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Scholars must unite to fight hunger: Scientist

Says Growing Population Lies At Core Of The Problem

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Dharwad: The global community of scholars must work together to solve problems like food insecurity, said Mark Hussey, noted agricultural scientist and interim president of Texas Agricultural and Medical University.

Addressing fresh graduates, postgraduates and

27th UAS CONVOCATION

PhD awardees at the 27th annual convocation of the University of Agricultural Sciences held in Dharwad on Thursday, he said the world's exponentially growing population was at the core of these problems. "As a result, food insecurity, malnutrition and world hunger are rampantly growing. Currently, one-sixth of the world's population (a billion people) suffer from chronic hunger and at least 3.5 million children die each year globally from undernutrition. Not only does hunger rob the poor of a healthy and productive life and stunt mental and physical development, it provides a breeding ground for crime and civil unrest," he warned.

As a remedy, he suggested that there should be diligent efforts to train the next generation of 'hunger fighters' and to develop and deploy new technologies. He added that many of these issues could be addressed by agricultural universities.

Throughout his 22-minute speech, Hussey recalled the influence of his guru and Nobel Prize winner Norman Borlaug, the pioneer of Green Revolution.

In the absence of governor H R Bhardwaj, who is also the chancellor of state varsities, agriculture minister Krishna Byregowda, who is the pro-chancellor of the varsity, presented the honoris causa to Hussey and Magsaysay awardee Rajendra Singh.

The convocation got off to a glittering start with a large number of academicians, policymakers, progressive farmers and students participating in it.

UAS vice-chancellor D P Biradar welcomed the gathering and explained the achievements of the varsity.

A total of 845 students were conferred with various degrees.

TOI

HONORIS CAUSA: Minister for agriculture Krishna Byregowda honours Texas-based agricultural scientist Mark Hussey and Magsaysay awardee 'Water Man' Rajendra Singh at the annual convocation of UAS, Dharwad

'Golden' students

Nishakumari, an undergraduate student of the Agriculture College, emerged as the 'Golden Girl' by bagging 10 gold medals for 2011-12, and Mallik M of the same college emerged as the 'Golden Boy' by winning 12 gold medals for 2012-13.

'Water Man' warns against linking rivers

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Dharwad: The river-linking project is not feasible in India, warned Magsaysay awardee Rajendra Singh, popularly known as 'Water Man of India'.

Singh, who was in the city to receive the honoris causa from the University of Agricultural Sciences, told TOI on Thursday that instead of linking rivers, the country needs linking of brains and hearts with rivers so that they are conserved.

He said the project would harm the ecological balance, besides causing large-scale destruction of the green belt. He said a few politicians were floating the idea of linking rivers and wondered how so-called high-level officers and experts were also vouching for the idea.

"Rivers are like veins in the human body. One cannot cut the veins and join it with another person. If the veins in the human body are altered, it would result in the death of the person. Similarly, if the rivers are diverted according to the wish and will of mankind, it would harm the environment," he added.

Rejecting experts' argument that floods and drought could be contained by linking rivers, Singh said such a move would pose much danger to flora and fauna.

Water conservation schemes launched by governments, including the one in Karnataka, have been engineering works aimed at conserving surface water, he pointed out. Nothing has been done to conserve underground water level.

'Honour for farmers'

"By conferring the honorary doctorate on me, the University of Agricultural Sciences in Dharwad has honoured the illiterate farmers of parched Rajasthan, who taught me the preliminary lessons in water conservation. This is the doctorate conferred upon those farmers," said Rajendra Singh.