A day of awards: PU’s 19th convocation

Puducherry: The 19th convocation organised by Puducherry University was held on March 20 at Jawaharlal Nehru Auditorium. Mr. Somnath Chatterjee, Former Speaker of the Lok Sabha delivered the convocation address. He said that the convocation is an occasion to take stock of what has been achieved and what remains to be done. “Our commitment should be that all those who were denied education should now have access to quality education. True education is indeed a liberating force, bringing down all narrow barriers and enabling us to think critically and scientifically without fear or prejudice,” he added.

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Puducherry celebrates Independence Day

In Puducherry

Greetings to our readers in the new academic year. We are just coming out of hibernation after a lengthy and sweaty summer and the ending of another University year. We are gradually beginning to get our bearings and kick-starting the engines of creation again. Adrenaline rushes, collective frenzy, flashes of inspiration and waves of frustration have characterised this issue of THE INQUIRER, as always. It has all our regular columns and brings you a varied spread of reading matter that will keep you immersed for at least a couple of hours. The content for this one has mostly been produced by our sophomores, now quite seasoned journalists in their own right.

Our new batch has just joined us and will soon begin to grace our media lab with their presence, contributions and creative fire. You will see them large and in colour in forthcoming issues.

On campus

Puducherry: Vice-Chancellor, Prof. J.A.K. Tareen, Registrar S. Loganathan, faculty and students of Puducherry University assembled to celebrate the 62nd Independence Day at the B.R. Ambedkar building. Speaking on the occasion, the Vice Chancellor said that each citizen plays a crucial role in the building of a nation. “A country with the largest human resources and technical efficiency will excel in the near future,” he averred.

He urged all the students to achieve their goals and contribute to the development of the nation.

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An aromatic experience for all

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A nice mixture of interesting stuff

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**Workshop on Contemporary Issues in Engineering Education**

**Pondicherry:** On July 30, the Department of Economics of Pondicherry University organised a workshop on ‘Contemporary Issues in Engineering Education’ which was held at the Pondicherry Engineering College auditorium. Various issues related to technical education were discussed and deliberated upon.

In his inaugural address, Prof. A. Gnanam, former chairman of SNAAC and former Vice-Chancellor of Pondicherry University said that the government has not only permitted private participation on a large scale but also initiated serious steps to establish government-funded national level technical institutions to improve the accessibility and quality of technical education in the country. He also pointed out that in the 18-24 age group, 2% enrol in technical education, indicating a huge gap between demand and supply.

**Puducherry:** The electric shuttle service to airports and important destinations will be started in a few months ago at Pondicherry University, has made life easier for the students. These non-polluting electric vehicles are eco-friendly and efficient, making rides a pleasure. The shuttle service is a wonderful initiative taken by the University as it helps in commuting to any place at any time of the day.

Three shuttles go around the University from 8.30 a.m. to 9.30 p.m. The students are delighted by this facility but some argue that this service needs to be provided even more frequently and that drivers should be more customer-friendly. Distances can be covered faster as the shuttle will take you to your destination.
Creating a Knowledge Society: Ananda Rangapillai Library

A National Seminar was conducted by the library on Aug. 26-27 in collaboration with the Departments of French, History, Anthropology and Tamil as part of the tercentenary celebration of Sri Ananda Rangapillai who began his birthday on March 30.

On June 27, a workshop on e-resources was organised for the Principals of affiliated colleges. The objective was to provide a broader perspective of the information products available, to facilitate e-learning and research and to enable them to be part of the National Information Infrastructure network initiated by the UGC/ MHRD.

On June 8, a workshop on e-resources was organised for the librarians of affiliated colleges. Course material on overview of e-resources, how to search e-resources – namely, e-reference, e-books, e-databases and e-journals, UGC INFONET Digital Library (ailinfonet.co.in), which has an e-journal access facility was given. Online demo and training conducted the librarians knowledge and search skills. They were given hands-on experience at the e-resource browsing centre of the library.

On May 26, a User Orientation Workshop on EBSCO data-bases namely Academic Source Complete (6100 + full text periodicals) and Business Source Complete (3388 full text + Journals) was organised. Faculty members and research scholars were trained in search skills and the databases being subscribed by the University.

Talent search by Hello FM

Hello FM 106.4, under its ‘College Seminar Talent Hunt’ stepped into Pondicherry University on Aug 18 to conduct auditions. The team has been going to various colleges and universities to conduct games and contests to identify talent in radio. The channel is looking for people who can run one-day transmission days and their programmes were broadcast on air for a day.

Monalisha Basumatary

Mass Communication

A peek into PU’s English Department

The life in the University is rich with various departments and schools contributing to its diversit y. In this issue, we bring you an initiative of the “Know your University” initiative on the campus. Each issue will showcase one school/centr e/department, in order to share its working with our readers. We begin with the Department of English and request other departments to contribute for the upcoming issues.

Editor

All roads will soon lead to the English Department. The English Department has always been bustling with intellectual and cultural activities, but has kept to itself all strictly in-house. Now we are all set to announce ourselves with flair and flamboyance.

Those coming up the southern entrance to the second floor of the English Department in the last ten days would not have missed our inviting new reading space, where research scholars and postgraduate students alike like to linger. Students are seen here flipping through the newspaper, or simply taking a break in between classes. A wall-mag that will soon go up on the walls of the reading area is going to bear the signature of our students’ creativity.

The new entrants were induct ed into the Department with a small, colourful booklet profiling the Department’s academic activities, faculty and scholars of the people. I was always with the people and had fought for the cause of the people of Puducherry. I have tried hard for their upliftment in social life. And I have raised social issues in the Lok Sabha for the development of women, the scheduled castes and tribes, the socially and educationally backward classes and the unemploy ed. I have also raised issues like reservation of ORCs, price-rate and budgetary issues.

Why did you join politics? I was invited by a political party to file my nomination for the Lok Sabha. My passion is to fight for the needs of the people and to serve them. I thought politics is the best way to get in touch with the common people. My hard work, devotion and sincerity have contributed to my success in this endeavour. Now that you are back on campus, what are you looking forward to?

I have more responsibilities this time, for developing the Department. The University has to arrange for more funds for students who would be stepping into the developing world of economics. I hope to use my experience to introduce better schemes, programmes and provide financial assistance to the University. I am also looking forward to setting up new departments.

Finally, what is your message to the youth? Life without values is meaningless. Perseverance, hard work and sincerity are the keys to success. They must inculcate these qualities and develop their skills in their respective fields. To be a valuable citizen of this country one ought to contribute to make India a developed nation by 2020; a cherished dream of the former President Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam.

Prof. M. Ramadas

Perseverance, hard work and sincerity are keys to success: Prof. M. Ramadas

The Ponlait milk parlour is the latest centre of attraction for everyone at the University. Ponlait (Pondicherry Co-operative Milk Producers) has recently opened two outlets inside the campus. One is opposite the Indian Bank and the next is near the 24 hours shopping complex, opposite the Bio- technology department. The students, teaching staff and non-teaching staff of the University can now enjoy dairy products like badam milk, butter milk, coffee, lassi, milk pedas and ice-creams. It is yet another initiative taken by the University to make dairy products easily available on campus. Teachers and students who stay back to pursue their academic assignments are looking forward to the extension of the parlour services up to 9 p.m.

Arathi Krishnakumar

Mass Communication

The Milky Way!

Perseverance, hard work and sincerity are the keys to success: Prof. M. Ramadas

The Milky Way!

PU launches new Diploma & Certificate Courses

Evening courses open to both students and outsiders are beginning soon. At the end of two years, students can walk out with a degree and two diplomas. These include certificate courses in Tamil and five foreign languages (Chinese, French, Japanese, Korean, Russian) and 20 Diploma courses in areas of contemporary relevance: Functional Hindi & Translation, TV Production, Media & Communication, Women’s Studies, Library Automation & Networking, Industrial Psychology, Planning and Evaluation, Sports and Health, Fitness and Life Style Management, Investment Management, Rural Development, Statistical and Research Methods, Human Rights, Industrial Relations and Labour Law, Teaching Skills, Computer Applications, Simulation & Modeling, Theatre Arts, Event Management and Mass Communication in English.

Minimum duration of course: Two Semesters (One Year) Maximum Duration to complete programme: Four Semesters (Two Years)

For detailed information visit www.pondiuni.edu.in

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Monalisha Basumatary

Mass Communication

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While rag picking may not solve the problem of India’s waste by any stretch of the imagination, it would be fair to say that the problem would have been worse had it not been for their silent intervention. Unlike in the developed world where there is greater awareness on waste and its potential to scar the environment, India and other countries of the developing world, have no effective policy to tackle the issue of waste. The mantra of “Reduce, Reuse and Recycle” is not on the lips or on the agendas of our policy makers, industry or citizenry. Terms like ‘conservation’ and ‘eco-friendly’ are not even visible. It does not get factored into our eco-friendly schemes. With the absence of clear and enforceable regulations, sometimes waste disposal becomes just another facet of the system of waste management, this service cannot be overestimated. This faceless army bravely contends with the weather, unbearable odour and filthy ‘working conditions’ to select, sort and sell waste.

The population explosion has ensured greater migration from the villages to the cities. Waste is a natural byproduct of large and overcrowded cities with poor infrastructure. Garbage piles in public places are a common sight in Indian cities and towns. Since there is no reliable system of waste management, the problem of waste is left to care for itself. Rag picking, while providing a valuable service whose benefits are not immediately visible. It does not get factored into our eco-friendly schemes. With the absence of clear and enforceable policies on waste disposal and management, this service cannot be overestimated. This faceless army bravely contends with the weather, unbearable odour and filthy ‘working conditions’ to select, sort and sell waste.

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Nature as architect

The international township of Auroville near Pondicherry is a place for experimenting with the arts, technology, agriculture, health and education. Architecture in particular is adventurous. It freely borrows themes and ideas from everywhere and weaves them into a tapestry that is unique. Natural houses, or houses built predominantly with natural building materials, are commonplace. The inherently simple lifestyle promoted by the township’s philosophy makes such quaint dwellings appealing to many of its inhabitants. A lot of research goes into the many possible applications of natural building materials. Many designers and builders in Auroville are inspired by native and traditional architecture and often incorporate these elements into residential and other buildings. Natural and alternative building materials are also gaining popularity despite their scarcity and high prices. Chief amongst these is the humble coconut palm leaf that is on hand if one needs to build a semi-permanent or makeshift structure at short notice on a small budget. Straw and reed grasses are equally sought after for roofing. These are some of the most comfortable and climate friendly building materials one can find. However, their restricted availability, rising costs and dependence on skilled labour ensures that their use is limited. Ironically, they are being used increasingly by the wealthy who are drawn to down-to-earth, natural simplicity. Designers also use this element as part of a new and emerging design aesthetic.

One can see the innovative use of natural building materials and styles in the houses featured in this article. They include Achkul, a traditional type of very slim burnt brick that is no longer available commercially. Manchatti (earthen pots) for walls and ceilings, Keth (coconut leaves), Vizhal (reed grass) and Bamboo for roofing. Granite slabs and natural boulders are used in gardens and in landscaping. These houses then become a creative mixture of various ingredients taken from Nature herself. Being of varied character and function, these materials affect and regulate the internal climate of these buildings, while significantly adding to their aesthetic presence. Living in such aesthetically pleasing and environment-friendly structures must be a truly unique experience!

Our urban mindset predisposes us to seek a sanctuary and security within the concrete confines of apartments and tenement blocks. But where is the choice, one may argue, given the spiraling costs of land, buildings and space constraints that most of us encounter today? Be it as it may, the natural houses and buildings of Auroville and elsewhere will be a reminder of a way of life that is friendly to the environment and the human spirit.

Rinoy Basumatary
Mass Communication

The exterior of a house in ‘Petite Ferme’, Auroville

Plastic at your peril

The next time you go shopping and carry home your purchase in a compact plastic carry-bag, think you are contributing to a deadly pollutant whose ill-effects are irreversible and which can remain on the face of the Earth for numerous generations to come. Plastic is one of the major toxic pollutants of our time. Being a non-biodegradable substance, composed of inorganic chemicals, plastic pollutes earth, air and water. There is no way one can ‘safely’ dispose of plastic waste. Every year, around 500 billion plastic bags are used worldwide. Over 500,000,000,000. Five hundred followed by nine zeros. That’s a lot of bags. So many that over one million bags are being used every minute and they’re damaging our environment. Polyethylene, polycrylonitrile, polystyrene are largely used in the manufacture of plastics. Synthetic polymers are easily molded into complex shapes, have high chemical resistance, and are more or less elastic. Some can be formed into fibers or thin transparent films. These properties have made them popular in many durable or disposable goods and for packaging materials.

These materials have molecular weight ranging from several thousands to 1,50,000. Excessive molecular size seems to be mainly responsible for the resistance of these chemicals to biodegradation and their persistence in soil environment for a long time. Due to their relatively low cost, ease of manufacture, versatility, and imperviousness to water, plastics are used in an enormous and expanding range of products, from paper clips to spacecrafts. They have already replaced many traditional materials—such as wood, stone, horns and bones, leather, paper, metal, glass and ceramic—in most of their former uses.

It is expensive to recycle plastic and most end up on landfill sites where they take around 300 years to photo-degrade. They break down into tiny toxic particles that contaminate the soil and waterways and enter the food chain when animals accidentally ingest them. But the problems surrounding waste plastic bags start long before they photodegrade. Our planet is becoming increasingly contaminated by our unnecessary use of plastic bags. They were rarely found during the 60s and 70s. Their usage has increased at an alarming rate since they came into common use during the 80s. Plastic bags can be seen hanging from the branches of trees, flying in the air on windy days, settled amongst bushes and floating on rivers. They clog gutters and drains causing water and sewage to overflow and become the breeding grounds of germs and bacteria that cause diseases.

Plastics are used because they are easy and cheap to make and they can last a long time. Unfortunately these same useful qualities can make plastic a huge pollution problem. Urbanisation has added to plastic pollution in a concentrated form in cities. Plastic disposed of on land can enter drainage lines and choke them, resulting in clogging. Animals also inadvertently ingest plastic while chewing their food — for instance, in the stomach of a dead cow, as much as 35 kg of plastic was found. Since plastic does not decompose, and requires high energy ultra-violet light to break down, the amount of plastic waste in our oceans is increasing steadily. More than 90% of the waste found on the beaches contains plastic.

The only way out of this deadly and lasting danger is to cut down on the use of plastic, or better still, avoid it altogether. Say no to plastic — whenever and wherever you can.

Sandesh Kumar.JM
Mass Communication

The interior of a house in ‘Petite Ferme’, Auroville

The exterior of a house in ‘Petite Ferme’, Auroville

Earth Matters
A little ‘philosophy’ is good for you

Do not wait for others to begin anything in life. Begin them yourself and begin with yourself. The nobility of your actions and reactions depend upon your wider vision of life. The nobler your vision, the greater your mission will be. If your vision is right then your actions will generate beauty and grace.

Spend time to know yourself. It requires patience, intensity and dedication to know your nature, your purpose and your rightful place on earth. You are the only person to determine your contribution to your own greatiness. You will get out of life only what you put into it.

Be sure your attitude and intentions to life match to help you get what you desire. “Yes I can” and “Yes it is Possible” should be your behavioural mantras. Your sensory reports must not be in alignment with your environment as much as possible. Each consistent and confident step laid towards your commitment clears your path and transports you to new territories of the self. Openness of the self stimulates intellectual awakening and brings you closer to fulfilling your responsibilities.

You will never lose, unless you give up. It is easy to find reasons why things won’t work and why you can’t be great. Some have starting problems; others keep asking but never start. Others find it difficult to sustain their enthusiasm and involve- ment after starting. But achievers always find ways to make things work and, in the process, witness the birth of new possibilities within themselves. Remember extraordinary people are simply ordinary people who achieved extraordinary things.

You are living in a universe of wonders, an embryo of possibilities. It is this that turns beliefs and dreams into possibilities and achievements. Never be your own obstacle, preventing yourself from going where you want to go. The moment you realize that you are the single deciding author- ity then you will initiate your success plans. The wonderful part of this is that you can think, plan and achieve all that you want by believing that it is all possible.

You are born to manifest your inner talents and use your capabilities to execute actions that befit your singularity as a human. No matter how bleak and dim your life may look, achievement is still possible for you because you are special, you are different and you are unsteppable!

Therefore, realize that you within you all the resources, abilities, energy and power you need to build a world of possibilities and a successful way of living. You should refine the art of living through making ‘possible’ the ‘impossible’.

Living with a sense of purpose does not mean that you have to rule the world. It only means that you should live your life fully and passionately, to the brim of your own cup. Let your life and actions leave an inspir- ing trail for posterity.

S. Ugin Mary, Dean Vavasour College of Education Paducherry

The moment you realize that you own all the resources, abilities, energy and power you need, you can make ‘possible’ the ‘impossible’.

A little ‘philosophy’ is good for you. Do not wait for others to begin anything in life. Begin them yourself and begin with yourself. The nobility of your actions and reactions depend upon your wider vision of life. The nobler your vision, the greater your mission will be. If your vision is right then your actions will generate beauty and grace.
The diverse culture of the people of Assam is well-preserved in the famous Srimanta Sankardev Kalakshetra, a park-cum-museum located on the outskirts of Guwahati city. Various facets of Assamese life are reflected in the artefacts in Kalakshetra. The museum possesses almost all the cultural artefacts from the ancient and the present times. Many weapons and shields used by ancient warriors are also on display. The handicrafts and handloom, sericulture etc mainly practiced by tribals are also preserved very well by the museum authorities. The intricate designs and delicate style of weaving dresses and handicrafts attract tourists from different countries and other states of India. Also the bright colours and designs of the clothes appeal to all visitors. The bright colours used by the tribals hence promote the quality of their dresses to add light to their own culture. The people of Assam are proud of their unique heritage.

Rinoy Basumatary
Mass Communication
Life In A Wounded Country In Hosseini’s A Thousand Splendid Suns

Khaled Hosseini, the author of the best seller, The Kite Runner, through his other work, A Thousand Splendid Suns, relates a poignant story of life in the war-struck country of Afghanistan. The dedication note by Hosseini in A Thousand Splendid Suns itself reveals that the novel is about ‘the women of Afghanistan’. While he has written about the life of two women, Mariam and Laila. The courage with which they bear each dilemma that life throws at them is itself commendable.

In A Thousand Splendid Suns, Mariam is described by her ‘harami’ husband, Rasheed, as an illegitimate child born to Jalil, a wealthy man from Herat. She is deprived of basic education and her mother compares the idea of her upbringing to that of a ‘harami’ as she is an illegitimate child. She is clumsy, mentally unstable and holds a major blow to her, Jalil, who always bestows her with endearments rather than with due respect. Her marriage to Rasheed who is much older than her makes her life worse as she is left in a prison of her own making. She comes from a family which cleaves to liberal views, and is given a good educational background, Tariq, her lover, who is all the more shrewd and tough, get away with her and marries her. However, Rasheed’s solicitude for her is a major blow to her. Jalil, who always bestows her with endearments rather than with due respect.

The Prime Minister of India, Dr. Manmohan Singh, was invited to France to take part in the celebrations. ‘Bastille Day’ is the National Day of France (also referred to as Fete De Nationale and Qua- torze Juillet, variously) and on this day, the French people, revolting against monarchy, and demolished the Bastille, the infamous prison in Paris. France became a republic on this day, ending the king’s rule for ever.

The republic was a new political institution, a model that would soon be emulated by other nations of the world. This day is an important one in the festival calendar of Pondicherry as she was once a part of the French colonial empire in India. It was a moving and colourful moment when the flags of both nations, India and France were hoisted together to the strains of their respective national anthems.

Bastille Day: ‘Bastille Day’ as the day of French independence is called, was celebrated in Pondicherry at the French War Memorial monument on July 14. The Governor of Pondicherry and the Consulate General of France paid homage to the soldiers (soldats in French) and Combatants who fought for France in the World Wars. All the Franco-Indians of Pondicherry enthusiastically took part in the celebrations, proud and honored at being both Indian and French citizens. The Indian Army and the French Army marched side by side in a show of cultural and national solidarity.

In the clutches of the credit card…..

In Aadi month is a behemoth season marked by a blitzkrieg of advertisements. Newspapers are heavily laden with discount ads and sale offers. Television and radio too sing the same tune. The bait is all too inevitable for the moneyed class, who earns a handsome salary and afford that luxury. There are others, most of us belong to this second league, who earn too much to be satisfied. In fact, the tantalizing offers too snare them. But, how do we cope with the Aadi pull?

Quite rationally, and finding ourselves hard pressed to calm the gnawing dilemma, we step into showrooms or sale venues. A desire to buy, or ‘have to buy’ or ‘not to buy’ or ‘not to buy’ or ‘to buy’ gives way to ‘how many to buy?’ We feel a gust of temptation fusing within us whenever we are stuck at the shop with every vestige of restraint

Life In A Wounded Country In Hosseini’s A Thousand Splendid Suns

Khaled Hosseini, the author of the novel A Thousand Splendid Suns, relates a poignant story of life in the war-struck country of Afghanistan. The dedication note by Hosseini in A Thousand Splendid Suns itself reveals that the novel is about ‘the women of Afghanistan’. While he has written about the life of two women, Mariam and Laila. The courage with which they bear each dilemma that life throws at them is itself commendable.

In A Thousand Splendid Suns, Mariam is described by her ‘harami’ husband, Rasheed, as an illegitimate child born to Jalil, a wealthy man from Herat. She is deprived of basic education and her mother compares the idea of her upbringing to that of a ‘harami’ as she is an illegitimate child. She is clumsy, mentally unstable and holds a major blow to her, Jalil, who always bestows her with endearments rather than with due respect.

The Prime Minister of India, Dr. Manmohan Singh, was invited to France to take part in the celebrations. ‘Bastille Day’ is the National Day of France (also referred to as Fete De Nationale and Quatorze Juillet, variously) and on this day, the French people, revolting against monarchy, and demolished the Bastille, the infamous prison in Paris. France became a republic on this day, ending the king’s rule for ever.

The republic was a new political institution, a model that would soon be emulated by other nations of the world. This day is an important one in the festival calendar of Pondicherry as she was once a part of the French colonial empire in India. It was a moving and colourful moment when the flags of both nations, India and France were hoisted together to the strains of their respective national anthems.