

new plan for Old Campus

By Intikhab Hanif

LAHORE, Jan 22: Efforts are afoot to give a new life to the Old Campus of the Punjab University.

One of the proposals is to supplement PU revenue by offering its historic hall for private functions.

The Old Campus is relatively quiet after the shifting of many departments to the New Campus. The examinations branch, too, was recently shifted to the New Campus — the Quaid-i-Azam Campus. And except for the students and teachers of the few departments left here, those attached to the university visit the Old Campus mainly to board a university bus to the new campus.

The Old Campus houses pharmacy, fine arts and social work departments besides the Oriental College which was also given possession of the building of the law college. But the imposing building appears to be too big for the existing activities there, especially after the shifting of the examinations branch to the new place.

With this shifting the administrative block and the university's main library hall which was given to the examination branch, now look haunted.

The senate and syndicate halls are still used for meetings and retain their traditional grandeur, teak wood panelling and impressive pictures of successive vice-chancellors and academics. And the lavish and spacious office of the vice-chancellor is being maintained for occasional meetings whenever he chooses to hold them here.

University authorities say the Old Campus would be used for teaching new disciplines like the computer and environmental sciences.

The English Department premises have been given to the adjacent fine arts department as it required expansion and needed better facilities. Currently the department's gas supply has been disconnected allegedly for non-payment of arrears. The department needs gas heaters to keep its high-walled rooms



ONCE bustling Punjab University Old Campus. — Photo by Azhar Jafri

warm in winter. The chemistry department building facing the National College of Arts was given to the neighbouring pharmacy department after the former was shifted to the New Campus many years ago.

"The portion of the chemistry department where US Nobel laureate Dr Compton had conducted his award winning research many decades ago, is being used for running various educational programmes of the pharmacy department which is also taking benefit of the big laboratories there," the authorities say.

The examinations branch is being renovated for the proposed college of computer sciences the admission process for which has already been started.

The hall previously housing the main library will be given to the Oriental College for the same purpose and orders have already been issued for it renovation. The Oriental College immediately requires a better building to house its huge collection of books presently piled up even in the teachers' rooms.

The authorities say that during a recent visit Vice-

Chancellor Lt-Gen (retd) Arshad Mahmood had expressed his desire to restore the original look of the main hall of the university whose basic purpose once used to be to hold prestigious annual convocations.

During the visit the vice-chancellor praised the architecture of the hall and the gallery where once parents and relatives of the graduating students sat to witness proceedings of the convocations.

He asked for renovation of the hall to restore its original look and open its doors to public functions and parties, the authorities say, adding that this could earn some revenue and bring life to Old Campus.

Asked about the future of the Old Campus and whether private functions at its main hall would just start a commercialization trend, they said the land could be used only for academic purposes for which it was allotted. No one was going to invite public wrath by altering or demolishing the imposing structures of the Old Campus, a Lahore landmark.

The university was formally

established with the convening of the first meeting of its senate on October 14, 1882 at Simla. It was the fourth university set up in the British India, the first three were in Bombay, Madras and Calcutta.

The three were only certification bodies while the Punjab University had both the teaching and examination facilities from the beginning.

Dr GW Leitner, a Hungarian turned Britain, was instrumental in the establishment of the university and was its first registrar.

Prof AC Woolner, whose life size black stone statue stands outside the Old Campus's main entrance on The Mall, remained the vice-chancellor from 1928 to 1936 and played a significant role in the development of the university into one of the most respected educational institutions in the Indian sub-continent.

He died in Lahore with his boots on and was buried in the Jail Road's cemetery under a black stone grave. His statue carrying a book and wearing his academic's robe still appears to be guarding the campus.

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