Anju Hazarika, the Registrar, USTM, Gives Her Account of the University and its Architect: Mahbubul Hoque.

In an interview with Maeeshat, Ms. Anju Hazarika, the Registrar of USTM in Meghalaya, takes us to the memory lane of how the university and other educational institutions came into existence with the untiring efforts of Mahbubul Hoque. She also spells out why the university, in particular, has struck a chord with the students in the extreme corners of India.

Here are excerpts of her interview with Maeeshat.

You have been associated with Mahbubul Hoque since before the USTM. So, can you tell how this incredible journey unfolded?

Yes, I have been there from the start, but at that time, there was just a study centre affiliated with Sikkim Manipal University (SMU) in the name of Central IT College. It was in 2002, and there was a craze among students for Sikkim Manipal University's professional courses like BBA, BCA, MCA, MBA etc.

Mahbubul Hoque started the study centre in a rented one-floor building, and later student enrollment began to increase so much that we got the SMU Award for being the largest study center in the North East. In 2006, we were in the second position at the national level in terms of student enrollment.

Following the success of Central IT College, Mahbubul Hoque thought that we should expand beyond distance education. The need to start an engineering college was felt. And thus, in 2009, the Regional Institute of Science & Technology (RIST) came into being with B. Tech courses under the affiliation of NEHU. Later, Mahbubul Hoque established its branches at Patharkandi and Badarpur in Assam.

How did the idea of USTM come about?

The idea was suggested by the former governor of Meghalaya, R.S. Mooshahary to Mahbubul Hoque, judging the latter's ability in establishing and managing an array of institutions. Acting

upon the governor's advice, proposal to establish USTM was submitted to UGC in around 2009/10 & also to the Government of Meghalaya. USTM formally started in 2011 with just two professional courses, namely, MSc (Biotechnology) & MSW (Master of Social Work).

USTM has grown in strength in a quick time. What could be the reasons for its success?

Several factors are working for us. First, it's a home away from home. The campus has an inclusive environment without any bias or discrimination toward anyone. There are students from 8 eight states and about 40 communities in the campus, all co-existing harmoniously to achieve their goals. We are also quick to address issues, if any arise, to the students' satisfaction. We have highly competent faculties and state-of-the-art facilities for the students to thrive academically. In addition, we are an institution with social responsibility. The students studying here come from distant rural backgrounds in the North East. Our fee structures are designed to be affordable to these students. Hundreds of students who are poor but meritorious are receiving free education. At the same time, we recognize and incentivize our students and faculties for their achievements.

The atmosphere here is certainly another attraction. The USTM campus amid the greenery is a quiet place away from city crowded areas. This disturbance-free atmosphere is conducive to more focused and serious study.

A university with such a



big infrastructure must be getting people curious as to how it all came into being. How do you respond to such curiosities?

I don't know what people think of that, but I must tell you that we are a self-financed private university. Our student fee collections are the only source of our revenue. We don't get grants from anywhere save for some exceptions like projects we are getting into. Earlier, we received some grants from NEDFi (North Eastern Development Finance Corporation Ltd) for starting construction. But mostly, we built it all by taking loans. We still have outstanding loans; however, we are confident of paying them back within the time.

You joined USTM early on as a teaching faculty, and now you are working as Registrar of this university. How do you

feel about it?

I started as an Academic Officer, but also had to see finance since I had MBA background. And I am currently working as Registrar, USTM. I really feel honoured and rewarded. Most of the people who joined Mahbulul Hoque during the initial days are still with him and holding several important posts.

He treats everyone as family. His enthusiasm and dedication to work hard have rubbed off on us. We are working quite effectively as a team under his able supervision. I have seen this institution develop from its formative days to a full-fledged university, so it's like our own child.

The everyday functioning at USTM looks organized and well-managed. However, do you think there is still scope to improve?

We are growing fast and expanding to different

locations. As a result, new bunch of people are coming on board to become a part of our journey. But some of the new employees haven't seen the struggle we had to go through to bring a university into existence. Sometimes we find them not having sufficient drive to perform, may be because they lack a sense of belongingness in the early days. We put in extra effort to dispose of a work assigned to them on time. So sometimes we get to face that hurdle to motivate them.

What else you would like to tell us about Mahbulul Hoque?

An array of institutions that we are proud of today is the result of Mahbulul Hoque's single-minded resolve to bring about pioneering change in the educational landscape of the North East. It didn't happen overnight. When he set off on his mission in Guwahati, people refused to rent him a building, doubting if he could pay the rent. So, starting from nowhere, what he has managed to establish today is awe-inspiring.

“About 15% of students belonging to the poor and backward class at USTM are getting education for free or at a significant concession”

Dr. Mehjabeen Rahman, Principal Secretary of USTM,
Talks About USTM’s Incredible Journey.

University of Science and Technology, Meghalaya, has put higher education on the centre stage in North East India thanks to its high standards of teaching and infrastructure. Students who once used to go outside of the North-East to fulfil their dreams are now more than content to study at USTM. However, the university came into existence due to one man’s steadfast vision and sheer hard work. He is Mahbubul Hoque, the Founder and Chancellor of USTM.

Mehjabeen Rahman, Principal Secretary of USTM, talks to us about Mr. Hoque’s life and USTM’s journey. Here are the excerpts from her interview with Maeeshat.





Can you give us background on the establishment of the University of Science and Technology, Meghalaya?

It all began after Mr Mahbubul Hoque Sir, the Founder Chancellor of the University of Science and Technology Meghalaya, returned from Aligarh Muslim University after completing his education in 2001. He dedicated his career to education entrepreneurship. However, it was not smooth sailing at the beginning.

No one was willing to give him premises in his home state Assam to start an institute affiliated with Sikkim Manipal University. He was not from a well-to-do family. His parents passed away at a very young age. It was his elder brother who bore the cost of the expenses of his education. He admitted him to Aligarh Muslim University. As far as I know, he started the Manipal study centre with the same computer his elder brother gave him while he was pursuing an MCA. In other words, he started his career with the same computer.

In the first year, i.e. 2001, four students (boys) took training under him. They got jobs in the government sector. In 2005, Mr Mahbubul Hoque founded Education Research and Development Foundation (ERDF), paving the way for establishing more educational institutions.

Then, Central IT College (the Sikkim Manipal University centre) was started. And it became the second-best centre of the Sikkim Manipal University in the country, flourishing leaps and bounds in a short time. Then the Regional Institute of Science and Technology (RIST), affiliated with AICTEE, was established in Meghalaya.

At this time, the Meghalaya government offered us to start a university. In 2008, the enactment of the university was done. However, due to financial constraints, the university did not start immediately. The university started functioning in 2011. It started with six students (five boys of MSc Bio-Technology and one girl of Master of Social Work). Next year, 200 students took admission. Since then, the university has started growing. At present, we have 5000 students in our university.

How USTM is different from other universities?

We are proud of the diversity and inclusivity of our university. More

than 40 types of tribal students study here. At the same time, over 2500 students stay on the university campus. Our campus is secure, so the parents feel their children are safe. It should be noted that the university has 57% of girl students while 20% of students are minorities. About 80% of the teaching staff are female. One can say it is an inclusive environment that we have created.

Our Chancellor, Mr. Mohbubul Hoque, wants students, irrespective of religion, caste, creed and tribe, to study here. One can notice that students from Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland and parts of the country study here.

Mr. Hoque always speaks and follows the ideologies of the first Education Minister of India, Maulana Azad, Swami Vivekanand, and Rabindranath Tagore. He tries to follow in their footsteps. He is also heavily inspired by former President APJ Abdul Kalam.

Tell us about the journey of University of Science and Technology, Meghalaya from 2011 to 2022?

You may have noticed that students of North East India leave their hometown and go to different places for higher studies. We focus on those students and also meritorious students from rural areas. We ensure that the students receive all the benefits at USTM at an affordable cost and without the hassle of going out of their state. About 15% of students belonging to the poor and backward class at USTM are getting education for free or at a significant concession.

Our responsibility doesn't end with awarding degrees to students. In addition, we have a dedicated career counselling and coaching mechanism for competitive examinations such as NET, IIT JAM, GATE, UPSC, and SCC.

USTM and ERDF conduct a three-day programme (sessions) for students from class 9 to under-graduates and high school dropouts in rural areas. We give them professional career guidance.

We earned "A Grade" accreditation from NAAC in the first cycle, which is a record. Moreover, in the seventh edition of the NIRF 2022 ranking, we have featured among the top 200 universities in the country. I can say our journey is getting better and better with each passing day.

“Women Entrepreneurship in the NE: An Overview”



By: Dr Rani Pathak Das

*Public Relations Officer,
University of Science & Technology
Meghalaya*

Building a business is no easy task. The perception is truer when we think about women in this field. Participation of women in the growth of the economy through their entrepreneurial endeavour helps in building economic independence of families, improve the social status of women, promote economic development and solve the problem of unemployment and poverty. A common observation for the women of the north-eastern part of India is that here women are more involved in the income generating activities than in the rest of the country. Though majority of the enterprising women are small business owners, a section of women is progressing in an encouraging manner achieving success in business, creating livelihood for many and setting example for other women to be risk takers and contribute to the growth of the economy. Along with their counterparts in the rest of India, rural women from the various corners of the North East India are embarking on their entrepreneurial journey on a relatively smaller scale. Talking about Assam, we can say that there has been a significant increase in women entrepreneurs. Earlier, women were mostly seen in the field of beauty and wellbeing, garments, fashion, handloom and handicrafts, etc. Most women lacked any formal training or a rigid business framework. Nowadays, women entrepreneurs of the region have moved beyond the trodden path and have ventured into the less traversed sectors in entrepreneurship even in the face of varied socio-cultural, economic, technical, financial and managerial

challenges. The entrepreneurial spirit of the rural Assamese women could be seen since time immemorial. We can mention the weavers of Sualkuchi who are primarily women.

However, one cannot deny the fact that entrepreneurs in rural areas face diverse challenges in setting up their self-employment ventures. Defeating such challenges, the women entrepreneurs have started their journey of entrepreneurship in their respective fields in rural areas. The problems of women entrepreneurship in rural areas include Individual, Social as well as Structural problems. Individual problems are personal in nature. In rural areas, women entrepreneurs lack motivation. As they have to attend other activities like household works, agricultural task, social ceremony, etc., they cannot concentrate on entrepreneurial activities.

Education and marketing knowhows also play an important role while availing opportunities for the development of entrepreneurship like financial assistance, training assistance and many more. There is also social and economic insecurity. Nevertheless, the encouraging side is that of late a number of organized attempts have been made to help groom women as potential entrepreneurs. Earlier, the nodal ministry of the union govt. in charge of this mission was the Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME). But now the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship is in charge of this sector.



Women entrepreneurs in the North East can take advantage of the plethora of resources and opportunities available, but it is not a uniform process here. Only a particular section of women who either had some kind of financial resources in hand or the fortitude could pave their own way to success.

According to a study sponsored by NEDFI (2002), the North East contributes 19.18% of total number of handicrafts units in India, 21.71% in terms of artisans and 79.58% in terms of value of production. Every state in the region has some unique items of production that have been highly appreciated within the country and also abroad. Handloom and handicrafts products from the NE have excellent brand value. For instance, as a special step in this direction, NEDFI, one of the premier financial organizations in

the region has launched this scheme called the SNEHH (Scheme for NE Handloom and Handicrafts).

Organizations like NABARD are promoting rural and women entrepreneurship, supporting initiative for promotion of new entrepreneurs and creation of awareness of entrepreneurial opportunities in the North East. Consortium of Women Entrepreneurs of India (CWEI), a registered civil society and a voluntary organization that works for the economic empowerment of women in the country, has also focused on developmental activities in the NE region.

It has been seen that most of the women entrepreneurs are self-motivated or motivated by their family members where they have come from business families. Encouragement from the

personnel associated with EDP course also motivated the women to start a business. Story of successful women entrepreneurs also motivates the women to come in this line. Studies have shown that women entrepreneurs not only absorb themselves in their units but also create job opportunities for outsiders and family members in their entrepreneurship. Even the financial institutions are sceptical to fund women in new ventures.

It has also been observed that most have to face tremendous difficulty in getting timely and adequate finance at a reasonable rate. In a positively note, the scenario today is improving and the prospects seems to be gradually increasing with government as well as non-government institutions extending support to the women entrepreneurs of the region.

NEP2020, Foreign Education and Minorities



By: Izhar Khan



National Education Policy is policy formulated by government of India to promote and regulate education in India both urban and rural at primary, secondary and higher education.

After Independence Maulana Abul Kalam Azad became India's first education minister and established first Indian institute of Technology in 1951 and University Grants Commission in 1953. Since then, there have been several attempts to modernise Indian education system. Union government first established the University Education Commission (1948–1949), the Secondary Education Commission (1952–1953), University Grants Commission and the Kothari Commission (1964–66).

NEP 1968 Under Indira Gandhi

Based on the findings of Kothari Commission Prime Minister Indira Gandhi Announced First National Education Policy in 1968. National Education Policy under Indira Gandhi called for 3 language formula implementations at secondary level.

NEP 1986 Under Rajiv Gandhi

Rajiv Gandhi Known as Computer man of India introduced National Education Policy 1986. In this policy Rajiv Gandhi expanded the concept of open University, established in 1985. NEP1986 also called for budgetary increase to 6% to boost education infrastructure in the country. The



policy also called for establishment of rural University to take education to rural

India, schedule Caste and schedule tribes. NEP 1986 was modified and introduced concept of common entrance exams to get admission in professional and technical courses. On 18, October 2020 government launched JEE, AIEEE and state level entrance exams.

NEP 2020 Under Narendra Modi

National Education Policy 2020 is first education policy of 21st century. It aims to address many developmental imperatives of country. It is also designed address Sustainable Developmental Goal4 (SDG4) to ensure inclusive, equitable quality education for lifelong learning.

NEP2020 seeks to fulfill unfinished agendas of previous education policies 1968, 1986 and 1992. According to NEP policy document the vision of the policy is;

“This National Education Policy envisions an education system rooted in Indian ethos that contributes directly to transforming India, that is Bharat, sustainably into an equitable

and vibrant knowledge society, by providing high-quality education to all, and thereby making India a global knowledge superpower”. (NEP2020 Policy Document)

NEP2020 and HIGHER EDUCATION

Higher education is an integral to India's growth and is key driver of social and economic progress of the country. According to NEP 2020, Indian Higher Education system is facing lots of problems few of them can be listed below;

- a. a severely fragmented higher educational ecosystem;
- b. less emphasis on the development of cognitive skills and learning outcomes;
- c. a rigid separation of disciplines, with early specialization and streaming of students into narrow areas of study;
- d. limited access particularly in socio-economically disadvantaged areas, with few HEIs that teach in local languages
- e. limited teacher and institutional autonomy;
- f. inadequate mechanisms for

merit-based career management and progression of faculty and institutional leaders;

- g. lesser emphasis on research at most universities and colleges, and lack of competitive peer-reviewed research funding across disciplines;
- h. suboptimal governance and leadership of HEIs;
- i. an ineffective regulatory system; and
- j. large affiliating universities resulting in low standards of undergraduate education. (NEP2020 Policy Document)

NEP2020 and International Education

Two earlier national policies on education (NEP 1968 and NEP 1986) were relatively silent on International Education. (N.V. Varghese ,2021). NEP2020 sees internationalization of Indian education system as one of the solution to reduce it's problems of higher education in India. Policy document mentions the vision to attract more foreign students to India and establish its image as Vishwa Guru(Global Education Hub) at affordable cost. To achieve this objective

government encourages universities to sign MOU with foreign universities for research and collaboration.

In India Internationalization strategy was first adopted by University Grant Commission in 2002 by “Promotion of Indian Higher Education Abroad” (PIHEAD) in 2002. The bill to allow foreign education providers was presented in 2010 but was not passed by the parliament. India offers 3940 scholarships every year through Indian council for cultural relations (ICCR) for foreign students from 140 countries and has signed MOU with 54 countries for education (N.V. Varghese ,2021).

India hosted 46703 foreign students in India (N.V. Varghese, 2020). Indian Higher Education Institutions have provision to reserve 15% seats for foreign students although in reality is farfetched, the enrollment is close to 0.13% and this is due to low demand for Indian programs in international market.

Looking at these scenarios NEP 2020 gives priority to international Education and encourages the top-ranking foreign universities (Among top 100 in world University ranking) to establish campuses in India. It also encourages High performing Indian Universities to set up campuses abroad.

NEP2020, HEI, Students and Minorities

Under NEP2020 HEIs are given target and means to globalize Indian education system. High performing HEIs have task to establish campuses abroad and even attract foreign students to India. It has two way responsibility. According to the Cross-Border Education Research Team’s latest international campus listing, Indian institutions have branch campuses in countries such as Australia, Mauritius, Nepal,

Singapore, Sri Lanka, the United Arab Emirates, and Uzbekistan.

India is aspiring to play a global role and education may be a supporting sector in that process. Therefore, India has been making serious efforts in recent years to increase the flow of inbound international students by extending scholarships under the

“Study in India” program launched in 2018. India plans to host nearly 500,000 international students by 2024, 10 percent among them on attractive government scholarships. The provision of scholarships is an indication of India’s interest to play a global role.

Another area envisaged in NEP 2020 is the promotion of research collaborations and faculty exchanges between Indian and foreign institutions. India launched a Scheme for Promotion of Academic and Research Collaboration (SPARC) in 2018, to strengthen academic and research collaborations with select countries. Another program, the Global Initiative for Academic Networks (GIAN), was successful in attracting more than 1,283 scholars from 56 countries to Indian higher education institutions between 2015 and 2019. These collaborations are seen as reliable and sustainable ways to promote internationalization.

High performing Minorities institutions can also capitalize on this by signing MOUs with foreign institutions in Middle East, Africa, Europe, South America and North America. The MOUs can be in the areas such as research, Conference, joint collaboration, Credit Transfer, Exchange Programs and many more.

Under NEP2020 if India is able to achieve its target then Indian HEIs will benefit in terms of higher revenue, better infrastructure, increase in foreign students, research opportunities, exchange programs and

enhanced global reputation.

However the reality is very far from what is planned. The NEP 2020 condition that India will only welcome branch campuses from top-ranking institutions may act as a constraint against expanding the scope of institutional mobility to India. Informal discussions with officials at some top-ranking institutions indicate that only a few are keen to establish campuses in India, for several reasons. (N.V. Varghese ,2021).

Students will make most out of this happening. They will be able to achieve global education at affordable price and will also improve their job prospects will multidisciplinary education. The students will have global career prospects after completing their education. They will have improved network and opportunities waiting for them.

Conclusion

To fulfil its vision, India needs to put in place legislative measures and incentives to attract institutions and students. Under NEP2020 India can emerge as global leader in education a Vishwa Guru and Students can pour in to learn arts, science, yoga and many of ancient Indian knowledge. Minority Institutions have lots of scope to develop their network and evolve as major sources of education multidisciplinary education providers with more pluralistic approach. Students’ community is another segment where NEP2020 has put lots of emphasis on learning with purpose. Internationalization will enhance scope of learning and better career prospects globally. With this I will suggest that NEP2020’s vision for Internationalization of Indian education is a positive step in right direction.

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Understanding Climate Financing



By: Sana Iqbal Shaikh

Earth needs a balance of greenhouse gasses to maintain just the right temperature for living things. But some human activities are changing earth's natural greenhouse effect. For example – burning fossil fuel like coal and oil release more carbon dioxide into our atmosphere to trap more and more heat, leading to a climate change. So, to reduce the greenhouse gas emission, renewable power is to be used such as wind, solar etc.

This can be done with the help of Climate financing. Climate change is one of the defining challenges of our time, with the potential to impact the health and well-being of nearly every person on the planet. In addition, climate change poses a large aggregate risk to the economy and the financial system. The tools of financial economics, designed for valuing and managing risky future outcomes, can therefore help society assess and respond to climate change risk.

This burst of research activity constitutes a new and quickly growing field that we refer to as “Climate Finance”. Any type of financing that is used to tackle climate change is climate finance. Climate finance refers to the money that is provided by the developed countries economy to the developing countries in order to mitigate this problem of climate change and at the same time, help them develop and invest in eco-friendly technologies, renewable resources and solar power.

And achieving the objectives of the

Paris Agreement require not so much increasing the volume of investments but rather redirecting investments from certain technologies and options toward greener, low-carbon, resilient ones.

Climate finance also tries to accelerate development and can do so by helping to close financing shortages. Accelerating development is important because recent evidence suggests that development—as framed in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

There are various types of agreements and treaties that are form to serve the purpose of climate finance

1. Paris Agreement -The Paris Agreement is a legally binding international treaty on climate change. It was adopted by 196 Parties at COP 21 in Paris, on 12 December 2015 and entered into force on 4 November 2016.

Its goal is to limit global warming to well below 2, preferably to 1.5 degrees Celsius, compared to pre-industrial levels.

2. UNFCCC- UNFCCC is an acronym for the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. It has been ratified by 197 countries and is called to have a near-universal membership. All of these culminated in the establishment of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in Rio de Janeiro in Brazil, in 1992.

UNFCCC is a major step in the

direction to control the downward spiral of climate change.

3. Kyoto protocol - The Kyoto Protocol was an international treaty which extended the 1992 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change that commits state parties to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, based on the scientific consensus that global warming is occurring and that human-made CO₂ emissions are driving it.

The Kyoto Protocol was adopted in Kyoto, Japan, on 11 December 1997 and entered into force on 16 February 2005.

There are various types of climate financing such as Climate Investment fund (CF), Green Climate Fund (GCF), Adaptation fund (AF), Global Environmental Facility Trust Fund (GEF). this fund is critical to addressing the climate finance requirements.

There are a variety of mechanisms to meet the need for climate finance:

Green Bonds

A green bond is a fixed-income financial instrument like any other bond. However, these bonds are issued to raise financing for climate change solutions and are labelled as green by the issuer when they meet a certain benchmark. They can be issued by governments, banks, municipalities, or corporations in any debt format, such as private placement, securitization, and covered bonds

Bloomberg Barclays MSCI Global Green Bond Index -This is a multi-currency benchmark that includes local currency debt markets tracked by the Barclays Global Aggregate Index.

S&P Green Bond Index and S&P Green Bond Select Index-The S&P Green Bond Index and the S&P Green Bond Select Index are also multi-currency benchmarks, wherein

the former is market-value-weighted while the latter is modified market-value-weighted.

As a result, this is how various developing nations have recovered environmentally from climate finance. Green Street Africa will develop portfolios of distributed solar projects in sub-Saharan Africa, addressing the energy access gap of public buildings.

On June 30th 2020, the European Union (EU) and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) announced a total grant package of EUR 61.3 million to be provided for green and climate resilient investments in Egypt, Morocco and the countries of the Eastern Partnership.

By allocating grants to energy efficiency, renewable energy and climate resilience projects, the EU and EBRD intend to boost a sustainable recovery and ensure a low-carbon and climate resilient pathway in their partner countries.

On June 26, 2020, the European Investment Bank (EIB), the long-term lending institution of the European Union owned by its member states, announced to invest EUR 43.5 million to finance four 50-megawatt peak (MWp) solar photovoltaic (PV) plants in Andalusia, Spain.

Over a 30-year period, the projects are expected to reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 119 million tons and create 340,000 green jobs in key sectors such as sustainable transport, renewable energy and energy efficiency systems, as well as low-carbon agriculture and natural resources. Climate finance in India has been understood as budgetary outlays made towards climate missions under the NAPCC. This understanding has gradually given way to a more nuanced picture of climate finance structure, which is heterogeneous,

fragmented and decentralized with several public, private, national and international actors playing important roles.

Climate Finance in India can be distinguished into public and private.

Private climate finance exists in the form of loans (local and foreign currency loans), private equity, venture capital, partial risk guarantees, green bonds and Clean Development Mechanism (CDM).

Apart from these sources, international funds, multilateral Development banks and bilateral financial institutions also provide climate finance in the form of grants, loans and concessional loans.

The distinction between public and private finance in many instances is difficult to maintain the environment ministry has estimated that India will need \$2.5 trillion to meet its Nationally Determined Contributions, of which \$280 billion is needed in the next five years for green infrastructure alone SBI had launched Green Channel Counter (GCC) facility at their branches in 2010 to change the traditional way of paper-based banking (SBI, 2014).

There is still time to avoid the worst impacts of climate change, if we take strong action now.

The scientific evidence is now overwhelming: climate change is a serious global threat, and it demands an urgent global response.

Understanding how much and what type of finance is being made available to support low-carbon, climate-resilient development, how finance corresponds to countries' needs, and how funds are being spent, is critical to building trust among countries and ensuring that money is being spent wisely.

Islamic Social Finance and Its Role in Achieving Sustainable Development Goals



Shahbaz Alam

Ph.D. student in Islamic Finance;

If we study the Quran and Hadith then we can find that six elements are founded by the shariah to be played a unique role in showing the value of society in Islam, in which there are four main social coherencies are Farad, Shura, ALADI wall Ishan, Al-Waqf, and Zakat. These five elements are the main indices of sustainable development.

Currently, the world under the united nation has introduced 17 sustainable development goals that are to be achieved by 2030. The current 17 goals are no poverty, no hunger, good health, quality education, gender equality, clean water and sanitation, clean energy, good jobs and economic growth, innovation, and infrastructure, reduce inequalities, sustainable cities, and communities, responsible consumption, protect the planet, life below water, life on land, peace, and justice and finally partnership for the goals.

If the SDGs are analyzed properly, they would reach the same goals that Islamic finance aims to achieve by applying its teaching from the main source.

The 17 goals are a chain that links each one to the other, where the first goal is the most important one. Poverty is the mother of all evil as it has a direct connection to the remaining goals. Hunger as an example would be automatically removed in the presence of money, similarly, education would be provided with enough sources of

money. The existence of education would solve the issue of gender equality. This linkage is also applied to clean energy and economic growth as nations would focus on clean energy once they have a stable economy that supports all aspects of life. So, the achievement of the goals is believed to be collected rather than individually. The UN to achieve the 17 goals may face many challenges that make the 2030 dreams fade away. Challenges such as bringing the interested

Stakeholders' together, building accountability for actions and finding the correct financing tools to achieve the goals. The main tool in solving the given 17 problems is the financing part, which most countries that suffer from the 17 mentioned issues lack.

For example, Throughout Islamic history and civilization, Waqf institutions have played important roles by providing social goods, for example, education and health, public goods i.e. roads, bridges and national security, commercial businesses, utilities i.e. water and sanitation, religious services i.e. building and maintenance of mosques and graveyards, aid for the poor, orphans, and the needy, and creating employment and support for the agricultural and industrial sectors, without imposing any costs on governments. Waqf has been one of the most important socio-economic institutions that have ensured that social and economic roles can be established and upheld with fairness

and justice.

Moreover, the framework of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) constituted one of the most comprehensive and inclusive models. The MDGs encapsulated eight highly prioritized social goals to be achieved by the international community within the timeframe of the last 15 years. The given timeframe of MDGs has already expired at the end of 2015. The MDGs are now improved and replaced with another set of social goals namely, SDGs. Compared to the eight goals of MDGs, the SDGs provide a more comprehensive framework as it consists of 17 major goals. The target of poverty elimination is the top-most agenda of both the MDGs and SDGs while the other hand, eradication of poverty always remains one of the main priorities of Waqf institutions in Islamic history. It was found that the approach of SDGs with the Maqasid al-shariah since both are focused on human survival to combat all deprivations which cause potential hardship on human existence and jeopardized human dignity. It was pointed out that seventeen (17) of the existing developmental goals of SDGs are in line with the Maqasid al-shariah in which Muslim people may benefit through waqf. This study is possible through desk-based research in which a qualitative research paradigm is used for the analysis of the available literature.

The overall interest of Islamic social finance is the provision of finance to the poor to increase their income and wealth thereby making them less dependent on others for sustenance. So Islamic social finance has

identified various means of making funds available to the poor or the small-scale entrepreneurs which include micro-financing, zakat and

sadaqah, awqaf, and Qard Hassan so that wealth will continue to circulate and poverty which is the root of all social menace will be curtailed significantly. Therefore, the concept and application of Islamic social finance will genuinely cater to the needs of the poor and the less privileged and of course in the long run generate socio-economic growth for the community at large.

Likewise, the CSR, If we look at CSR, we should understand that businesses must act responsibly not only because it is in their commercial interest to do so, but because it is part



of how society expects businesses to operate. Furthermore, according to the social contract paradigm, business is regarded as a social institution and should join with other social structures like the family, educational system and religious institutions, to help enhance life and meet basic needs., each enjoying a set of rights and having reciprocal responsibilities. There is a direct and indirect mutual strong relationship between business corporations and society (Dusuki, A. W., 2008).

Islam nurtures and helps to remove

self-centeredness and encourages kindness and compassion, foreclosing cooperation, and harmony among human beings. The influence of Islam on business practices is well defined in the Holy Qur'an and Sunnah, which are the main resources of business ethics in Islam. Islamic business values such as justice, socio-economic measure, human wellbeing, honesty, integrity, kindness, etc are considered the core of socio-economics in Islam.

Therefore, it is a social responsibility of every believer to look after the well-being of society especially the poor and needy within his capacity.

In Islam, individuals, as well as corporations, are encouraged to sacrifice, give up, and spend their wealth on the poor and the needy people while expecting their reward will get only from God on the Day of Judgment.

In the same vein, the social finance system is available in Islamic finance. It has been able to unveil the social finance structures including their efficacy in bringing about social justice among the members of a given community. Since everything was given to us as a gift as we do not own all the things that keep us alive.

We should not hesitate to reciprocate by giving out special things we have as excess to those who require them to bring about peaceful co-existence. Consequently, for us to promote healthy relationships among people of different backgrounds and socioeconomic statuses, concerted efforts should be made not only by the government but also by the privileged individuals in society to enhance the adequate framework for social finance. By so doing, poverty which is the root of all social vices and social insecurity will become a thing of the past and the world will become a better place for us to live.

The Metaphysical Role of the Machine as a Communicator:

A Look at Functional, Social, and Cultural Aspects of AI's Communication and Dilemma to its Ontological Definition



By: Intikhab Alam Shamsi



Abstract

Artificial Intelligence and people's interactions with it (through virtual agents, social bots, and language-generation software) don't fit into standard human-to-human communication paradigms. To address the divide between communication theory and rising

technology, this article proposes human-machine communication (HMC) scholarship as a theoretical underpinning for navigating these settings. Using an HMC framework, we outline a research agenda centered on two key aspects of communicative AI technologies: (1) the functional dimensions through which people make sense of these devices and

applications as communicators, (2) the relational dynamics through which people associate with these technologies and, in turn, relate to themselves and others.

Keywords

Artificial intelligence, communication research, human–computer interaction, human–machine communication, media studies, ontological classification, social configurations

Introduction

For over 70 years, Artificial Intelligence and communication have been studied separately. Neural networks took off during the 1980s when an algorithm was developed for unsupervised learning, leading to advances in the automatic speech recognition, natural language processing, and machine translation domains. Now research in Artificial Intelligence aims to replicate human intelligence, including communication, in the forms of robots (Frankish & Ramsey, 2014). But communication has typically been seen as a human activity mediated by technology (Schramm, 1972), with an emphasis on how people exchange messages and the repercussions thereof (Craig, 1999).

Now, AI systems designed to communicate bridge AI and communication research. Recent AI breakthroughs have led to the incorporation of powerful AI technology into daily life. People often use Amazon's Alexa, Apple's Siri, and other digital assistants (OLMSTEAD, 2017). With the proliferation of the Internet of Things, their interactions with these smart products will also expand. Within the media industry, the Associated Press and other news organizations employ AI-enabled technologies (Marconi et al., 2017).

Several communication academics are urging the field to understand

increasingly realistic and communicative AI systems, people's interactions with them, and their repercussions (Gunkel, 2012b). Communicative AI researchers face a major challenge. AI and people's interactions with it don't suit communication paradigms that have centred on human-to-human communication for more than a century (Gunkel, 2012b). This article analyses AI's theoretical challenges and proposes a new way to think about technology and communication.

Before proceeding, we want to stress that it's impossible to cover all elements of AI and communication in one article, and that journalism studies still have many unexplored areas (Lewis et al., 2019). Our goal is less to categorize the issue comprehensively than to utilize HMC as a theoretical entry point for stimulating research on AI and its role in communication, highlighting new problems and providing fresh light on current ones.

Artificial intelligence as a social actor

AI systems function as interlocutors and content providers. Voice-activated assistants like Amazon's Alexa answer questions audibly (Peter & Kühne, 2018). Humans and robots communicate verbally and nonverbally. Automated programmes called bots masquerade as human social media discussion partners, affecting tone and substance (Ferrara et al., 2016). News-writing programmes construct stories from raw data that can't be differentiated from human-created stories (Clerwall, 2014). These technologies function as communicators, a position previously designated for humans in the communication profession. AI automates communication and the social processes it supports (J. Reeves, 2016).

AI communication systems are

developed to exchange messages, a move from media's traditional role as a medium for human interaction (Gunkel, 2012b). Before AI, talking technology like car navigation systems existed, but interactivity was restricted to a few predefined requests. Technology wasn't user-, context-, or message-aware. AI-enabled devices and programmes have dynamic rather than static interactions, based on the messages exchanged and context or data offered to the programme. Some AI systems "learn" about their human communication partner and adjust interactions. Some scholars propose that new technology, such as robots, may bypass the constraints of human communication by integrating different modes of communication (Peter & Kühne, 2018). AI technologies are designed to be realistic conversation companions.

Human–computer interaction (HCI) study shows that when technology directly communicates with people, particularly when linked with human social signals, gadgets and programmes are considered "social actors" (C. Nass et al., 1994). While people know a human programmed the system, they direct their messages to the computer, not the programmer (Sundar & Nass, 2016). Individuals regard robots as communicative partners separate from humans but social nevertheless (Edwards et al., 2016), and people engaging with a digital assistant perceive themselves as exchanging messages with a technology (Guzman, 2019). Humans see communicative AI devices as communicators.

The progress of Artificial Intelligence and the progress of theoretical obstacle in communication theory

This AI distinction of a computer as a communicative subject makes AI technology attractive for

communication scholars, but also a theoretical hurdle. AI threatens communication research by dissolving the ontological boundary between people and computers (Gunkel, 2012b). The anthropocentric definition of communication sees it as a human trait (Peters, 1999). Earlier communication ideas made humans the communicators and technology the medium (Rogers, Everett, 1997). The default paradigm of communication in textbooks and research has been that of humans exchanging information via a technology that mediates human connection.

This doesn't mean communication theory has disregarded or ignored technology's progress. As digital devices spread, researchers focused on "old" and "new" media divisions (Rogers, 1986). Some scholars developed the study of technology as a social actor and made substantial theoretical contributions to human-computer interactions (C. Nass et al., 1994). Computer-mediated communication research evolved with new media but remained anthropocentric (Gunkel, 2012b). AI gadgets produced as communicators do not fit into assumptions based on prior technology established as human engagement channels.

Transforming the machine's function: From channel to communicator

AI in communication scholars requires a body of work that questions long-held ideas of communication as a human-only process and accounts for technology's growing role. HMC research and theory may handle this problem, we say.

Despite being founded in several epistemological and methodological methodologies, HMC research focuses on meaning-making in communication settings involving

at least one machine partner. HMC research includes theorising robots as communicative others (Sandry, 2015), exploring human emotions to digital interlocutors, and addressing the ethical implications of machines as communicators (Gunkel, 2012a).

HMC study is not bound to a vision of communication as a human-only process and the role of machine as mediator, making it an ideal lens through which to explore communicative AI. The role of technology in HMC is governed by its form and function, enabling it to be a communicative subject directly exchanging signals with people in a meaning-making process. HMC scholars don't say machines aren't mediators. Alternative methods of thinking about technology's design, function, and how people perceive and engage with it may lead to a new understanding of human-machine interactions (Peter & Kühne, 2018). HMC provides a theoretical and methodological framework for communicating about AI.

We start with HMC's ontological thesis that technology is a communicator, based on AI and similar studies. Our topic is comprehensive and adaptable for numerous theoretical and methodological approaches. The agenda investigates basic characteristics of human communication when a machine performs a human role. According to Dautenhahn (Dautenhahn, 2004), few people comprehend what technology is and how it communicates. The study plan begins with AI's position as a communicator. Communication is a social activity (Mead GH, 1934), and incorporating technology into communication tasks places it in social situations (Suchman, 2006). Our next event discusses AI's function in social settings. We've explained that communication is a human activity. The introduction of a technology into

a role historically associated with people raises ontological questions about what it means to be human (S, 1984). The final element of the agenda focuses on the consequences of AI for humans and communication. AI's functional and relational communication traits.

Communicative functions of artificial intelligence

The first half of the agenda focuses on the fundamentals of communication, including how AI systems are formed and perceived as communicators. We analyze the difficulties communication scholars must consider before studying AI, as well as the larger challenges that accompany the shift from human-human to human-AI communication contexts.

Communication studies must differentiate interpersonal vs. mass communication. New technologies have required a rethinking of communication definitions and limits (Lievrouw, 2009). Now, communicative AI raises questions about where human-AI interactions fit in a human-human paradigm.

Testing the degree of resemblance and difference between human-human and HMC is key to studying people's interactions with technology (B. Reeves & Nass, 1998), an approach that continues to drive HMC research. Hypothesis: a human-machine message is similar to interpersonal (human) communication (Lewis et al., 2019) describe, automated journalism technology, such as news-writing programmes, are intended for mass communication. Academics have assessed "robot reporters" and the material they create based on human journalistic norms, such as dependability (Clerwall, 2014).

This pragmatic approach to defining parallel categories of human-human and human-machine communication

has helped characterize interactions and locate human communication theories and practices applicable to HMC. Human interaction for HMC education has hazards. Spence (Spence, 2019) compares HMC's entrance to a big CMC debate. Should HMC be judged by human communication? Beginning with HMC's inferiority will restrict future studies, he warns.

We would add that although human communication and its concepts have proven significant, researchers must be careful not to allow these categories determine the permanent boundaries of HMC. The emergence of HMC may give the opportunity to develop new categories for people's interactions with technology and to reflect on the limits of human communication (Peter & Kühne, 2018). AI communication researchers should not just ask "where does this human-AI contact fit in HMC?" or "what is the human-communication equivalent of this interaction?" "Does this interaction make sense under these categories?" "What new categories or old borders need to be redrawn?"

Individuals' interactions are impacted by their perceptions about their communication partners (Kelly GA, 1955) HMC replaces "with whom" with "with what". This study studies how people conceptualize AI as a communicator, including their perceptions of the technology's human and machine-like traits and the links they make between a communicative technology and other interacting entities, such as animals (Dautenhahn, 2004).

According to studies (C. I. Nass & Brave, 2005), voice and gender elicit human-like behaviors in gadgets. The degree a technology's gender reflects societal standards affects people's opinions of and interactions with it (Suchman, 2006). (C. I. Nass &

Brave, 2005) The study of how people comprehend the human and machine-like components of communication technology is ongoing. This may include verbal and nonverbal qualities (human/machine, male/female, young/old, embodied/disembodied, mobile/stationary) that govern how to create the assistant as a communicative subject and how to engage with it.

Social responses to human-like signals in technology are not evidence that people regard a certain technology as human or behave similarly to a person and a gadget in all communication-related settings. Nass and Moon (C. Nass & Moon, 2000) say people are social toward technology because they depend on human-to-human communication. Machine attributes may affect how people view technology as a communication source (Sundar, 2008). Humans and technology, especially AI and robots, have different communication styles. In these cases, people and technology were both communicators, albeit in different ways. Continuous study should not only compare humans and machines as communicators, but also their differences, so academics may grasp technology as a separate communicator.

Existing research on social cues and technology provides a basis for communicative AI. AI design is more complicated than past research technologies, as we've described. Since communicative AI is relatively new, much remains to be learned about how people interpret and use technology in their daily lives. Future research may focus on how location and time affect AI's communication function and how humans perceive it. It's now possible to study how people's conceptions of programmes and devices as communicators change over time and across settings. How does early AI alter people's understanding of future AI?

Relational dimensions of AI's role as a communicator

Conversation connects people and, ultimately, society (Mead GH, 1934). Thus, people's interactions are not isolated; they occur in social environments where each communicator understands the other's features and characteristics in relation to the self (Goffman, 1956). What about human-AI communication? In the last section, we discussed how a technology operates as a communicator, including interaction principles and embedded communicative qualities. This section focuses on how individuals view AI as a communicator in relation to themselves.

Human social roles and relationships have inspired technology, especially AI (Suchman, 2006). Weizenbaum's (Weizenbaum, 1966) ELIZA was meant to act as a therapist while the user played the patient. Human-like traits, including gender, strengthen AI's social function. AI assistants have generally been developed using gender cues that match human assistants (Suchman, 2006). How people view the typically human role communicative AI performs may affect its social standing. Automated news-writing technologies help journalists create data-driven pieces (Dörr, 2016). Although these programmes do not do extra journalistic activities, they are called "robot journalists" in the popular press and journalism studies (Clerwall, 2014), and they have been compared to human journalists in writing competitions (SMITH, 2015).

Developing technology for a social purpose is meant to provide people conceptual advice on how to engage with it (Suchman, 2006). From an HMC perspective, the social placement of technology comprises how humans perceive a specific technology in connection to themselves, the factors

leading to such interpretations, and how such conceptualizations shape their interactions. As in the “robot journalist” scenario, people may assign social functions to technology without overt social indicators. Communication academics should examine how the function of a technology is decided via public discourse, in addition to how people react to technology with a given function (Carlson, 2015). Social roles and linkages may be used to analyse power relations between people and technology.

AI may affect how people view themselves in connection to their devices (S, 1984). Although technology has always played a part in the construction of the self, what fascinates academics about people’s encounters with AI is that a human-like entity, rather than a person, is on the receiving end (S, 1984). According to Papacharissi (Papacharissi, 2019), the study of the “networked self” in the age of AI involves not only how humans make sense of themselves in their contact with a technology, but also how they “reimagine” who they are utilizing these technologies. Papacharissi (Papacharissi, 2019) advocates for going beyond clichés regarding technology and the self by investigating the fundamental assumptions of how these technologies are explored. Researchers must be mindful of how the anthropocentric idea of communication has shaped the study of the self and how it may need to be rethought in a human–AI environment.

Zhao (Zhao, 2006) advised academics to consider the societal repercussions of human-like technologies, while Reeves (J. Reeves, 2016) urged them to explore technology’s mutability. Even before AI, technologies were deemed communicative because they embody cultural ideas around which human relationships and societal

institutions grow (Suchman, 2006). Jones (Papacharissi, 2019) adds that as AI and other technologies gain agency, questions emerge regarding how much humans have.

For critical, cultural, and feminist scholars, emerging AI systems represent their inventors’ worldviews and biases (Broussard, 2018). From this perspective, technology’s ability to stand in for a person as a communicator, thereby automating communication, undermines social institutions that depend on human communication, such as democracy, and perhaps erases and devalues the human who originally occupied this function (J. Reeves, 2016). Scholars say that using gender and other human-like signals in technology, such a virtual female assistant, socially and economically lower some groups, like human assistants. Economic and political concerns with communication automation are akin to industrial automation (J. Reeves, 2016). As communicative AI gets increasingly integrated into the home, the power struggle moves there (Fortunati, 2017). In critical and cultural studies of communication, the social consequences of reflecting the human in the machine, automating communication labor, and embracing these technologies in personal and meaningful settings are growing concerns.

Conclusion

AI-based technology’s shift from mediators to communicators provides theoretical concerns and opportunities for communication academics. In form, function, and human interpretation, communicative AI breaks from the major role of technology in communication theory, which is based on anthropocentric communication assumptions. HMC academics are researching ways to reinvent technology as a

communicator. Such an approach allows for new questions about three key aspects of communicative AI technologies: (1) the functional dimensions through which people make sense of these devices and applications as communicators, (2) the relational dynamics through which people associate with these technologies and, in turn, relate to themselves and others, and (3) the metaphysical implications raised by the blurring of ontological boundaries surrounding what constitutes a person.

This paper aimed to provide communication scholars with a starting point for articulating the differences between communicative AI and previous technologies at the centre of communication research, and to introduce a theoretical foundation for navigating these differences and the challenges they present through HMC scholarship. We’ve created a research strategy to increase human-AI communication expertise. Each part of this agenda—the functional, the relational, and the metaphysical—could justify its own work, but our goal in covering all three more generally was to give researchers with a holistic picture of communicative AI’s implications for the study of communication. HMC combines functional, relational, and metaphysical aspects of human communication. Communication scholars must examine not just issues within each sector, but also their linkages.

This programme focuses on AI communication technology. As technology advances, more aspects will be discovered and this agenda will be refined. As AI gadgets gradually take over human communication obligations, communication experts will need to coordinate their efforts to describe a complex phenomenon using a variety of ideas and concepts.

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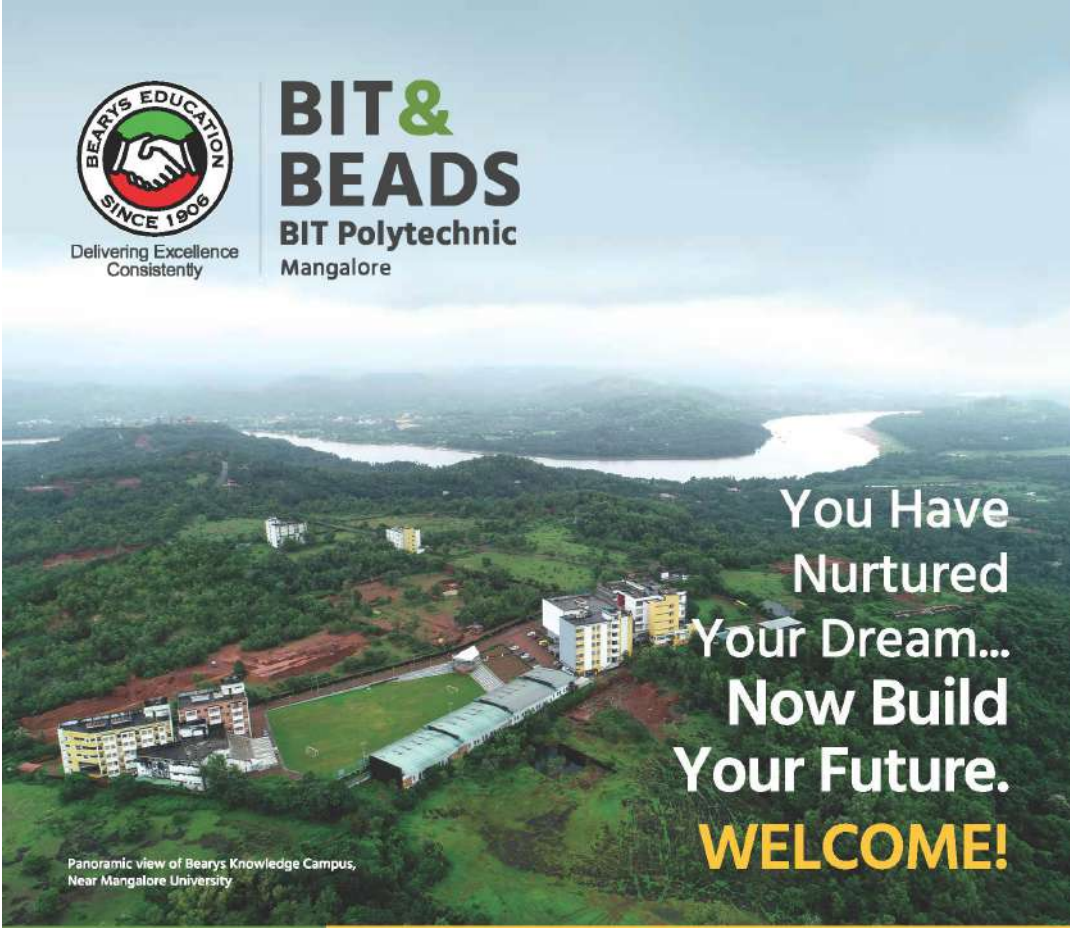
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