Newspaper Clips
August 2-3, 2013

August 2

Times of India ND 02/08/2013   P-19

Institute spills beans on NIT admission gaffe

Disowns Normalization, Blames CBSE, Govt

Akshaya Mukul | TNN

New Delhi: Indian Statistical Institute (ISI), Kolkata, has blown the lid off the story behind the normalization of class XII and JEE (Main) that was used for admission in prestigious NITs.

Blaming the HRD ministry and the Central Board of Secondary Education for the normalization that was eventually arrived at, ISI has distanced itself from the formula. It has said the suggestions made by the S K Joshi committee — of which the ISI was a vital part — were partially disregarded.

ISI had said last September when the S K Joshi committee held its first meeting, CBSE chairman Vineet Joshi told the panel that he has

Indian Statistical Institute said suggestions made by the Joshi committee — of which the institute was a vital part — were partially disregarded

hired Jim Tognolini and John Twing of Indian Centre for Assessment Evaluation and Research to suggest how to normalize Board score. The report by Tognolini-Twing, ISI says, started with the premise that some Boards have more able students and suggested that the performance of students of different Boards in JEE (Main) be used to differentially adjust the scores of these Boards. ISI

said this suggestion would benefit a CBSE student at the expense of a non-CBSE student with identical percentile.

ISI said CBSE chairman set up a core committee to shore up support for differential normalization method. Some data was received from Glenn Rowley of the Australian Council for Educational Research, and some supporting data analysis from IIT-Kanpur teachers. The Joshi panel decided to include the Core Committee formed by the CBSE head in all its subsequent meetings. On October 31, the Core Committee did not support the approach promoted by the CBSE chairman and flaws were pointed out.

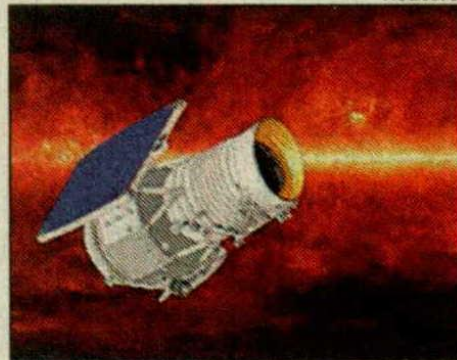*For the full report, log on to www.timesofindia.com*

Times of India ND 02-Aug-13   P-23

Nasa telescope may get new lease of life as asteroid hunter

Nasa is considering re-activating a moth-balled space telescope to help find asteroids that could be on a collision course with Earth, according to a senior US space agency official.

Launched in December 2009, the Wide-field Infrared Survey Explorer, or WISE, telescope spent about a year taking pictures for an all-sky map. With its infrared detectors, WISE was able to peer through thick layers of dust and see even relatively dim objects such as cool brown dwarf stars in great detail.

Nasa then put WISE to work on another mission

Reuters

An artist's concept of Wide-field Infrared Survey Explorer

looking for asteroids and comets in the solar system. Of particular interest were objects in orbits that pass relatively close to Earth.

WISE found about 150 near-Earth asteroids, includ-

ing 20 that were potentially hazardous, before funding for the project ran out. The telescope was put into hibernation in February 2011.

Nasa is now reviewing options for enhancing its asteroid-hunting efforts including bringing WISE out of hibernation, Lindley Johnson, who oversees the agency's Near-Earth Objects observations programme, said this week. This follows February's explosion of a small asteroid in the skies above Russia and the near-Earth passage of a larger one the same day. REUTERS

August 3

Pioneer ND 03-Aug-13   P-5

New norms to curb conflict of interest in IIT boards on cards

DEEPAK KUMAR JHA
NEW DELHI

With 'conflict of interest' plaguing the governing bodies of some of the IITs, the HRD Ministry is considering framing a new set of guidelines for constitution of Board of Governors (BoG).

"Chairman and members should not have any direct or indirect business dealing with their Institutes during their tenure and for a certain period after completion of his or her tenure," said a top HRD Ministry official. According to the new draft proposal, the Chairman and Members of the BoG would have to first declare their business interest and stakes wherever to check allegation of conflict of Interest.

The matter is likely to be taken up by HRD Minister MM Pallam Raju during the end of this month when he convenes a review meeting on IITs.

On the agenda is the controversial percentile and normalisation system that has invited protests from aspirants across the country and the need to decide whether to continue with the new pattern of IIT-JEE in 2014 also. All the BoG Chairman, Chairman JEE, CBSE Chairman and top officials of HRD will attend the meet.

HCL Chairman Shiv Nadar is currently facing allegations of conflict of interest. The HRD Ministry, CVC and PMO have sought a response on the matter from IIT Kharagpur as Nadar is Chairman of the BoG

According to the new draft proposal, the Chairman and Members of the BoG would have to first declare their business interest and stakes, wherever, to check allegations of conflict of interest

of the institute. *The Pioneer* had reported about Nadar's business dealings with IIT and how his software company is being benefited due to his position. Nadar was nominated Chairman BoG by the then Visitor President Pratibha Patil.

"In cases where business is inevitable because no alternative source of supply is available for the product or the service, an appropriate intimation and proper justification must be sent to the HRD Ministry and Visitor for information and record. Complete details of such dealings should be made public, pointed the official.

The new guidelines would be applicable to the Director (ex-officio Board Member), Institute's Registrar (who is also Secretary of most of bodies of the Institute like the Finance Committee, Building and Works Committee and the Senate), and other authorities, who are permanent invitees of the Board.

Further, in what may affect the fortunes of many who used to receive honorary degrees from IITs while holding a post in BoG, the Chairman and members of the Board would not have to receive any honorary degrees, fellowships or awards from the Institute during the tenure and for couple of year thereafter.

The Centrally Funded Technical Institutes (CFTI) are managed and governed by a Governing Body made up of educationists, administrators and industrialists from the country. The Chairman of the BoG is nominated by the Visitor while its members are nominated / selected by the respective Council, Central / State Governments and Senates. According to the Institutes of Technology Act, 1961 the Board would be responsible for the general superintendence, direction and control of the affairs of the Institute.

'New formula helps more girl, rural students crack JEE'

Akshaya Mukul | TNN

New Delhi: Faced with widespread criticism of the normalization method in JEE Mains, the CBSE has now claimed that due to the new pattern, representation of students from rural backgrounds as well as of girl students has shown remarkable improvement.

In 2013, there were 136 students with rural background among the top thousand rankers. In 2012, there were only 90 students from rural India. Urban student representation went down to 864 this year from 910 in 2012. Rural representation also showed gradual growth among the first two, three and four thousand rank holders.

Among the top 5,000

> **Among the top 5,000, there were 861, or 17.22%, students from rural background compared to 13.4% last year. As for female students, 136 made it to the top-1,000 this year against 96 last year**

rankers, there were 861, or 17.22%, students from rural background compared to 13.4% last year. Urban representation among the top 5000 came down to 82.78% in 2013 from 86.6% last year.

Female students, figures showed, increased their presence among the toppers. This year, among the top thousand rankers, there were 136 female students, and 749 among the top 5,000 rankers. Male representation among the top thousand rankers came down to 864 in 2013 compared to 904 last year and 924 in 2011.

Students from government schools are also beginning to make a slow but steady presence among top rankers. But the rate is slower. Last year, 89 government school students were in the first one thousand. In 2013, it went up to 117. In the top 5,000, there were 624 such students, up from last year's 545. Private school students, however, continue to dominate. This year, of the top-1,000, 883 students were from private schools, a marginal decline from last year's 911.

Naya India ND 03/08/2013 P-8

हैदराबाद आईआईटी का जापान के ओडीए से करार

सरकार ने भारतीय प्रौद्योगिकी संस्थान हैदराबाद (आईआईटीएच) को जापान सरकार के आधिकारिक विकास सहायता (ओडीए) के साथ करार करने की परियोजना को शुक्रवार को मंजूरी दे दी।

आर्थिक मामलों की मंत्रिमंडलीय समिति (सीसीईए) की बैठक में लिए गए निर्णयों की जानकारी देते हुए सूचना एवं प्रसारण मंत्री मनीष तिवारी ने यहां बताया कि 1776.50 करोड़ रुपए की इस परियोजना के लिए जापान की ओर से ओडीए के तहत 1501.72 करोड़ रुपए का ऋण मिलेगा। उन्होंने बताया कि इस परियोजना की शेष 274.77 करोड़ रुपए अर्थात 15.5 फीसद हिस्सा केन्द्रीय मानव संसाधन विकास मंत्रालय अगले चार वर्षों अर्थात 2013-14 से 2016-17 के दौरान अनुदान के रूप में देगा।

तिवारी ने कहा कि इस परियोजना के तहत शैक्षिक और जापानी उद्योग के सहयोग से मूल्य संवर्धन होगा और दोनों के बीच छात्रों एवं प्राध्यापकों का आदान प्रदान होगा। इससे दोनों देशों के बीच विज्ञान एवं प्रौद्योगिकी तथा मानव संसाधन विकास के क्षेत्र में सहयोग बढ़ेगा।

Economic Times ND 03-Aug-13   P-12

Common Entrance Test or Multiple Exams?

The govt is thinking of challenging the scrapping of a common National Eligibility and Entrance Test for medical programmes, but students are in two minds

URMI A GOSWAMI

The government's move to seek a review of the Supreme Court order scrapping the common entrance test for undergraduate medical programmes has evoked protests from some quarters while the students harbour mixed feelings about the development.

Tamil Nadu chief minister J Jayalalithaa has written to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, saying the idea of a review petition should be dropped. Jayalalithaa has urged the Centre not to seek a review of the order so as to avoid "confusion and frustration" among students, even as Tamil Nadu was among the states that opposed the NEET.

Law minister Kapil Sibal had told ET on Thursday that the government would challenge the apex court's July 18 ruling that the Medical Council had no power to hold a common National Eligibility and Entrance Test (NEET) for the entire country, leaving the private institutions free to hold their own entrance tests.
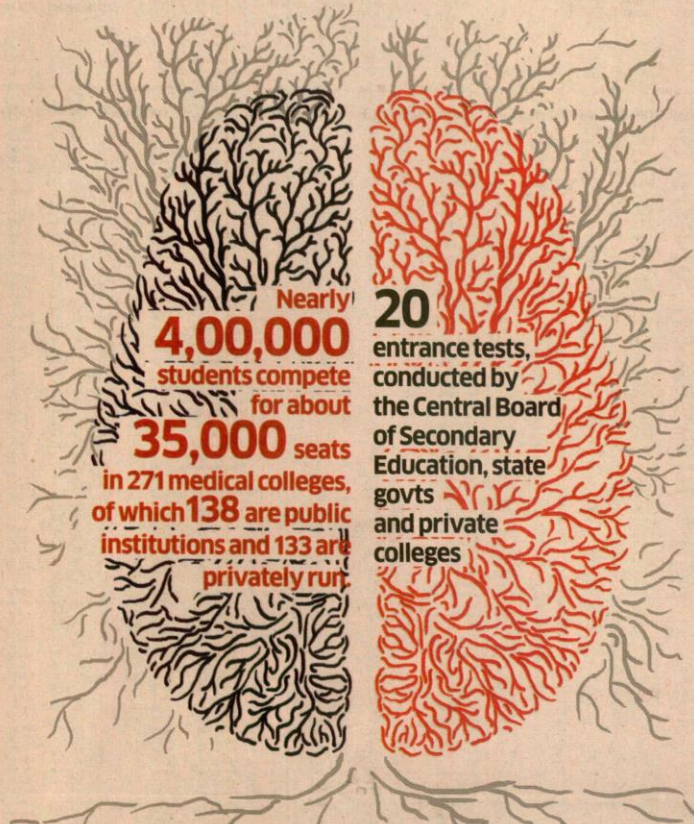
Nearly four lakh students compete for about 35,000 seats in 271 medical colleges, of which 138 are public institutions and 133 are privately run. There are more than 20 entrance tests, conducted by the Central board of Secondary Education, state governments and private colleges.

"It is much better to have one exam," says aspiring medical student Priya Singh. "That way I can focus on doing well in one exam, instead of worrying about scoring high in multiple entrance tests," she said, adding that students are forced to appear for seven to nine entrance tests to ensure a fighting chance for a seat.

V. Hemanth, who is in his second year at a medical college in Karnataka, offers the contrary opinion that a single exam is not nearly as good an idea as it seems. "Risking my entire future on one examination is not a good idea. Suppose I don't perform well in it, and get a middling or low rank, then immediately my choice of colleges will get limited. On the other hand, if there are multiple options, I can be in the running for a seat in a good college even if I do badly in a test," Hemanth explains.

Before the introduction of the NEET, the all-India examinations were conducted for 15% of seats in government medical colleges. States organised their own common entrance examination for a sizeable percentage (50% or more) of the seats, and individual colleges – private and some public institutions – conducted separate examinations. The NEET proposed to change this. All students would be given an all-India ranking and a state ranking, and students could be admitted either on the basis of their all-India performance or, if they were to opt for the state quota, the state ranking would be used.

For many students, separate all-India and state entrance tests make sense. "The state quota can be used by those who meet the domicile criterion. So it is a smaller pool of students and a larger number of seats, improving the chances of getting into a good college," says Subha Rao, even as she adds that she sees merit in the idea of reducing the

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number of entrance tests.

The NEET addressed the concerns of the state governments by creating the system of separate state-wise rankings and provisioning for state quotas. Minority institutions would still maintain their quota and private colleges could continue with a system of management quota. The only condition was that all students would have to be sourced from the merit list prepared on the basis of performance in the common entrance test.

This was the biggest objection that most private colleges had. "A common exam puts an end to capitation fee that most of these colleges extract," an official said. Seats in medical colleges, unlike in other professional courses, are at

a premium, with institutions allegedly charging anywhere between Rs 45 lakh and Rs 1 crore.
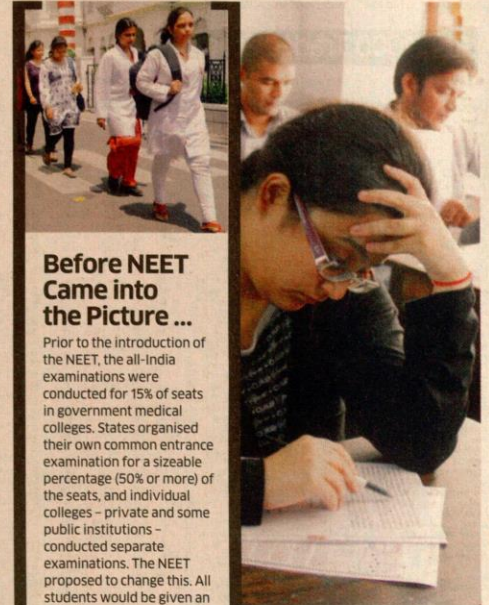
Vikram Singh, head of the Noida International University, a private institution, said, "The single test is a good idea. It reduces stress for parents and students, but also puts an end to the practice of charging for a seat. A common test will ensure that those who get admitted will have an aptitude for the subject, be it medicine, engineering or management."

Recognising the need to put an end to this practice, Justice AR Dave in his 35-page dissent note, argued that admission on the basis of a single test would mean that "unscrupulous and money-minded businessmen operating in the field of education would be constrained to stop

their corrupt practices, and it would help a lot, not only deserving students but also the nation, in bringing down the level of corruption".

The reduced stress for students, the lower financial outlay that comes with appearing for a single examination, doing away with the need to travel to across the country to appear for the tests, made the NEET a winner for parents as well. Though some question the decision to keep prestigious institutes like Armed Forces Medical College and the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) outside the ambit. These institutes were established by an Act of Parliament, hence not under the ambit of the MCI.

The Ramasami Committee, set up

Before NEET Came into the Picture …

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State Quotas

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by law minister Kapil Sibal during his tenure as human resource development minister to fashion a single exam for engineering and sciences, also received overwhelming positive feedback from the public.

Despite the positive feedback getting a single examination on track has been something of an Herculean task. A senior official who served in the HRD ministry during former minister Murli Manohar Joshi's tenure said, "We tried getting a common examination for engineering. It was opposed by institutes like the IITs and BITs. We did manage to get the All India Engineering Entrance Exam on track with the National Institutes of Technology, and other public institution, but it was on a voluntary basis. For management courses, we were not that successful, though we did manage to work out a compromise by identifying five examinations, which institutes could use to admit students. But it never got to the implementation stage as the government changed."

"The real problem," as a senior private college administrator said on the condition of anonymity, "is that most of these private colleges are owned by politicians and businessmen or their fronts. Many look on the educational institute as a way to make money. Until this is addressed, a common entrance examination is bound to remain a Sisyphean task."

Mint ND 03-Aug-13 P-4

ANANT AGARWAL
President, edX

ONE-ON-ONE
Learn anytime, anywhere and largely for free

The MIT professor on how online courses are revolutionizing education and how a famous student inspired the idea

BY PRASHANT K. NANDA
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NEW DELHI

Massive online open courses (MOOCs) are revolutionizing the education space, racking up students all over the world in the millions. EdX, a joint venture of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and Harvard University and one of the pioneers of the movement, was set up in May last year with an initial investment of $60 million and has more than a million students for its free courses. Indians constitute the second largest group of students after the US.

Coursera, founded by computer science professors at Stanford University in April last year, has also been enrolling students all over the world.

In an interview, edX president and MIT professor **Anant Agarwal** spoke about MOOCs, and how they could become an alternative to on-campus learning. He also spoke about partnering the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Bombay, the International Monetary Fund, and shifting to a paid platform to create a revenue stream. Edited excerpts:

> In India, many students take tuition. Instead, they can take MOOCs for free and ask renowned professors for help

Tell us about MOOCs and how edX happened?

MIT has a long history of open content. Then there came Khan Academy in the US (set up by) Salman Khan (in 2006). He was my student and an inspiration for the MOOCs movement. EdX started as an MIT venture in December 2011. It was called MIT-x. Then MIT thought, we need to take open courses to the next level, beyond content on the Web which is unidirectional.

We want to give it the shape of an interactive course and a certificate for those who complete it. We wanted to create a students' community (like an alumni network). In short, we wanted to move from content on the Web to the 3Cs—course, community and certificate! Then Harvard joined and we become edX. The initial investment was $60 million with a view that all courses need to be good quality. Gradually many universities joined from different countries. Soon University of Australia will put up courses on Hindi and Sanskrit.

MOOCs empowers learning and a revolution in the education space. Learn anytime, anywhere and largely free. We now have a presence in over 50 countries and top universities from MIT to Berkeley, from the University of Toronto to China's Peking University and Kyoto University of Japan are part of edX. These courses have received mass acceptance.

What response have you received from Indian students?

If you look at the figures, the US contributes 30% of the students enrolled on our courses. India is significant. Since we launched (May 2012), some 150,000 (13%) are Indian students. This is the second highest contingent, third is the UK and fourth Brazil with 40,000 students each enrolled with edX.

India is debating how to provide quality access to higher education to a large population. But the gaps are evident. Do you see an opportunity?

As a first step you can take it as micro-education. You can get content, teaching and professors online. In India, many students take tuition. Instead, they can take MOOCs for free and ask renowned professors for help. This could be interesting micro-education—not secondary, but primary source of learning. The first part is content, second is tutorial and the third is competence-based assessment. It's a complete package.

You have signed a partnership with IIT Bombay. What kind of content and revenue agreement do you have?

EdX has partnered with the best institutions in the world. The IITs are among the best and IIT Bombay is now our first Indian partner. Three things will happen. First they will be offering MOOCs on our platform with a brand name like IIT-Bombay-X and it will be taken up by Indian and foreign students. They will develop open-source software aiding the edX platform. Third, they can provide MOOCs to other universities in India by contextualizing them as per the local requirements.

We have nearly 60 courses right now ranging from law to mathematics, engineering, science and business management, humanities, etc. IIT Bombay can offer some of them as it is and others can be modified as per local requirements. We are talking to other top institutes, including several IITs, to form partnerships.

What's your revenue source?

Currently, we are offering MOOCs for free and even certificates are free. But in future we will start charging students. Once we get the revenue, it will be shared between edX and partners. We are working on a sustainable revenue model. One is we will begin charging students;

another model is we have began working with corporations and NGOs, who want to offer courses on our platform. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has come in as a collaborator in June. They will offer courses on finance, debt and so on to governments around the world. They are even using the edX platform to create those courses. IMF is paying edX for that. We are talking to several companies in India and abroad for such collaborations. The fee could be based on the number of students or a flat fee per company.

We are non-profit, but not loss-making. We have 75 employees and like any other American company with similar scale, our requirement is no different. Every university is spending between $10,000 to half a million dollars to produce a course depending on the quality, efforts and duration. And these courses could be two weeks to a semester long. We hope to break-even in the next three years.

Some criticize MOOCs over quality? What's your take?

In contrast—our courses are known for their quality. For us the most important thing is: have the students learnt. I think the quality of a pure online course can be better than the quality of an on-campus course. The pure lecture form of education is not working these days. In the online format, it could be more engaging. What we do is replace the lecture with learning sequences, inter-linked videos and interactive exercises. We introduced a games lab, allowed social forums for discussions, virtual labs and we promote use of simulation.

The quality of our courses is

good, but I believe we can improve further. We can teach through blended learning—a mix of both classroom and online—for a better result. Last August, we did an experiment in a university to offer blended courses—the results were stunning. Traditionally, the courses have a 59% pass rate, in the blended class it touched 91%. I think online education with a little bit of campus is a better model than 100% campus. I think 90% of virtual lab and 10% of physical lab is better. On the virtual lab, the number of experiments one can do is immense and it does not have limitations.

MOOCs are in their early days. How do you keep the courses up to date?

Normally, yellow notes stay with professors for years. He teaches the same stuff and cracks the same joke year after year, but in the MOOCs era you have to constantly change and upgrade. Else (students won't come).

Does that mean professors will either become brands or redundant?

I think online learning is like a rising tide. Professors have to reinvent themselves. Instead of dwelling on the old yellow notes, they can improve on the online content and spend more time one-on-one with students helping them how to learn, how to collaborate. Slowly, lectures and yellow notes will become redundant.
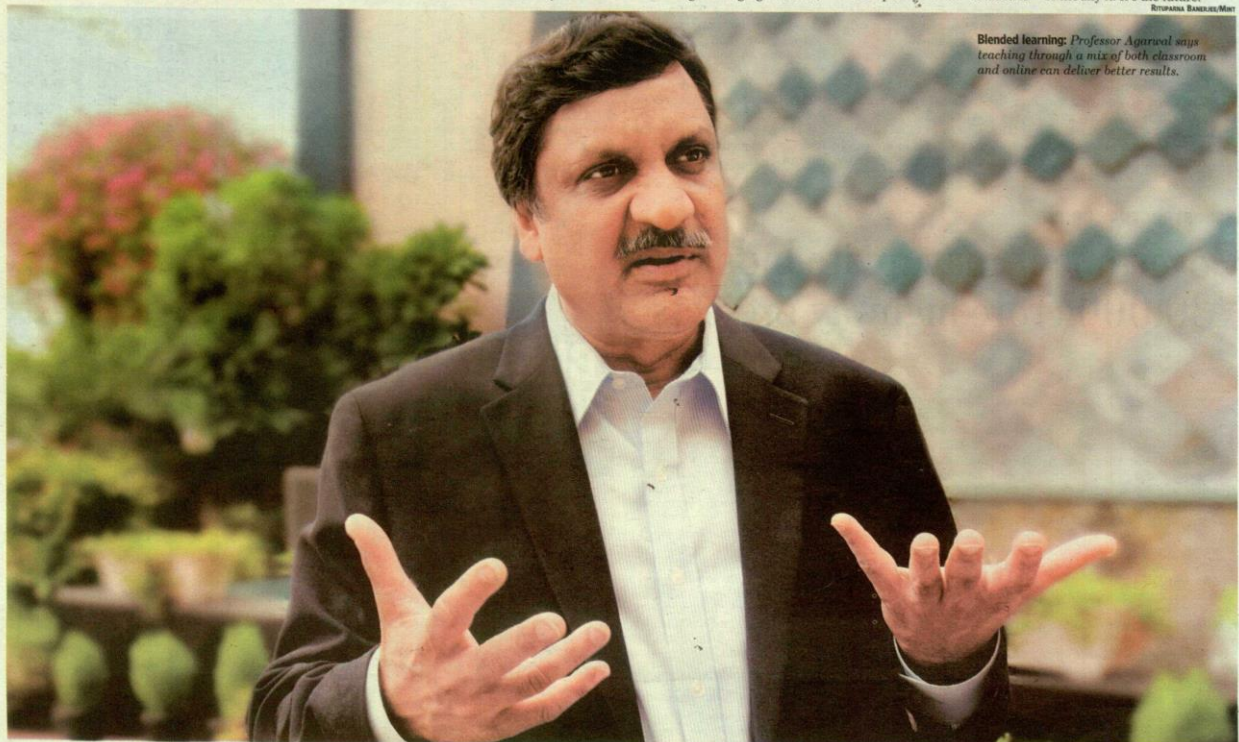
How do you see the future of open-source online education?

There are two types of open source—one is open-source content and another, open-source platform. MOOCs on edX platform is free, but you cannot copy or modify it. It's the future!

RITUPARNA BANERJEE/MINT

Blended learning: *Professor Agarwal says teaching through a mix of both classroom and online can deliver better results.*

Financial Express ND 03/08/2013   P-3

Aakash 4 to be available by Jan 2014: Sibal

New Delhi, Aug 2: The government has finalised specifications of next version of low-cost tablet Aakash which would be ready by January 2014, telecom and IT minister Kapil Sibal said on Friday.

"Yesterday we had meeting on the Aakash. The generation 4 Aakash is ready, all the specifications are frozen," Sibal said while addressing the Telecom Summit here.

The minister also said that around 12 manufacturers from around the world are ready to make the tablet in India.

"There is no problem in terms of manufacture. In fact lines are ready for manufacture, what they need is orders. Now that specifications are frozen, we hope that the Aakash will be available to the people of India by January 2014," he said.

The Directorate General of Supplies and Disposals (DGS&D) will start the process for orders, he added.

Final specifications of the new Aakash tablet, however, could not be ascertained. As per proposed specifications, the latest version of Aakash should be capable of supporting 4G services, phone calling features, 4 GB in built storage and bluetooth connectivity.

Government had sourced previous version of Aakash tablet for $49.98 which translated in to ₹2,276.

PTI