

100 years of Delhi University

May 3, 2022

In news- On May 1st Delhi University has marked the beginning of its centennial celebrations.

History of Delhi University-

- **The idea for the university began taking shape in 1911 when it was decided to shift the capital of India to Delhi from Calcutta.**
- The onset of World War I, differences over the nature of the would-be university, and lack of funds kept the idea from coming to fruition for another 11 years.
- **The university came into being a hundred years ago in 1922 as a unitary, teaching and residential University.**
- The Bill to constitute Delhi University was introduced in the Central Legislative Assembly on January 16, 1922, and it was passed on February 22.
- The Bill was introduced in the Imperial Legislative Assembly with the objective of establishing a unitary teaching and residential university in the capital of British India.
- It was started with three colleges and 750 students in 1922 and it has 90 colleges and 86 departments today with over 6 lakh students from across India.
- At that time, Delhi had three arts colleges – St Stephen's College, which was founded in 1882 by the Cambridge Mission; Hindu College, which was founded in 1899; and Ramjas College which was founded in 1917 and Lady Hardinge Medical College.
- These three colleges were to become the first constituent colleges of the university.
- DU Act came into force on May 1, 1922, with **Viceroy Lord Reading as the first Chancellor and Hari Singh Gour as the first Vice-Chancellor.**

- **Presently, the President of India is the Visitor, the Vice-President is the Chancellor and the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of India is the Pro-Chancellor of the University.**
- DU began with just two faculties arts and science and eight departments English, history, economics, Sanskrit, Arabic, Persian, physics, and chemistry.
- At the university's first convocation in 1923, Vice-Chancellor Gour said that at "the new Delhi now to be the Imperial capital of a reformed and regenerated India...a new university should be created which should serve as an inspiration to its new hopes and signpost to its new born aspirations".
- During the its first decade of its existence, significant additions were made to the university: the Faculty of Law was established in 1924; **Delhi College** which traced its history to the 17th century – **was revived as Anglo-Arabic College** that same year and was affiliated with **DU (today's Zakir Husain Delhi College); Commercial College, today's Shri Ram College of Commerce – began in 1926; and Lady Irwin College was inaugurated in 1932.**
- In this transitional phase, the university shuffled between rented buildings – it was housed in the Ritz Cinema building, in Curzon House on Alipur Road, and in a portion of the Old Secretariat building.
- It was finally allotted its current home in the Viceregal Lodge and Estate near the Ridge in 1923.
- In 1938, Sir Maurice Gwyer, who was appointed Vice-Chancellor in 1938 and after whom the university's oldest men's residence, Gwyer Hall, is named, presented a memorandum to the Government of India, outlining a vision for an all-India character for the university.
- Among the measures Gwyer suggested were the establishment of a number of professorial chairs and readerships; scholarships to encourage "young men of

real ability" to come to Delhi from different parts of India.

- St. Stephen's moved to the new site of its college in what would become North Campus in 1942, and was soon followed by Hindu, Ramjas and SRCC.
- With Partition, the city's demography and character underwent major changes.
- The need to accommodate displaced students from West Punjab led to the start of new colleges like Hansraj College (1948), SGTB Khalsa College (1951), Deshbandhu College (1952), and Kirori Mal College (1954).

Viceroy Lord Reading-

- Lord Reading (Rufus Isaacs) was **Britain's Lord Chief Justice in David Lloyd George's Liberal Cabinet prior to his appointment as viceroy of India in 1921.**
- Reading was one of the most distinguished jurists of his time, the **only person of Jewish faith appointed viceroy of India.**
- Arriving so soon after Amritsar's Jallianwala Bagh Massacre, in the midst of Mahatma Gandhi's first nationwide satyagraha, Reading ruled India during one of its most revolutionary half decades.
- His tenure was a testing time for British. **The Non-cooperation Movement had reached climax and was abruptly withdrawn in 1922.**
- This period saw a sudden rise in communal growth and fringe elements in both Hindu and Muslim Community.
- Some of the events included: Prince of Wales visited India in 1921, Repeal of Rowlatt Act was enacted in 1919, Moplah Rebellion (1921), Simultaneous Examinations of Civil Services in London and Delhi (1923), Start of Vishwa Bharati University (1922), Foundation of Communist Party of India (1921), Formation of Swaraj Party (1923), Kakori Train robbery (1925) etc.