

CEPT UNIVERSITY

Sixteenth Convocation, January 29th, 2022

Welcome Address by Dr. Bimal Patel, President

Friends: We are gathered this morning for the Sixteenth convocation of CEPT University. The University will confer degrees on students who have completed their programs of study during the academic session 2020–21. It will also confer awards won during that period.

On this special occasion, I am very happy to welcome our Chief Guest, Prof. Madhav Khosla, who is an Associate Professor of Law at Columbia University. Prof. Khosla is a very distinguished person.

He grew up in Delhi. After completing his schooling there, he pursued a 5-year BA LLB at the National Law School in Bangalore, which he completed in 2008. This was followed by a year as a Research Assistant with the Commission on Centre-State Relations, Government of India.

In 2010 he went to study at Yale University and received his LLM from the Yale Law School. While at Yale Prof. Khosla developed a keen interest in Constitutional Law. He attributes this to the excellent teachers he studied under at Yale.

The following year Prof. Khosla returned to India and spent a year at the Center for Policy Research in New Delhi. During this year, he published his first book titled the *The Indian Constitution*. It was a part of the Oxford India Short Introductions series and has since then been cited in several court rulings. I read this book in 2012 when it was first published. I found it to be a most useful introduction to the subject and recommended it for courses at CEPT University. Little did I know that Prof. Khosla, whose impressive book I was recommending to master's students at CEPT University, was himself 27 years of age when he wrote it!

After his year at the Center for Policy Research Prof. Khosla spent several years at Harvard University pursuing a PhD in political theory. During this period, he published an anthology of letters written by Nehru to India's Chief Ministers and co-edited two books: *Unstable Constitutionalism: Law and Politics in South Asia* and the *Oxford Handbook of the Indian Constitution*

Prof. Khosla received his doctorate in 2017. His dissertation was awarded the Edward M. Chase Prize for the "best dissertation on a subject relating to the promotion of world peace". He was also selected to the Harvard Society of Fellows. This is a rare honour.

The Harvard Society of Fellows is a group of scholars selected at the beginnings of their careers by Harvard University for their potential to advance academic wisdom. They are bestowed with distinctive opportunities to foster their individual and intellectual

growth. Junior Fellows are appointed by Senior Fellows based upon previous academic accomplishments and receive generous financial support for three years while they conduct independent research at Harvard University in any discipline. They are not required to meet formal degree requirements or graded in any way. The only stipulation is that they maintain primary residence in Cambridge, Massachusetts, for the duration of their fellowship and that they attend a formal dinner with other fellows every Monday. Membership in the society is for life.

Prof. Khosla spent two years at Harvard. During this period he co-edited a book titled *Regulation in India: Design Capacity, Performance*.

He then returned to India. Between 2020 and 2021 he was the Ambedkar Visiting Associate Professor of Law at Columbia University and an associate professor of political science at Ashoka University. During this period he published a wonderful book: *India's Founding Moment: The Constitution of a Most Surprising Democracy*. This book has very recently won the Order of the Coif Book Award. Prof. Khosla has only recently taken up a full-time job at Columbia University.

Prof. Khosla's remarkable and prodigious career focused on the Indian Constitution has been fueled by a very strong belief that the Constitution is much too important to be left to lawyers alone. It fundamentally affects every dimension of our lives, and we should all take a keen interest in it, know it, celebrate it and worry about it. Towards this end, Prof. Khosla has striven, through his books and scholarship, to bring the Constitution alive to us and to make it accessible all of us.

Dr. Khosla, we are extremely honoured to have you as the Chief guest at our convocation.

It is also my pleasure to welcome our Chairman, Shri Sanjay Lalbhai. As many of you already know, he is a well-known and highly respected business leader. As Chairman and Managing Director of Arvind Ltd., Sanjaybhai led Arvind in its quest to be one of the largest manufacturers of woven textiles in India and one of the largest denim fabric manufacturers in the world.

Sanjaybhai is also the present-day torchbearer of a remarkable tradition of enlightened and farsighted civic leadership in Ahmedabad, which is over a century old. Long before 'corporate social responsibility' became mandatory, it is this tradition, of civic minded business leaders supporting noble, strategic and far-reaching causes, that has allowed Ahmedabad to play a far bigger role in the life of our nation than Ahmedabad's size or economy warrants.

Sanjaybhai is deeply interested in and involved with higher-level education and research. He is the President of Ahmedabad Education Society and is involved in many other institutions such as Ahmedabad University, Ahmedabad Textile Industry's Research Association and the Physical Research Laboratory.

Sanjaybhai, we are thankful for the keen interest you take in the development of CEPT University, and we are privileged to have you present at this convocation.

I am also very happy to welcome the other members of the Governing Body, members of the Board of Management, Provost, Deans, faculty members, alumni and students of CEPT University.

And, last but not the least, I especially welcome all the parents of our students, particularly the parents and guests of the students who are graduating and winning awards today. It is indeed a special occasion. Today, we honor the achievements of our students and all of us at CEPT University are very happy that you are with us to share in our joy and pride.

Now, as is customary on this occasion, let me tell you something about CEPT's activities in the past one year.

In the last two years, the world has undergone a tremendous disruption because of the COVID-19 pandemic. In the last one year we have witnessed a second wave, and we are in the midst of a third wave of infections. Over this time, many have lost their loved ones, suffered loss of employment and income, and faced many associated challenges. Schools and universities have also faced their share of challenges. It has not been easy. And yet, together, we have overcome many of the challenges.

We have continued to operate, and deliver on our mission of teaching and research, to the best of our ability. We have attempted to keep the university accessible and open as much as we could within ambit of regulations. We have supported those who faced greatest difficulties through additional financial support.

All the while, we have tried to retain the high quality of teaching and learning that CEPT is known for.

Everyone at the University has continued to work hard to help the University function smoothly. I would like to commend the tremendous effort put in by our students, faculty members and staff, that have enabled us to tackle the challenges in these difficult times.

I hope that one day very soon, we will see the campus completely filled with students again.

Now, I would like to list a few of the notable events of the past year....

1. **People**

CEPT is blessed to have a pool of highly motivated and committed teachers and staff members. I would like to mention a few, who after many years with CEPT, have transitioned to other roles during the previous year..

Ms. Tejaswini Joshi, our librarian, retired from her role after being with CEPT for almost 40 years. She has been a pillar of support to many students, faculty members

and some past students who are now faculty members. **Mr. Rimpal Shah, Deputy Librarian**, who had been with us for 18 years has also moved on to a different organization.

Prof. Reshma Shah has stepped down from her role as a faculty member at FT to join the Center for Infrastructure at CRDF. She has been with FT for over 20 years and she will be instrumental in augmenting the work at CRDF.

In the accounts team, **Mr. Mahesh Panchal**, Dy. CFO retired after over 37 years with CEPT and **Ms. Himani Shah** has stepped down after 11 years with CEPT.

CEPT is deeply thankful to all of these people for the contributions that they have made towards building our University.

2. **Scholarships**

Our aim has been to ensure that no student is denied opportunity to study at CEPT for want of financial resources. In response to the ongoing COVID pandemic, CEPT has continued the emergency scholarship fund in addition to its regular merit and means scholarships.

Overall, CEPT spent approximately Rs. 7.12 crores or roughly 13 % of its total fees towards scholarships and assistantships, which benefited 745 students in total. It is heartening to note that no student had to discontinue their education due to financial impact of COVID.

3. **CEPT Mentorship Program**

In the last year, CEPT University signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) of mentorship with two institutions: the McGan's Ooty School of Architecture and the Vellore Institute of Technology (VIT), Vellore. Through these MOUs, CEPT will provide capacity building and support for faculty, setting in place systems to achieve excellence. The mentorship program in response to the call of NEP 2020, to establish mentorship relationships between Higher Education Institutions within India and abroad. Going forward, CEPT will continue to mentor institutions to help improve the quality of teaching and learning in architecture and design programs across the country.

4. **ILCC 2021**

The Indian Lean Construction Conference (ILCC) is a significant and coveted lean construction conference of the world. In India, the Institute for Lean Construction Excellence (ILCE), a non-profit entity, has been propagating the ethos of lean construction among the industry and academia. CEPT University in collaboration with the ILCE hosted the national conference - ILCC in Dec 2021. It was attended by over 100 participants comprising leading academics and industry experts from across the country.

5. **CEPT Essay Prize**

CEPT Essay Prize 2020 with a theme of **Urbanizing Asia and World Knowledge** had **two winners** along with the **three honorary mentions**. The winners were virtually felicitated in the award ceremony that was held in October 2021. An award-winning writer and festival director, **Ms. Namita Gokhale** was invited to give a public lecture to honor the winners. During the ceremony, the theme of the next round - CEPT Essay Prize 2021 was announced as **Embellishment**. The jury comprises **Romi Khosla, Tridip Suhrud, and Kazi Khaled Ashraf**.

6. **CEPT Archives & CEPT Press**

The CEPT Archives and CEPT Press continue to grow in their activities and impact. They are well underway to becoming important institutions in the country and make a significant contribution to the Academic Commons of the country.

The CEPT University Press has recently published **From Diagram to Design** by **Kamu Iyer** and the Indian edition of **Rahul Mehrotra's** book on **Working in Mumbai**. Both books make a significant contribution to the discourse on architectural practice in the country. **Four catalogs of Vernacular Furniture** along with the book **Anaikya: Vernacular Furniture of Rajasthan** were also published. These catalogs and the book are a result of the project undertaken by Design Innovation and Craft Resource Centre (DICRC) and South Asian Decorative Arts and Crafts Collection Trust (SADACC, UK). The **proceedings of the ILCC 2021** (Indian Lean Construction Conference) were also published by the CEPT University Press.

The CEPT Archives has been continuing the digitization of archival collections. New acquisitions include the work of **C S H Jhabwala** and **Kiran Pandya**. An agreement has recently been signed with **Shirish Beri** for his works. Additionally, three items from the Archives collection will be on display at an upcoming exhibition - **The Project of Independence: Architectures of Decolonization in South Asia, 1947-1985**, at MoMA, New York from 20th February to 2nd July, 2022. The Archives continues to work with and is the only University archive recognized by the National Archives of India.

INFRASTRUCTURE

7. **Lecture Hall:**

The construction of **Balwantrao N Brahmhatt Lecture Hall** has been completed and this new lecture hall was recently inaugurated. We are deeply thankful to the Brahmhatt family for their contribution towards this wonderful facility and to its architect Christopher Benninger for designing it so well. It will be of significant value in the teaching and learning.

8. **Repair of the FA Building**

The repair of FA building is almost completed. In the next couple of weeks, the renovated space will be available for students to start using. The COVID pandemic allowed us the time for the long overdue repair of the building.

RESEARCH AND ADVISORY OPPORTUNITIES

9. **CEPT Research and Development Foundation (CRDF)** has been doing some exemplary work in research, advisory and capacity building.
Center for Advanced Research in Building Science and Energy (CARBSE) is developing 3D energy model of Ahmedabad city, one of the first city in the world to have such model, in partnership with University College London, C40 and Bentley Systems.
10. **Center for Heritage Conservation (CHC)** is working with the Tourism Corporation of Gujarat Limited (TCGL) for a “Feasibility study of 10 stepwell sites in Gujarat” with a focus on preparing concept plans for their restoration, conservation, and development as a tourist destination. CHC has also started Conservation Site School to safeguard heritage sites through short courses on the repair, restoration and upgrade process.
11. **Center of Excellence for Urban Transport (CoE-UT)** is making advances in electric mobility with projects like – “The Strategy and Action Plan for Electrification of Public Transport and Intermediate Public Transport in Indian Cities which is funded under the UK PACT (Partnering for Accelerated Climate Transitions) Green Recovery Challenge Fund.
12. **Center for Urban Planning and Policy (CUPP)** is working on handholding select cities in preparation and implementation of Town Planning Schemes and Local Area Plans. They are doing a comparative study on TDRs to help develop guidance for cities dealing with challenges with assembling land for public uses.
13. **Center for Advanced Geomatics (CAG)** launched podcast series on Data for Resilient Cities with CODATA.
14. Cities in Maharashtra have implemented a cost-effective and non-mechanized treatment technology with the support of the **Center for Water and Sanitation (CWAS)**.
15. Additionally, CRDF continues to expand its partnership with both bilateral and multilateral development actors such as GIZ, Asian Development Bank and the World Bank.

RATINGS, RANKINGS AND ACCREDITATION

16. The Strategic Initiatives Office (SIO) has been leading the University’s efforts on participation in various rating and ranking opportunities. Last year, in the NIRF,

CEPT continued to remain among the top institutions in the country in the Architecture Category. The University improved its standing to five stars in overall University category in the GSIRF.

In addition to this, after an 18-month process, CEPT University was recognized as a **“Center of Excellence”** by the Government of Gujarat. The University received formal notification of this status on the 5th of January this year. This is significant not just in the immediate term but also for the long-term development of the University. It is a testament to the tremendous efforts put in place by everyone, on a regular basis, to keep the university’s pursuit of excellence on good track.

17. CEPT PROFESSIONAL PROGRAMS

Recently we have announced a new initiative called CEPT Professional Programs. The mission of the CPP is to support individual and organizational learning by providing opportunities to acquire new skills and capabilities, thus allowing professionals to stay relevant in the evolving context. CPP will draw from the expertise and capacity of the accomplished faculty members at CEPT University experts and practitioners from the field. Its programs will build on deep research, vast advisory projects, and innovative pedagogies. A yearly calendar of programs to be offered through the CPP will be announced within the next few months.

18. 50 YEARS OF THE FACULTY OF PLANNING

This year, the Faculty of Planning completes 50 years. Established in 1972 as the School of Planning, Faculty of Planning at CEPT University, is one of the pioneers of education in the field of Planning in India. Many of our 2700 plus graduates have, over the last 50 years, demonstrated excellence in research, consulting, plan and project implementation, public policy and shaping the urban agenda in various capacities at global and national level. The year 2022 will be marked with a series of events including panel discussions, round table deliberations, special lectures, and alumni events to commemorate FP50. A dedicated FP50 website will be launched today.

ONE LAST POINT

- 19. Alumni Office:** Very soon, you are all going to be newly minted alums of the University. Our 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 the students also want to. Traditionally, this is where I would request a round of applause. In this virtual world, please use the zoom reactions button on the bottom right (the one which looks like a smiley) and click on the first reaction to the left.

This afternoon a total of **646** 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.