

INTERVIEW | ANU SINGH LATHER

## 'AUD used lockdown to prepare for online shift, focus now on research'

JAIDEEP DEO BHANJ

*Ambedkar University Delhi (AUD) Vice-Chancellor Anu Singh Lather talks about how the institution adapted during the lockdown, implementation of the National Education Policy, introduction of the Happiness Curriculum and focus on research and entrepreneurship. Excerpts from the interview:*

**It has been a very tough year for education and learning. How did AUD switch from physical classes to online?**  
■ As soon as the lockdown was announced, we went in for a long vacation that was initially planned for June-July. This gave us time to plan and prepare, including facul-

ty training, for a shift to online classes. While many universities had short-term plans, expecting educational institutions to open by May, we realised that COVID-19 was not going away. Hence, we made a plan till December that included the new admission process. We also followed a continuous assessment system so we did not face problems regarding conduct of exams.

**How did you deal with the digital divide and access to high-speed Internet as AUD attracts students from across the country?**

■ We went in for a synchronous as well as an asynchronous mode of teaching. Books, study material, pre-

sentations and case studies were all put together and emailed to students. We also recorded the lectures so that students from the Northeast and Kashmir, who were facing problems with Internet connectivity, could watch recordings and access material. We had students approaching us for laptops, smartphones and other relief. We provided EWS students with reimbursements for their Internet connection. We also purchased and gave tablets to those who were in need.

**When can students expect to attend classes like pre-pandemic times?**

■ We waited for the State government to notify us when



Ambedkar University Delhi Vice-Chancellor Anu Singh Lather. ■ JAIDEEP DEO BHANJ

we could open the university for students. PhD students who are interested are already on campus. We are working on a definite schedule for UG and PG students as well. We want final-year MA and

UG students to attend classes on campus before opening it up for other students.

**How does AUD fare now when compared with other universities in the Capital that have been around for much longer? Do you feel it has become the first choice for students?**

■ We have started organising campus placements and appointed a full-time assistant registrar for placement and training. The assistant registrar ensures that "skilling" is a part of education here. While we are approaching the industry for placement of our students, we saw an interesting trend—students who are graduating from courses like history and

global affairs are being placed for unique profiles that show that there is an integration of social sciences and acceptability for employability. It is encouraging that we have found profiles for our students from the social sciences, and we hope to take further steps in this aspect.

**With the National Education Policy (NEP) coming in, what changes will we see at AUD?**

■ The university is taking a few steps on the quality parameters when it comes to research. We have created our own ordinance for the PhD programme. Also, regulations for that have been created to meet the international demands of research

work. This kind of direction is required as there is a perception that Indian research is often plagiarised and viewed to be fake or not up to international standards. These ordinances will help researchers be professional and move towards better integration of what is expected of them internationally.

The NEP also has a lot of focus on early childhood care. We are one of the universities in the country that thought about it far ahead and have established ourselves in the field of early childhood care. We also want at least three-four programmes at the UG level to be of the four-year duration. We might make the switch in the next session after discus-

sions with all the Deans.

**AUD is regularly adding new courses. Any more new courses that AUD is planning to start?**

■ We are going in for a major revision of our syllabus in the near future to incorporate aspects of the NEP and keep it updated. We are also planning to launch a Happiness Curriculum. This will be done at two levels. At the university-level, it will be introduced as an essential course. On a wider note, a training programme will be launched for the judiciary, government officials and others.

In the three-six months of training, the course will teach those enrolled to look at life differently.