

CEPT UNIVERSITY

Twelfth Convocation, January 20th, 2018

Welcome Address by Dr. Bimal Patel, President

Friends: We are gathered this morning for the twelfth convocation of CEPT University. The University will confer degrees on students who have completed their programs of study during the academic session 2016–17. It will also confer awards won during that period.

On this special occasion, I am very happy to welcome our Chief Guest, Prof. Alain Bertaud. Prof. Bertaud is a highly reputed urbanist who is currently a senior research scholar at the 'Urbanization Project' at the Stern School of Business, New York University. He has a lifetime of rich experience in city planning and he has thought deeply about how cities work and how they should be planned. He has just completed a much-awaited book on urban planning and transport titled 'Order without Design'. MIT Press will publish the book in summer 2018.

Prof. Bertaud knows India very well, and since very long. He graduated as an architect from the Beaux-Arts in Paris, in 1967. Soon, after working for a while in a private architectural firm, he travelled to India to work in the office of the Chief Urban Planner in Chandigarh where Corbusier was designing a new city. During that period he also travelled extensively in India - by cycle, all the way down to Bhopal.

His next job was in Algeria in the Ministry of Public works. Algeria had just become independent then and, since all the French officers had left, young Bertaud's professional skills were in high demand and he was allowed to take decisions that in normal circumstances would only be taken by senior officers. After that he worked briefly with the great architect Philip Johnson* in New York. Then he worked in the 'New York City Planning Commission'. After that he went to Yemen and worked in the 'Ministry of Public Works', then in San Salvador in the 'Ministry of Housing and Urban Development' and then in Bangkok in the 'National Housing Authority'.

Then for 20 years from 1980 to 1999, Prof. Bertaud was principal urban planner at the World Bank where he advised local and national governments on urban development policies mostly in China, Central and Eastern Europe, India, Mexico, Russia and South Africa. He was also involved in the design and implementation of large land development projects and urban extensions financed by the World Bank.

I first met Alain twenty years ago. He had come to Ahmedabad as a member of a World Bank Mission. I, my colleagues at the Environmental Planning Collaborative, and planners at AMC and AUDA were engaged in liberalizing and modernizing urban planning in the city. Alain was deeply supportive and inspiring. We soon started collaborating. Our first collaboration was a workshop for six cities in Gujarat. It was an attempt to more widely liberalize planning in Gujarat.

Alain has always been a reflective practitioner in the full sense of the term - a practitioner as well as a researcher. He knows cities from having walked around in them, having lived in them and having worked on improving them. He has tested his ideas in the real world and carefully observed planning practice. He has thought deeply about why some ideas work and others don't. He has educated himself to learn new concepts and solve conundrums. His insights are not derived only from books and from engaging with students and other academics. This is why he continues to be sought out for advice across the world.

Once again, welcome Prof. Bertaud; it is a great pleasure to have you with us.

It is also my pleasure to welcome Shri Kartikeya Sarabhai.

While traditionally, our Chairman Shri Sanjay Lalbhai is the Chair for this occasion, due to ill health he is unable to be present today. Shri Kartikeya Sarabhai, who is a member of our governing council, has graciously agreed to chair the occasion on his behalf.

As many of you would know, Kartikeya Sarabhai belongs to a great tradition of philanthropic civic leadership of Ahmedabad. His grandfather, Ambalal Sarabhai, an industrialist, was closely associated with Mahatma Gandhi. His mother was a renowned dancer, and his father, Vikram Sarabhai, was a great scientist and the founder of India's nuclear energy and space programs. Along with Shri Kasturbhai Lalbhai, he was also a co-founder of the Indian Institute of Management.

Shri Kartikeya V Sarabhai is the Founder Director of the Centre for Environment Education (CEE). Over the last 33+ years, Mr. Sarabhai has been a champion for environmental education and sustainable development. He has been a member of several committees. Most notably, he is the UNESCO Chair on Education for Sustainable Development and the Human Habitat, set up at CEE in partnership with CEPT University. He is the co-chair of the Global Citizenship Working Group convened by the Brookings Institute. He is also the co-chair of the Earth Charter International Council.

He has received many awards and accolades. The Government of India awarded him the Padma Shri in 2012, for service towards environmental education. He is also the recipient of Olive Green Crusader Award (2013), the Sir C.V. Raman Memorial Award for popularizing science (2014), the World Human Rights Promotion Award (2005) and the International Brandwein Medal (2016).

Welcome Kartikeyabhai. We are very glad to have you with us today.

Now, let me tell you something about CEPT University. I begin by saying something that you already know: CEPT University continues to be one of the finest institutions focused on architecture, planning, design, construction and management of habitats. It has the most talented students, very experienced and dedicated teachers, a highly committed

and hard working administration, a lovely campus and many cherished traditions and a bright future.

The future is particularly bright because all of us are continuing to improve the University in many different ways. I am not going to list all the improvements that you can expect to see. If I did that it would take forever*! Bet I would like to tell you about a few of the most important improvements.

ACADEMICS

1. **Studio:** Studios are key to design education and CEPT has always emphasized studio-based learning. Last semester we reviewed studio education in the undergraduate design programs at CEPT – in Architecture, Interior Design and Urban Design – and decided upon a number of improvements. These improvements have been first implemented in the 2nd and 3rd years. Studios now constitute a much larger portion of the curriculum. They are now also smaller - 12-15 students with one or two faculty members. this structure helps emphasize mentorship and coaching by studio tutors. Soon the same will be true for the 4th and 5th year of the UG programs.
2. **Foundation Program:** In July last year, we also started reviewing and revamping the foundation programs in the three undergraduate design programs. Each of them took a slightly different approach. Recently, a specially constituted Board of Studies* reviewed all three programs. After the review, the Board of Studies has recommended that the three programs be merged into a consolidated foundation program, which combines the strengths of each of these programs. We are hoping to implement this starting July.
3. **Teaching and Learning Center:** Another key initiative is the setting up of the Teaching and Learning Center, similar to ones that exist in all globally leading universities. The TLC at CEPT will primarily look at 3 things:
 - Facilitate preparation for studio units and courses, and oversee the registration etc.
 - Support newer faculty members to get ready for teaching
 - Set benchmarks and assess new pedagogic initiatives against the stated objectives to ensure continual ratcheting up of academic standards
4. **Integrated Master's Programs:** In new programs, we are considering the introduction of integrated master's programs from academic year 2019. This will allow students to complete UG and PG program in six years with a one year period of internship in the 4th year. Details of these programs are being worked out and will be announced soon.
5. **Transport Management:** This year, we will be starting a new PG program in Transportation Management; this will be a first-of-its-kind program for in-service professionals engaged in the Urban Transport sector. The program is currently

being developed by our Center for Excellence in Urban Transport and will be hosted in the Faculty of Management.

6. **Masters Programs:** Over the coming year or two, we will also be restructuring the present M Arch program into three separate programs focused on Architectural Design, Conservation, and, History and Theory of Architecture. Similarly, the M Plan program will be restructured into four streams, Urban Planning, Urban Transport, Urban Housing, and Urban Infrastructure.
7. **Scholarships:** As you know, at CEPT we strives to ensure that meritorious students are able to afford an education here regardless of their financial standing. This year we have budgeted rupees five crores towards student financial aid. This is not enough. Alongside our budgetary allocation, our Student Scholarship Fund provides us additional resources to ensure this. I am very thankful to M/s. PSP projects, and Amaya Properties, for their notable contribution to the student scholarship fund last year. I hope many more individual and corporate donors will consider contributing to this fund.

INFRASTRUCTURE

8. **Library, Workshop, Canteen:** As many of you know already, we completed two major buildings last year: the Lilavati Lalbhai Library, just behind us, and the recently inaugurated CEPT Workshops building. These facilities have given us 4000 sq m of new space and freed up 1350 sq m of existing space, which is now put to other academic uses. The canteen has also been recently completed, and with this, Phase 1 of our master plan is complete.
9. **Academic Facilities:** Soon we will be starting construction on the new academic building, which is coming up just north of the canteen. This will bring a new high capacity auditorium and many classrooms and seminar rooms for use by entire university.
10. **Faculty of Technology:** We have just received confirmation from our Board of Management to commence design of the new Faculty of Technology building, which will be located to the East of the present FT building. This building will be a named facility supported through a contribution of rs. six crores from Symphony. We are thankful to Mr. Achal Bakeri and the Bakeri family for their continued support of CEPT University.
11. **Faculty of Architecture:** The Faculty of Architecture building is in need of significant structural repairs and improvements. The study has been completed and we are commencing the repair work starting this summer. It will be done in two phases between this year and next year. We welcome contributions from alumni to support the effort of conserving this architectural masterpiece.
12. **Campus:** CEPT campus has a long history and comprises buildings that have undisputedly strong heritage value and some that merit a deeper review. Hence, we

have initiated an assessment of the heritage value of various buildings and other aspects of CEPT campus. Dr. Jigna Desai, faculty member of FA, Head of UG programs and Area Chair of the Conservation area, will lead this. Dr. Desai is also a member of the technical committee of ICOMOS – International Council on Monuments and Sites.

CONTINUING EDUCATION FOR PROFESSIONALS

13. **Professional Education:** As India continues to move forward on the path of urbanization, many professionals will need continuing education to address emerging challenges. CEPT has already been successfully conducting many continuing education programs for professionals.
14. **Center for Professional Development:** More recently, we have set up the Center for Professional Development to consolidate our efforts towards providing high quality continuing education programs. Last week we kicked off a program for providing specialized training to professionals from the 100 cities across India. These professionals will be trained to better manage peripheral expansion and in-city redevelopment of cities. This is part of 2 year program in collaboration with the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, Government of India.

ONE LAST POINT

15. **Alumni Office:** Very soon, you are all going to be newly minted alums of the University. Our new Alumni Office has put together a welcome package for you, with an alumni card and a token that will remind you of this day. As you go out, over the next few years, there may be many instances when you need support of the University, or you need some old document, or you would like to connect with someone in a new city. Please do not hesitate to reach out to the Alumni Office for any kind of help. Also, as and when time permits, please come back and share your experiences with other students.

Finally, before I return to the program at hand I want to remind all of us that without the hard work of the faculty members, both, permanent and visiting, and the staff of CEPT University none of the developments that I am taking about would have been possible. I sincerely thank all of our faculty members. I am sure that all of the students also want to. A round of applause is in order.

This morning a total of 537 students will receive their degrees. Many awards will be conferred. On behalf of my colleagues, Deans, faculty members, staff and myself, I congratulate all those receiving degrees and awards. All of us wish you all the very best in life and hope that you will make the most of the opportunities it presents. In doing so

you will make us proud. We also hope that you will stay in touch and keep coming back to your alma mater.

Thank you.