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Soon, mandatory rural work for students enrolled in NSS

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NEW DELHI: It will soon be mandatory for college and university students enrolled in the National Social Service (NSS) to camp in villages and undertake social work there.

The human resource development ministry is likely to sign a memorandum of understanding with the ministry of youth affairs to involve the NSS in the implementation of its flagship programme Unnat Bharat Abhiyan (UBA) to uplift rural India.

The NSS is a large-scale community service programme meant for the youth to engage with social problems and is run by universities across the country. Delhi University, for instance, took up the programme in 1969. The number of hours that students will have to spend in rural areas will be finalised soon.

"Association with the NSS is not only a welcome step but an essential one towards a strong

THE FIRST PHASE OF THE PROGRAMME IS LIKELY TO BE LAUNCHED ON INDEPENDENCE DAY; IIT DELHI MAY MENTOR ALL THE INSTITUTES

Unnat Bharat Abhiyan," said Vijay P Bhatkar, architect of India's first supercomputer and chairman of the UBA committee.

It is not mandatory for NSS volunteers at present to undertake work in rural areas. HRD ministry officials say NSS units in colleges and universities will be involved in surveys, planning and other activities.

"There are a number of universities that are either in rural areas or are close to villages. Their students will be taken first for providing help to the UBA. Universities that are in urban areas and have small hamlets in the outskirts can work there," a senior ministry official said.

One NSS unit in a college has

roughly 100 volunteers and each is supposed to dedicate 120 hours for social work in a year.

There are 38,000 NSS units in the country. Thematic issues such as village planning, resource mapping, water, irrigation, and infrastructure improvement will be taken up for intervention by a group of 10-15 volunteers of an NSS unit that will camp in villages.

"As part of the NSS we teach at blind schools and work for NGOs. It is a good move to involve the youth in our villages. But transportation and lodging will have to be taken care of by the government," said Anushree Dutta, a Delhi University student.

The first phase of the UBA programme in selected districts is likely to be launched on Independence Day. Training kits will be prepared for UBA activities by mentoring institutes under the guidance of IIT Delhi. Districts are being selected while work on identification of NSS units will be over by April and training kits prepared by June.

HRD Ministry asked to increase student intake in IITs, IIMs

Press Trust of India | New Delhi March 16, 2016 Last Updated at 22:22 IST

http://www.business-standard.com/article/pti-stories/hrd-ministry-asked-to-increase-student-intake-in-iits-iims-116031601296_1.html

Noting that the intake capacity of most of country's old institutions remains "stagnant", a Parliamentary panel has suggested expansion of IITs and IIMs and increase the number of seats there. In its 274th report, the Parliamentary Standing committee on HRD Ministry said the expansion of IITs and IIMs is very important for the development of these institutions. The committee hopes that IITs and IIMs will enhance the seats as well as expand the faculty on periodical basis and accommodate more students." The committee also asked the HRD ministry to set up new institutions immediately and also ensure that delay does not adversely affect the teaching, research and other facilities at these institutions. In the report, the committee has said that there seems to be a lack of transparency in regulatory bodies like UGC, AICTE, NAAC and NAB. Complaints related to these regulatory bodies should not just be monitored but action also taken to address them. The ministry should soon bring a Distance Education Council of India (DECI) Bill, the panel said. It also expressed concern over shortage of faculty while also seeking measures to attract the best talent.

Carpool campaign aims to clear traffic mess in Kolkata

TNN | Mar 17, 2016, 12.51 AM IST

http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/kolkata/Carpool-campaign-aims-to-clear-traffic-mess/articleshow/51433376.cms

KOLKATA: Over the years, the city's biggest school (in terms of student enrolment) - South Point - has been facing the worst traffic nightmare between 11am to 12.30pm everyday, when the morning school gets over and the day school starts. Repurcussions are felt up to E M Bypass at one end and Park Circus on the other. But things will start moving in the right direction when Kolkata Police and IIT-Kharagpur start the pilot run of their ambitious project to encourage school bus and carpool for transportation of students. To begin with, the carpool association has already held an interaction with parents. "We've tried to convince parents how private cars are choking the entire area. Private cars, according to the IIT-Kgp study, carry only 18% of students but occupy 80% of road-space. This is why we requested car-owners to switch to carpools or school buses," said Arupam Dutta, general secretary of Pool Car Operators Welfare Association. Bhargav Maitra, head of the project, and his IIT-Kharagpur team have been working hard to make it a successful model for other schools. "We need to offer parents much more than the guarantee of their children's safety. There has to be basic minimum comfort level and a tracking system so that parents can track their wards on their mobile. We are on the final stage of developing the system," said Maitra. The carpool association wants to be a facilitator in the transition. "Before the actual implementation, we tried to convince parents about the advantages of putting their wards in carpools or schoolbuses. We tried to dispel some of the misgivings about carpools and

schoolbuses. There might be some stray incidents, some exceptions. But if you look at our over-all performance, the track record is quite impeccable," said Dutta.

This IIT alumnus has stopped close to 70,000 people from committing suicide
THINK CHANGE INDIA

 http://social.yourstory.com/2016/03/richa-singh-yourdost/

According to an earlier study by the World Health Organisation(WHO), Indians are among the worst hit by depression, with nearly 36 percent of the population having a major depressive episode. While one person in India commits suicide every four minutes, younger Indians are among the worst hit.

That's why Richa Singh, an IIT Guwahati alumnus, started www.yourdost.com, an emotional support system for people to discuss problems with qualified and experienced individuals, in anonymity.

Problems among those who have sought help range from stress due to bad performance in competitive exams like CAT, IAS, etc. and relationship issues, anxiety during exam preparation, and the feeling of rejection due to working in a field they don't enjoy, reported The Huffington Post.

According to a 2015 report in The Economic Times, stress is part and parcel of college life, but for some students at the Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs), it can get overwhelming. Everything adds up: daunting academic loads, struggling to keep up after a lifetime of being an overachiever and the burden of expectations from family, friends and peers.

In 2014, the IITs saw an estimated 14 student suicides, probably the highest ever across these elite colleges. The inability to cope – often spiraling into depression – has haunted several students. "The world creates artificial expectations. There's peer pressure, family pressure, societal pressure.

Unfortunately, for some students, their ambition is centered around pay packages. To their mind, their success will be judged only around their pay packages and placements," said Indranil Manna, director, IIT Kanpur.

This is where Richa's contribution plays a crucial role. Anonymity helps, says Richa. "We all face problems, stress and anxiety at some point in our life but mostly we are not willing to talk about these, fearing social implications, being judged and for the fear of being judged. We are confident that technology combined with empathy and right kind of experts will go a long way in helping people going through a various emotional and mental challenges and equipping them to better deal with it," says Richa in a report in Business Standard.

Universities to go green: UGC

By Rajeev Mani, TNN | Mar 16, 2016, 03.14 PM IST

http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/environment/flora-fauna/universities-to-go-green-ugc/articleshow/51425256.cms

ALLAHABAD: At a times when many cities around the world are setting targets and introducing polices for promoting renewable energy and reducing GHG (green house gases) emissions, the UGC (University Grants Commission), has invited proposals from all universities of the country, including Allahabad University (AU), to develop their campuses as green campus during the 12th five year plan.

The financial assistance upto Rs Five lakhs, for preparation of a master plan and DPR (detailed project report) has been approved.

As per a letter, send by UGC secretary, S S Sandhu, the ministry of new and renewable energy, Government of India (GOI) has taken initiatives to develop green campuses under development of solar cities programme which aims at minimum 10 % reduction in projected demand of conventional energy at the end of five years.

The UGC official instructs that the buildings within the campus should be based on green building concepts to the extent possible. Each of the institution, who would be sending such proposals, should carry out the energy and water audit of the entire campus. Sensors for lighting should be adopted and reflected in the proposed master plan, mentions the instruction.

The universities should explore the utilization of renewable energy system such as solar water heater, solar air conditioning, solar dryers, solar cookers, solar lantern, solar pumps, solar traffic signals, battery operated vehicle, hybrid systems etc. Likewise, solar cooking systems must be utilised for hostels etc.

A master plan for the entire campus should be prepared keeping in view the overall reduction in fossil

fuel based energy by 25% within next 5 years by utilizing renewable energy applications, and taking suitable measures for energy conservation and energy efficiency.

Institutions have also been asked to organise an awareness/training workshop in their respective campuses regarding renewable energy applications, and taking suitable measures for energy conservation and energy efficiency.

Besides, the possibility of redesigning of exterior surfaces of the buildings with energy efficient material may be explored.

AU PRO, Prof K N Uttam said, "AU administration has already started following the instructions of the UGC and to start with, varsity has commenced budgeting of the energy after which we would be conducting auditing of individual units wherein energy consumed and utilised would be audited". In the second step, the proposal would be sent to the UGC, he said.

Add topics like vigilance, anti-corruption in curriculum: UGC

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http://www.business-standard.com/article/pti-stories/add-topics-like-vigilance-anti-corruption-in-curriculum-ugc-116031601304_1.html

Following a suggestion from the Central Vigilance Commission (CVC), the UGC has advised Universities and Colleges to add topics like ethics, vigilance and anti-corruption to curb graft in their curriculum.

In a letter to VCs of Central Universities, UGC secretary Jaspal S Sandhu said that it is observed that there is a general lack of awareness among school and college students about what is corruption, its adverse impact on society, how and whom to make a complaint regarding such practices.

Children are interested in knowing more about ethics, how to fight corruption and related issues, he said adding expanding their knowledge base on these issues will encourage them to be dedicated to the task of tackling corruption and also facilitate in character building.

The CVC, the senior UGC official said has advised that topics such as Ethics, Vigilance, Anti Corruption, Details of the organisations such as Central Vigilance Commission, Central Bureau of Investigation and how and whom to make complaints regarding corrupt practices, be included in the curriculum for all students.

"In view of the above, UGC would like to advise all the universities and colleges to add the topic in their curriculum," the UGC secretary's letter to Universities said.

IIM-Tiruchi campus construction cost zooms to Rs. 740 crore

http://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Tiruchirapalli/iimtiruchi-campus-construction-cost-zooms-to-rs-740-crore/article8363020.ece

An artist's impression of the Indian Institute of Management, Tiruchi, campus which is coming up at Chinna Suriyur village on Tiruchi-Pudukottai Road.

Construction under way on the 175-acre site at Chinna Suriyur village

The estimate for the construction of new campus of Indian Institute of Management-Tiruchi is likely to go up to Rs. 740 crore because of cost escalation.

As per the original plan, the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) had sanctioned about Rs. 333 crore for constructing own campus for the IIM-T, which is functioning in a portion of National Institute of Technology-T.

Construction is under way on 175 acres of land at Chinna Suriyur village near Bharathidasan University on Tiruchi-Pudukottai Road.

Construction of academic block, administrative block, and faculty residential quarters had almost been completed. The work of interior and other final touches were done now. The IIM had planned to move to the new campus in June or July.

Although the IIM-T authorities have expressed confidence on moving to the new campus as scheduled, they said the construction activities had been restricted to 78,000 square metres as against the 1.15 lakh square metres because of cost escalation.

Authorities said the estimate for the current plan was arrived at based on the cost price of 2007. Since the cost price had seen dramatic increase, it had been felt that it was not possible to complete all work with the current estimate of Rs. 333 crore. It was said that the Ministry of Human Resource

Development had prepared a revised estimate by taking into account of the 2016 cost. The IIM-T had forwarded its suggestions and requirements so as to incorporate in the revised estimate.

The sources added that the revised estimate was likely to go up to Rs. 740 crore from Rs. 333 crore to provide all world class amenities. Once the revised plan was approved, construction of auditorium, additional hostels, and other buildings would be started.

However, the IIM-T would start functioning on the new campus from June or July with the minimum facilities such as administrative block, academic block, students' hostel, students' mess, canteen and faculty, and staff quarters.

More seats in institutes reserved for children of Indian workers in Oman

By Rejimon K / reji@timesofoman.com

http://timesofoman.com/article/79600/Oman/Education/More-seats-in-institutes-reserved-for-children-of-Indian-workers-in-Oman-other-Gulf-countries

Muscat: More seats have been reserved for Children of Indians Working in Gulf countries (CIWG) looking for admissions at premier Indian institutes through Direct Admission to Students Abroad (DASA) scheme, an Indian government circular says.

According the circular, a third of the 15 per cent seats at premier Indian institutes, such as institutions/university departments, approved by All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE), offering technical courses leading to diploma, degree and post graduate degrees in engineering and technology, architecture and town planning, pharmacy, applied arts, MBA and MCA, hotel management and catering technology, will be reserved for CIWG.

As per the data available on the AICTE website, there are 10,329 affiliated institutions across the country. These institutions together have an intake capacity of 39,56,234, but the total enrolment in the 2015 to 2016 academic year is 20,97,889.

"There shall be one-third reservation for Children of Indian Workers in Gulf Countries (CIWG). However, any vacant seats out of the 1/3 category of CIWG shall be reverted to the quota of 2/3 meant for other categories of DASA- 2016. Eligibility of CIWG will be same as that of NRIs," the circular stated.

However, CIWG will have to pay fee at par with resident citizens and have to present proof of either parent working in a gulf country.

"Such a candidate has to make a payment of USD300 as registration fee (non-refundable) and USD700 towards tuition fee for one semester. Fee as that of resident students will be applicable. Any change in

the tuition fee from competent authority from time to time will be applicable to CIWG also," the circular added.

Proof that either of the parent is working in a gulf country, such as the copy of the passport of the parent working in the gulf, copy of the parent's visa and copy of parent's work permit (If any) will be required while applying for the admission.

"It's a commendable move from the government side. This at least assures a little more seats for the children of Indian workers in Gulf countries," Radhakrishna Kurup, a teacher at Indian School Darsait, said.

"The majority of the Indian workers in the Gulf cannot be placed under the so-called wealthy Non-Resident Indian category. When an ordinary Indian migrant is considered an NRI parent, then they have to shell out a huge amount to get an admission for their child under the NRI quota. Now, with seats being reserved for ordinary Indian workers' children in Gulf, it is surely a blessing," the teacher added.

'Exemplary action must be taken against fake universities'

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http://www.business-standard.com/article/pti-stories/exemplary-action-must-be-taken-against-fake-universities-116031601380_1.html

Concerned over fake universities duping students in the country, a Parliamentary panel has sought "exemplary" action against such bodies and those who violate UGC guidelines. In its 28th report, the Committee on Government Assurances pointed out that said that despite an assurance, UGC has failed to identify the individuals behind fake universities "mushrooming" in the country and shut them down. In another significant observation, the panel focused on issues related to corruption in All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) referring to several CBI cases against its officials, some of which are still at various stages of investigation. "AICTE being an important body regulating standards of technical education in the country, should be prevented from rotting down as a hotbed of corruption so that the technical education system of the country excels," the panel said in its report. The panel recommended that the HRD ministry improve the accountability and strengthen vigilance mechanism in AICTE.

'Plan to use infra of closed engg colleges for skill training'

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http://www.business-standard.com/article/pti-stories/plan-to-use-infra-of-closed-engg-colleges-for-skill-training-116031600639_1.html

Government is planning to use existing infrastructure of closed AICTE-affiliated engineering colleges or polytechnics for skill development training programmes, Parliament was informed today.

In a statement laid on the table of Lok Sabha, MSDE Minister Rajiv Pratap Rudy said the ministry "is working meticulously with All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) to utilise the existing spare infrastructure/ capacities of AICTE-approved engineering colleges/polytechnics for conducting" skill training courses.

National Skill Qualification Framework (NSQF) compliant courses under the National Council for Vocational Training (NCVT) will be conducted under the Pradhan Mantri Vikas Yojna, said Skill Development and Entrepreneurship Minister (MSDE) Rudy.

Already closed engineering colleges/polytechnics may apply directly for affiliation to run the courses, Rudy said.

The minister said as per information provided by AICTE, 31 institutions have been closed and 84 institutions have applied for closure across India.

"A committee has been constituted by AICTE for feasibility study for utilisation of the surplus infrastructure, engineering colleges/polytechnics, for running NSQF compliant NCVT courses," he added.