

Seminar on Christian Educational Institutions at Shimla Institute of Advanced Studies

PRESS NOTE

Shimla, April 26, 2011

Shimla: 26 April – Indian Institute of Advanced Study here is organizing a three-day National Seminar on “Christian Educational Institutions: The Making of Modern Democratic India” from 27 to 29 April 2011.

The Seminar will be inaugurated by Professor Mrinal Miri, Member, National Council for Higher Education and Research at 9.30 a.m. on 27 April 2011 while Rev. (Dr.) Thomas Menampambil, Archbishop, Guwahati will deliver the Keynote Address.

It is for the first time that over two centuries long investment in education by the Christian Churches across the country is being brought onto an evaluative platform. The story of Modern India and its continuing to be Democratic has a historical legacy rooted in the trajectory of its premier educational institutions. The Christian contribution in this regard of promoting primary to higher, medical to media, and disabled to gender, rural to urban, open and distance education across the country to the marginalized as well as the elite of the society is a story that is yet untold and deserving to be recorded in the national archives of memory.

About 50 scholars, heads of higher educational Institutions and journalists are participating in the Seminar. They include the names of Valerian Rodrigues from JNU, New Delhi; M.Arockiasamy Xavier from Arul Anandar College, Madurai; Pius Thomas from Assam University, Silchar; Stephen Mavelly, Vice Chancellor Assam Don Bosco University, Guwahati; Charlotte Simpson Viegas from St. Xavier College, Kolkata; Saju Chackalackal from Christ University, Bangalore; Praveen Perumalla from University of Madras, Jose Kalapura from St Xavier College Patna; and Fleur D Souza from St Xavier College Mumbai.(EOM)

(A.K. Sharma)

Public Relations Officer

STRONG CALL FOR VALUE BASED EDUCATION IN NATION-BUILDING

Shimla, April 27, 2011

A strong call was made today for encouraging value based education in the country to assist the process of nation-building and development of a modern secular and democratic society in India

In his keynote address at a three day seminar on `Christian educational institutions – making of modern democratic India`, Guwahati Archbishop Thomas Menapampil, SDB, cautioned that if the focus was shifted from values, it would lead to a disoriented, fragmented, unemployable youth, and the nation `will be heading for major troubles, some of which we have started experiencing.`

Stressing the need for an intuitive moral responsibility, the Archbishop said if the global ethic propped up by a dominant community and the forces of the market be resisted if they were ethno-centric and self serving. Never use others as a means, he said, while pointing out that a sense of readiness was missing to take collective responsibility towards the strengthening of broad ethical norms for the common good. `No wonder the situation of violence, deceit, injustice, immorality around us seem to be worsening.`

Prof Mrinal Miri, former Director of IAS and former vice chancellor of the North Eastern Hill University, in his inaugural address referred the many challenges, and opportunities, that faced educationists today, learning from the successes and failures of the past. He cautioned religious groups that their motives could be questioned in a secular and diverse society. No particular religion could claim to have a unique contribution to nation-building, he said. Prof Miri also questioned the market forces driven by greed, calling upon educationists to nurture the talent and identity of marginalised groups, Tribals who had their own cultures and their own native religions.

Prof Peter Donald DSouza, Director of IAS, in his welcome address said Christian educational institutions had a fundamental belief in the emancipating role and capacity building through education, enabling access to development processes, values and service. Learning from the past, they must now construct their role in `Project Modern India`. He noted that there was a healthy internal debate on whether this education was for the elite or for the marginalised, for gender empowerment and with a new pedagogy.

The seminar is being attended by about 50 academics from all over the country. Prominent participants included JNU professors Virginus Xaxa, Valerian Rodrigues, Joseph Bara, Sr. Molly Abraham, Principal, St Bede's College, Shimla, Catholic Bishops conference Executive Secretaries Fr Kuriala Chittattukalam and Fr George Plathottam, and Dr George Thadathil, Principal, Salesian College, Darjeeling, Convener, and Dr John Dayal National Integration Council member. The Seminar is jointly organized by IAS, Assam Don Bosco University and Salesian College Sonada/Siliguri.

Call for Stronger Emphasis on Education of Women and Marginalised Communities

Shimla, April 28, 2011

A national seminar on Christian Educational Institutions held at Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla, has focused on education of women, marginalised communities, Dalits and other disadvantaged groups. Scholars acknowledged the pioneering contribution of the Christian educational institutions in educating girl children, promoting gender issues and the

dignity of women in India. However, it cautioned against complacency as the condition of women remains far from satisfactory with growing disparity in gender ratio, lower literacy among women, and deep gender bias still prevalent in society. Gender issues, the participants stressed, are not the exclusive domain of women but should become the responsibility of all. Christian educational institutions as well as governments need to step up efforts to address the issues, it noted. The participants stressed the need to demand the full implementation of the Right to Education (RTE) from the government. It also underlined the need to effect necessary paradigm shift in Christian education to ensure that all beneficiaries become conscious of issues like human rights, dignity, equality of all, and building a casteless society.

:: Stephen Mavelly, VC DBU :: Peter DSouza Director IIAS :: George Thadathil Convener, IIAS Seminar

Some of the other important issues the scholars dealt with include women's contribution to nation building, educational development of Bettiah Christian community in Bihar which was able to create a casteless society, Dalit and marginalised communities in Andhra Pradesh and women's education and empowerment in Northeast India.

The three-day seminar is being jointly organized by Indian Institute of Advanced Study (IIAS), Assam Don Bosco University and Salesian College Sonada-Siliguri, and is being attended by about 50 academics from all over the country. 28 research papers dealing with a variety of issues related to the Christian educational institutions and their role in making of a modern democratic India is being presented during the seminar.



