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BU toppers wanted gold, not lucre

ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

Students wondered why the varsity could not **take government help** to pool funds and present **at least one gold medal** to each topper, while officials said they would remove the term 'gold medal' altogether from next year and only confer cash prizes if donors did not increase funding, reports **Rashmi Belur**

It was all gloom and no glitter at the 45th convocation of Bangalore University on Friday. The toppers were a dejected lot as their academic excellence was rewarded in cash and not with a gold medal.

Amrutha Venkatesh, a BSc student of MES College, who had won nine gold medals, sounded upset: "It was sad to receive a cash prize. They gave me Rs7,000 which I can spend in a minute. They could have given me at least one gold medal instead of nine, which I could have preserved for life."

All the toppers echoed Amrutha's opinion. Priyanka JB, a BCom student of Sri Bhagawan Mahaveer Jain College, who

Students welcome BU's decision to introduce degree certificates online, and suggest stringent measures be followed to avoid misuse

topped in seven subjects, said, "We were expecting to receive gold medals from the governor. If they were cash-strapped, they should have at least given us gold coated ones for keepsake."

Varsity officials said that for some time now, toppers were being awarded cash

prizes as the donors' contribution to confer medals was insufficient. An official said, "We had written to the donors requesting them to increase the amount. But most of them have not yet responded. We will write to them one last time, and if there is no response we will remove the term 'gold medal' and confer only cash awards."

While students and officials had their own tales of woes to share, second-timers like Smitha HN, an MSc Physics student, were least surprised.

Smitha, who won seven gold medals this year and had earlier topped in the BSc examinations, said, "I knew that we would be given cash awards as I had received a cheque even when I topped the BSc exams. Medals are more valuable, but we have to be satisfied with the money. However, we do preserve the certificates."

Harish NS of University Visvesvaraya



NUMERO UNO: Amrutha Venkatesh, a BSc student of MES College, who topped the charts with nine gold medals, received her degree, certificate and cash award from governor HR Bhardwaj on Friday during the 45th annual convocation ceremony of Bangalore University

ANANTHA SUBRAMANYAM K

Governor wants varsities to be free of political influence

Governor^{HR} Bhardwaj on Friday said that he would not tolerate any person involved in politics in universities. "The university is not a political *akhada*; it is a temple of learning. Everyone, including the government, should realise this." He said that varsity officials need to work in harmony for students' welfare. Mentioning that he had heard that students were being harassed at RGUHS, Bhardwaj said, "I will not forgive any university that is running against the law."

He said that appointment of registrars would have to follow the procedure that was okayed by the cabinet on Thursday.

Reacting to reports that he spiked BU's list of honorary doctorates this year, he said, "I did not receive any list from the varsity. So how can I recommend or reject it?"

College of Engineering, who won seven gold medals in civil engineering, said that the university and government together could have sponsored at least one gold medal for each topper, instead of putting the blame on donors.

He said, "After all, an achiever should experience the pride of receiving a real gold medal."

Meanwhile, the university's decision to introduce online degree certificates received mixed reaction from students. While most of them appreciated the idea, some felt it could be misused unless a stringent procedure was in place. Hamsini M, an MCom student, said, "The online degree certificate idea is good. I had to wait for eight months before receiving my convocation certificate."

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Factor of change must come from within universities



ISc director, Prof P Balaram, addressed the BU convocation and said that movements for change must come from within universities. "Reports submitted by committees only offer suggestions. Implementation of any agenda for reform has never been easy. Indeed, if reform and restructuring must happen, the movement for change must come from within universities. The faculty and administrators at our universities must be active participants in defining the reform process. Restructuring and reform of our existing system must accompany the process of expansion," he said.