Newspaper Clips
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Why IIT Founder Nehru Wanted Arts for Engineers

http://www.ndtv.com/opinion/why-iit-founder-nehru-wanted-arts-for-engineers-1208945

An acronym that has gained great of currency in the last few years, especially in the context of the debate around IITs, is the powerful agglomerate STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics). What I want to suggest today is that we need a balancing acronym which I will tentatively call LEAF (Liberal Education in the Arts Fields) for a more holistic view of education in general, and Indian education in particular. Such a perspective that gives due weight to culture, history and memory is especially moot when we have a very young population, as we currently do in India. How might STEM and LEAF complement each other under these circumstances? I'd like to ground my answer to this question in a very particular context namely, the role played by Humanities and Social Science Departments in the IITs today.

Although the IITs have been around for more than half a century, many members of the general public still do not know that the humanities subjects were included for credits in the curricula of the IITs from the beginning. Every single engineer who has attended an IIT has passed through its Humanities and Social Science (HSS) Department. But why? To understand this, let's go back to a major difference between a standard issue university and a technical institute.

Briefly, a university, as its name indicates, aims to be inclusive, universal. This word was first used in English in 1300 to refer to "the whole entire number engaged at a particular place in giving and receiving instruction in the higher branches of learning" *(Shorter Oxford).*

An institute, on the other hand, if we turn to its etymology, derives from the Latin verb for 'to establish' and has a more recent origin, since this word was only used after "1795 in post-revolutionary France" *(Shorter Oxford).* Note that this usage was coined nearly five centuries after the word "university". No wonder, then, that the characteristic feature of this model of learning is its modern emphasis on specialization or "expert" technical knowledge.

This stark difference between the ideologies of the university and institute, we can now see, is in fact exemplified by a 'meritocratic' system like that of the IITs. Students with an aptitude for scientific and technological subjects are exclusively admitted to these institutes on the basis of some extremely tough exams. However, the STEM and LEAF structure within the IITs is, surprisingly, far from exclusive. It actually presents us with an imaginative 'hybrid' of the two models cited. Indeed, the IIT Charter explicitly says that they were set up with two broad, egalitarian objectives:

a) the advancement of knowledge through education and research, in both Pure and Applied Science, in Engineering, Social Science and Humanities;

b) service to the community and nation (which we refer to as Extension activity) through the use of their resources both intellectual and material.

In the above respect, the IITs closely resemble the great US technological universities (MIT, Cornell, Carnegie Mellon) which themselves gradually expanded to include every discipline, leaving their instrumentalist beginnings behind, but retaining their commitment to 'excellence'. This 'turn to the humanities and social sciences' and the consequent flourishing research in interdisciplinary areas has, we know, been highly beneficial in the case of US universities and by no means detrimental.

In India, for a variety of reasons, we have chosen not to follow the US path, although some of the newer IITs (Gandhinagar, Hyderabad) have groomed their HSS Departments with particular care, as have some older IITs (Kanpur, Delhi). Some others offer postgraduate degrees in humanities subjects like Economics (Madras). This is

because of a growing realization that the HSS Departments are today far from 'service' departments - if they were ever that. The HSS subjects, at their best, introduce reflexivity, an ability to argue and logically present arguments, delight in unfamiliar, independent ideas and a view of the universe not merely as a nuts-and-bolts construction, but a changeable sphere of human interaction that can be conceptualized from a variety of philosophical and civic angles.

The founder of the IITs, Jawaharlal Nehru, appears to have understood this well. Anticipating that such institutes could become too narrow in focus, he wanted a structural component within the system that was oriented towards turning technologists into 'better men and women'. Specifically addressing engineers, he said:

"I know you can measure with your techniques and rules the hardness and strength of this metal or that, of stone and iron and whatnot...How do you measure the strength of an individual? The human being as material is not only a difficult material but an exciting material because it is a live material, a growing material, a changing and dynamic thing. No two persons are alike and we have to build with that material... [and] function in the environment of India with the material of India... It is important that...engineers advance to become better men and women."

It is that task of moulding 'exciting' human material to which Nehru thought that the HSS departments could signally contribute. So I wonder how Nehru would have answered the anonymous commentator in these NDTV columns who not so long ago charmingly wanted to rid the IITs of "humanities cockroaches". With his deep mistrust of the humanities, this commentator is unlikely to have read Kafka's great story "Metamorphosis", where the hero wakes up one morning to find himself turned into a giant insect, prompting a truly deep meditation on the human condition. He would probably not have read the famous Tagore-Einstein dialogues and be quite unfamiliar with Martin Heidegger's mystic dictum that the 'essences' of art and technology are connected; and almost certainly, he would be befuddled by the views of a world authority on cockroaches, Srini Kambhampati at U Texas, who might assure him that not only are roaches are among the world's hardiest species, the nitrogen cycles on which we all depend would be quite shot were we to get rid of these alarming creatures.

Ironically, though, a student at the IITs might be aware of many such intriguing, offbeat truths, thanks to his humanities courses - which could well serve to teach him the fine art of wonder, the basis of all science.

For the most part, I believe, the long suffering IIT students seem to enjoy their 'HUKKAH' courses because these allow them, as they sweetly put, to 'learn to relax'. Once, I got them to do a 'stereotypic' self-portrait in class. Here are the half-dozen or so jokey points they came up with:

1. Good at PCM, bespectacled, nerdy, very smart

2. Lacking in communications skills, especially when it comes to girls

3. Think they can conquer the world, extremely competitive

4. Interested in sports, video games

5. Not too keen on reading long books

6. Practical, focused on details and on getting results

7. Like the idea of money but are not too sure or sophisticated about how to spend it

Nehru himself put that last point somewhat more elegantly. He had "no doubt at all" Nehru wrote, "that India will....advance in science and technology. But what I am concerned with is not merely our material progress but the quality and depth of our people. Gaining power through industrial processes, will they lose themselves in the quest of individual wealth and soft living?" he asked.

These prophetic thoughts about the corruptions of "soft living" have returned, as we know, to haunt us today. Nehru solidly put his faith in engineers as the "creators" of modern India, but it is this very creativity that he thought would be augmented and extended in HSS classes:

"The Engineering approach to problems would be the scientific approach coupled with the urge for creation, the urge to make and produce new things for the common good. The main thing is that the growth of the individual, the group, cannot be imposed on him."

The STEM and LEAF combine in short was written into the DNA of the IITs. It is time we see it flower.

(Critical theorist and writer Rukmini Bhaya Nair is a professor at IIT Delhi. She is the author of several academic books.)

Times of India ND 20/08/2015 P-17

More girls now make it to IIT

Constitute 9% Of This Year's Intake

Yogita.Rao@timesgroup.com

Mumbai: The number of girls admitted to IITs has gone up marginally this year too, from 8% last year to 9% in the current batch. Though, in absolute numbers, girls on the elite institutes' campuses have gone up by 40, compared to 2014, gender disparity continues to be a problem.

Of the 9,974 students allotted seats in 18 IITs in the first joint seat allocation process, only 900 are girls.

Of the total students who qualified for IITs this year, only 11% were girls. After

Professors attribute the poor representation of girls on engineering campuses to the mindset of people

seat allotments, only 900 got in to the premier institutes. Of the total candidates registered, the number of girls is close to 18%. Before the two-tier exam was introduced in 2012, the number of girls registering for the joint entrance examination was steadily on the rise. From around 24.3% of the total registered candidates in 2008, it

had gone up to 33.3% in 2012.

Professors attribute the poor representation of girls on engineering campuses to the mindset of people. Pradipta Banerji, director, IIT-Roorkee, said girls are poorly represented only in the undergraduate programme, though their success percentage is usually on par with boys.

"There are not many girls

taking the JEE (Main), so we get fewer students for JEE (Advanced). But at the postgraduate level, we have more women on the campus. In fact, 44% doctorate students on the Roorkee campus are women. Of the total student population, they constitute around 15%," said Banerji, adding that people are unwilling to send their girls to a residential campus.

A professor from IIT-Bombay agreed that students on IITs come from a pan-India population and therefore it is difficult to expect a quick change in mindset. IITs had reduced the entrance test fee to half for girls, said Devang Khakhar, IIT-Bombay director and chairman of JEE (advanced). Last year, of the five students from IIT-Bombay who bagged the top offer from a social networking site during placements, two were girls.

Smriti Irani to lay foundation stone for AP NIT

Visakhapatnam, Aug 19:

http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/news/states/smriti-irani-to-lay-foundation-stone-for-ap-nit/article7557725.ece

Foundation stone will be laid on Thursday for two important projects by Union Ministers - one for the National Institute of Technology (NIT) at Tadepalligudem in West Godavari district and the other here for the laboratory and office of the Export Inspection Agency (EIA).

The AP NIT will be established at Tadepalligudem and the Union HRD Minister, Smriti Irani, will lay the foundation stone for it. Even during the current year admissions have been made to the NIT and it will be temporarily housed on Sri Vasavi Engineering College premises in the town. Classes are expected to begin in the last week of August or September.

The NIT, Warangal, will be the mentor institution for the AP NIT at Tadepalligudem for two or three years. The Director of NIT, Warangal, will be the mentor Director for the AP NIT also.

The Union Minister of State for Commerce, Nirmala Sitharaman, will lay the foundation stone for the office and lab of the EIA at Gamheeram on the outskirts of the city. It will give a boost to exports from the city, especially seafood exports.

The city tops in export of frozen shrimp and the EIA lab will be of grat help, according to trade circles. Seafood valued at Rs. 7,578 crore was exported from here during 2014-15.

K Haribabu, MP from Visakhapatnam and the president of the State BJP, said the Union Goverment would fulfill all promises made to Andhra Pradesh and the people of the state need not have any apprehensions on that count.

New IITs, IIMs won't have huge campuses

Hindustan Times (Bhopal)

HRD ministry approves reducing land size for institutions based on recommendations of a committee

IITS WILL BE ELIGIBLE FOR 250 ACRES, IIMS FOR 5-10 ACRES IN URBAN AREAS AND 60 ACRES IN NON-URBAN AREAS

The new crop of Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) and Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs) announced by the NDA government will not have the luxury of sprawling campuses like their older counterparts, the human resource development (HRD) ministry has decided.

T h e m i n i s t r y ap p rove d reducing the land siz e of these institutions last week on the recommendation of a committee set up to determine the land requirement for central higher educational institutions.

Under new norms, the Indian Institutes of Te ch n o l o g y (IITs) will be eligible for 250 acres of land and the Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs) will be eligible around for 5-10 acres in urban areas and 60 acres in nonurban areas.

The decision to cut land allocation was taken after several state gover nments found it difficult to find huge patches on contiguous land in urban areas.

Older campuses such as Indian Institutes of Technolog y Delhi and IIM Ahmedabad have sprawling campuses as compared to the new ones.

While IIT Delhi has 325 acres land, IIT Kanpur has 1,055 acres. Similarly, Indian Institute of Management Ahmedabad is spread over 100 acres while IIM Lucknow has 200 acres.

To make up for the loss of land, the new campuses have the option to go vertical.

Arguing for cutting the land s i z e, the committee said the inability of states to find requisite amount of land had led to inordinate delay in setting up many central higher educational institutions.

"T herefore, there is an urg ent need to revise the land requirements for different kinds of higher educational institutions, which is more realistic and takes into account technological developments which allow for vertical expansion of buildings," the committee in its final report said.

In its budget in July 2014, the government announced setting up six new IIMs in Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Bihar, Odisha, Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh.

Two more Indian Institutes of Management (Jammu and Kashmir and Telangana) were announced in the 2015 budget.

The government had also announced the setting up of five new IITs in Jammu and Kashmir, Chhattisgarh, Goa, Andhra Pradesh and Kerala.

Land shortage eats into new IIT, IIM campuses

http://www.hindustantimes.com/higherstudies/land-shortage-eats-into-new-iit-iim-campuses/article1-1381761.aspx

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Why Sundar Pichai's rise matters for India

Hindustan Times (Chandigarh)

SUCH ACHIEVEMENTS RAISE THE CONFIDENCE OF INDIANS BASED HERE SO THEY CAN TAKE ENTREPRENEURSHIP TO NEW HEIGHTS

IT WAS nice to see Sundar Pichai being named as the chief executive officer (CEO) of Google, the core unit of the reformed Alphabet Inc powered by tons of cash from the search engine. I was glad to see that my prediction about his future importance for the giant company last October take strong shape.

As he spearheaded the Android revolution, and with product management experience par excellence, any keen watcher of Silicon Valley would have smelt the coffee like I did. Rumours have it that Google was forced to rename itself and promote the Chennai-born IITian so that he won't fly the coop to Twitter, which has been looking for a CEO to replace Dick Costolo.

While Indians exulted in their native connection, some hands did go up in scepticism. Is Pichai really something that Indians should gush about as Indians? Fact is that Google is an American company and Sundar a US citizen. HT even ran an online poll asking if India should feel proud of him as his achievements were in the US.

I think Sundar's rise was worth celebrating (alongside that of Manipal-educated Satya Nadella of Microsoft) especially in the anniversary week of India's Independence. For a colonized nation first dismissed as a half-starved Third World country and then as a hub for cheap coding services, these two "made-in-India" engineers symbolise the rise of true overall leadership in the world's most frenetic technology hub. Both are "made in India" as engineers. Kanwal Rekhi, educated at IIT Mumbai, co-founded Excel an in 1982 in the US, took it public on Nasdaq in 1987 as its CEO and then merged it with Novell in 1989 when the networking revolution was being ushered in. Yet, the story goes, Novell never made him CEO and he left as chief technology officer because of the belief that Indians make great techies but not in marketing or overall leadership.

People including venture capitalist Vinod Khosla, Nadella and Pichai have helped explode that myth, which reeks of a glass ceiling. Their achievements raise the confidence levels of Indians based in India to pursue new heights.

IIT: technical team to visit Mysuru soon

http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/karnataka/iit-technical-team-to-visit-mysuru-soon/article7560230.ece

It seems there is still hope for Mysuru as it's still in the race as one of the cities proposed for establishing the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT).

Raichur and Dharwad are the other top contenders with Mysuru for establishing the IIT.

Deputy Commissioner C. Shikha, who managed to identify 499 acres of land a little away from the city, told *The Hindu* that Mysuru was in contention contrary to recent reports that the city's chances had weakened over land issue.

"I don't think that there are so many stricter guidelines on the extent of land necessary for housing IIT. If at all the institution needs over 500 acres of land, we are ready to provide it. There is additional land with us," she said.

Ms. Shikha said there are two major conditions that need to be fulfilled for establishing an IIT – 50,000 ready built-up area for immediately holding classes and land to the extent of 500 acres. "We fulfil both conditions," she said. There is ready infrastructure for holding the classes in the building which once housed the College of Horticulture at Tandavapura near Mysuru.

"This building belonged to the Department of Sericulture and we can hand over this infrastructure for the classes. There are also quarters for accommodating the faculty." The Deputy Commissioner disclosed that a technical team from the Centre is expected to visit the city and other districts to study the feasibility of the proposals.

Meanwhile, Pratap Simha, MP, recently met Union Minister for Human Resource Development Smriti Irani and urged her to establish the IIT in Mysuru.

Mint ND 20/08/2015   P-24

NEW STUDY

Long working hours linked to high stroke risk

BY SHREYA PUNJ
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NEW DELHI

Working 55 hours or more per week is linked to a 33% greater risk of stroke and a 13% higher risk of developing coronary heart disease compared with working 35-40 hours a week, said a study published in *The Lancet*.

This is the largest study in this field so far, involving 600,000 individuals.

Mika Kivimäki, professor of epidemiology at University College London, examined the effects of longer working hours on cardiovascular disease up to 20 August 2014.

Analysis of data from 25 studies involving 603,838 men and women from Europe, the US and Australia, who were tracked for an average of eight-and-a-half years, found a 13% increased risk of incident coronary heart disease in people working 55 hours or more per week compared with those working for 35-40 hours, even after taking into account risk factors including age, sex and socioeconomic status.

Further, data from 17 studies involving 528,908 men and women who were followed up for an average of seven years and two months, found a 1.3 times higher risk of stroke in individuals. This association remained even after taking into account smoking, alcohol consumption and physical activity, and standard cardiovascular risk factors including high blood pressure and high cholesterol.

Importantly, the researchers found that the longer people worked, the higher their chances of a stroke. For example, compared with people who worked standard hours, those working for 41-48 hours had a 10% higher risk of stroke, and those working 49-54 hours had a 27% increased risk of stroke.

Although the causal mechanisms of these relationships need to be better understood, the authors suggest that increasing health-risk behaviours, such as physical inactivity and high alcohol consumption, as well as repetitive triggering of the stress response, might increase the risk of stroke.

"The pooling of all available studies on this topic allowed us to investigate the association between working hours and cardiovascular disease risk with greater precision than has previously been possible," said Kivimäki. "Health professionals should be aware that working long hours is associated with a significantly increased risk of stroke, and perhaps also coronary heart disease."

According to Urban Janlert from Umeå University in Sweden, "Long working hours are not a negligible occurrence. Among member countries of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Turkey has the highest proportion of individuals working for more than 50 hours per week (43%), and the Netherlands the lowest (<1%)."

Deccan Herald ND 20/08/2015   P-6

Demand for no-detention policy gets support

NEW DELHI, DHNS: All the state governments on Wednesday unanimously demanded revocation of no-detention policy and re-introduction of annual examination system in schools, emphasising that the system of automatic promotion at elementary level was adversely affecting the learning outcome of children.

The Union Ministry of Human Resource Development (HRD), however, asked the states to examine the issue with "due consideration" of its various aspects and formally send to it their views and suggestions "in writing" within 15 days, saying any final decision on the issue required a "cautious approach". This came at a day-long meeting of the central advisory board of education (CBSE), presided over by HRD Minister Smriti Irani here.

"All the state education ministers, who attended the meeting, rose from their seat and unanimously appealed that no-detention policy must be revoked. Representatives of other states also agreed on the need to do so. We requested all the states to examine the issue with due consideration and send us their views and suggestions in writing. They accepted it," Irani told reporters after the meeting. The ministry will take a call on the issue only after receiving views and suggestion from the states "in writing".

"We told the states that we want to ensure we remain cautious in approach," the minister added. Besides the states, academicians and other eminent persons made members in the Central Advisory Board on Education (CABE), reconstituted a few months back, also favoured revocation of no-detention policy. Education ministers of 19 states attended the meeting while other states were represented by their senior officials. Union Women and Child Welfare Minister Maneka Gandhi, Minister of State for HRD R S Katheria also attended the meeting. Heads of various autonomous bodies, including University Grants Commission and All India Council for Technical Education, were also present. At the meeting, report of a sub committee of CABE, set up to examine the impact of no-detention policy, was also tabled for consideration of the members.

Is NCERT going the FTII way?

http://www.bureaucracytoday.com/latestnews.aspx?id=120311

*At a time when the Narendra Modi Government is inviting ideas from stakeholders to draw up a fresh education policy for India, the alleged apathy of its HRD Ministry in appointing the head of a key body like the National Council for Educational Research and Training (NCERT) has raised eyebrows among members of the academic fraternity. Since October last year, following the "forced" resignation of Parvin Sinclair the post of NCERT Director has been lying vacant. Confidential documents in the possession of **Bureaucracy Today** reveal that eight months ago, the Smriti Irani-led HRD Ministry did initiate the process of setting up a "Search-cum-Selection Committee" for appointing the new NCERT Director but the entire issue was mysteriously put on the backburner for unknown reasons. This move has raised a pertinent question whether the NCERT is also going the controversial Pune-based Film and Television Institute of India (FTII) way in the wake of allegations from various quarters that the Modi regime has been trying to "stem the autonomy" of key policy making bodies of the Government. **A BT exclusive.***

In October 2014, the then National Council for Educational Research and Training Director, Parvin Sinclair, a well-known educationist and a mathematician of repute, quit the post half way into her tenure after the Human Resource Development Ministry allegedly threatened her with initiating a probe into a Rs 50-crore paper purchase case. Interestingly, at the time of her resignation, Sinclair was monitoring the revision process of the national curriculum framework, an initiative which had allegedly miffed "some influential people inclined to right-wing ideology".

However, 10 months have passed but the Ministry is yet to make any headway into the appointment of NCERT Director.

Interestingly, confidential documents in the possession of **Bureaucracy Today** reveal that after Sinclair's resignation in October last year, the HRD Ministry did initiate the process of setting up a "Search-cum-Selection Committee" for appointing the new NCERT Director but the entire issue was put on the backburner for unknown reasons.

When contacted, Dr Mohd Akhtar Siddiqui, Professor of Education in Jamia Millia Islamia University, who was supposed to be the Chairman of the Committee, tells **Bureaucracy Today**, "I don't want to comment on that...It is not desirable for me to speak on this matter as of now. We can talk about it at a later stage." He, however, says that he had interacted with Ministry officials couple of times after giving his consent.

According to the documents, in January 2015 the Ministry sent letters to five noted educationists requesting their participation in the Search-cum-Selection Committee for appointing the NCERT Director. These educationists were Dr Siddiqui, Prof IK Bhatt, Director of the Jaipur-based Malaviya National Institute of Technology (MNIT), Banaras Hindu University Vice-Chancellor GC Tripathy, MK Sridhar, Professor of the Canara Bank School of Management Studies, Bangalore, and Dr Shyama Chona, president of an NGO, Tamana.

Barring Bhatt, all other educationists gave their consent to be part of the Committee. But surprisingly, even after getting the consent, the Ministry did not go ahead with the process and the panel has not been formed till date. Dr Chona acknowledges the fact that she was approached by the Ministry to become a member of the Committee and she had given her consent. But that is it. "I would not like to comment on it. I am an educationist and not a politician. You (BT) should call the Ministry," she quips. She also refused to divulge

whether she had any interaction with the Ministry after giving the consent.

Prof Sridhar has also adopted a guarded approach on the issue. He tells **Bureaucracy Today**, "I have heard that something is being done but that might again be a rumour. I never followed up with the Ministry after giving my consent."

The HRD Ministry also did not give a clear picture of the issue. **Bureaucracy Today** approached the Ministry seeking information regarding the status of the Committee -- whether it has been constituted or not; if not, what is the deadline set for constituting it; how many members are supposed to be part of the panel; and how many applications have been received by the Ministry for the post.

Bureaucracy Today on July 21 received a mail from the office of Dinesh Kumar, Under Secretary of the Ministry, stating, "It is to inform that the Search-cum-Selection Committee for the post of Director, NCERT, has been constituted. The first meeting of the Committee is likely to be held shortly." However, there was no clarification on which date the panel was formed. The mail also very conveniently ignored all other queries

Several academicians feel that ad hocism at the NCERT helm is a "pernicious" practice and is a "vicious attempt" by the Smriti Irani-led HRD Ministry to "stem the autonomy" of the national research body.

In March this year, Smriti Irani said that her HRD Ministry "is working on a new National Education Policy (NEP)" which will be formulated by December 2015. The Ministry had also invited suggestions from all State Governments and the general public by November "so that a universal education policy could be made for the whole country".

However, with the deadline for formulating the policy coming nearer, there is an apprehension among educationists that with the NCERT, which has a key role to play in the national curriculum framework, remaining headless, the policy formulation process won't be effective and conclusive.

Though NCERT officials claim that the organization is not facing any problem due to the absence of a full-time Director as officiating Director BK Tripathi has been handling all the responsibilities with élan, educationists feel that the ad hocism method will harm the education prospects of the country.

Recently former National Commission for Protection of Child Rights Chairman Shanta Sinha had also stated that the headless NCERT and CBSE are a "huge handicap in delivering anything of value". "The CBSE and the NCERT are convening authorities for everything related to school education in the country. When there's nobody at the helm of an autonomous body, who is going to take the lead in conducting meetings and pushing officials to formulate policies?" she asked.

'JEOPARDIZING AUTONOMY'

Experts feel that the Prime Minister "should personally intervene on the issue" as the absence of a regular NCERT head is "jeopardizing its autonomy" and affecting the functioning of the apex body which decides the contents of books to be taught across almost all secondary and higher secondary schools in India.

"It is impossible to calculate the quantum of material published by the NCERT every year. But there is more to

the NCERT than just creating Model Textbooks. It also promotes research, innovation and experimentation in areas related to school education and teacher education. That is why it is important to have a regular Director and not an Acting Director for the NCERT to remain autonomous. A headless NCERT can have an adverse impact on the education system in India," former NCERT Director Krishna Kumar tells ***Bureaucracy Today.***

He further says, "Even if we leave the imposition of ideology argument aside, the matters of governance can have a direct bearing on the functioning of the NCERT. The power of appointing key officials in the NCERT and its affiliated organizations rests with the Director. So if there is a vacancy for an important post, it cannot be filled in the absence of the regular Director."

Speaking to ***Bureaucracy Today***, former NCERT Director Parvin Sinclair avoids giving a direct reply to a query about her views on the manner in which the HRD Ministry has been functioning under Smriti Irani. Nevertheless, she asserts, "During the UPA regime, when Kapil Sibal was the HRD Minister, the NCERT was given autonomy as it was meant to be. There had been several objections and controversies but the NCERT used to deal with them as per well-laid-down conventions and rules."

FLASHBACK

An Economic Times report dated October 9, 2014 states that NCERT Director Parvin Sinclair tendered her resignation "after the new Government instituted a high-level inquiry against her for alleged financial irregularities." Quoting sources, the newspaper reports, "The inquiry against the current Director was initiated by HRD Minister Smriti Irani after the 100th meeting of NCERT's Executive Committee — its top decision making body — on September 21."

According to a Deccan Herald report dated October 9, 2014, "Sinclair initiated revision of the national curriculum framework in the last month of the UPA rule, a move that has not gone down well with HRD Minister Smriti Irani. The revision process appears to have upset Dinanath Batra, national president of the Shiksha Sanskriti Utthan Nyas, an outfit linked to the RSS. Batra, who has courted controversy because of his advocacy of Hindu texts in schools, took exception to the NCERT move in July, accusing the Council of revising the curriculum in a hurry."
In June this year, the HRD Ministry instituted an inquiry against Sinclair in the paper purchase case.

Reacquainting with the History of IIT Madras and its City Links

http://www.newindianexpress.com/cities/chennai/Reacquainting-with-the-History-of-IIT-Madras-and-its-City-Links/2015/08/20/article2982918.ece

CHENNAI: Once upon a time, IIT Madras was the hunting ground for the British. And when it became a specially designated forest area, it was off limits for encroachers. In those circumstances, setting up a college was far from ideal. But the then Chief Minister Kamaraj had vowed to bring this national institute to Madras. He had called Madras 'The Gateway of South India'.

Thus, in 1959, the campus that was the sole object of competition from other Southern cities came to be in the heart of Guindy National park area.

And in the years to come, the institute would earn the title of an 'island' of its own within the city.

"Madras Week isn't about celebrating the birthday of the city. It is nothing but a chance to reacquaint ourselves with the origin of our city. It was the hotbed of technological institutes among other things," said historian S Muthiah.

He traced the history of St George's school, a precedent to IIT which was the first institute back in 1794 with a course in Civil Engineering. "There was reason for all early colleges preferring Civil Engineering. There was a stress on fortification, construction of bridges, roads and structures during the British colonial era which translated into more civil engineers in the time," says Muthiah. Even the IITs across India began with civil engineering as one of their preliminary courses.

"IIT itself is part of the heritage of Madras. Almost 40 per cent of a student's curriculum is open to electives, allowing a healthy room for studying subjects like humanities. It would help them to understand the city and state better," said a professor of Chemical Engineering.

But Muthiah feels that Humanities is only an abstract subject and would fail to serve its purpose. "What are we doing in terms of knowing our country, state or city. We need to revise our content and contribute something back to our city," he pointed out.

He stressed on how subjects like History, Geography, Civics and Environment studies had been clumped together in recent times, diluting their importance.

Google launches OnHub, a smart Wi-Fi router

http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/tech/tech-news/Google-launches-OnHub-a-smart-Wi-Fi-router/articleshow/48538835.cms?

NEW DELHI: Google has launched a Wi-Fi router, the latest move in the company's efforts to get ready for the connected home and draw more users to its services.

The cylinder-shaped router, named OnHub, can be pre-ordered for $199.99 at online retailers including the Google Store, Amazon.com and Walmart.com.

The router comes with in-built antennas that will scan the airwaves to spot the fastest connection, Google said in a blog post.

With the router, users will be able to prioritize a device so that they can get the fastest internet speeds for data-heavy activities such as downloading content or streaming a movie.

The router can be hooked up with Google's On app, available on Android and iOS, to run network checks and keep track of bandwidth use among other things.

Google said OnHub automatically updates with new features and the latest security upgrades, just like the company's Android OS and Chrome browser.

The router is being manufactured by network company TP-LINK, Google said, hinting that ASUS could be the second manufacturing partner for the product.

The product launch comes days after Google restructured itself by creating Alphabet, a holding company to pool its many subsidiaries and separate the core web advertising business from newer ventures like driverless cars.

Making products for the smart home is one such venture.

Google last year bought Nest, a smart thermostat maker, for $3.2 billion, aiming to lead the way on how household devices link to each other and to electricity grids.

The global market for 'Internet of Things,' the concept of connecting household devices to the internet, will nearly triple to $1.7 trillion by 2020, research firm International Data said in June.

Technology firms including Intel, Cisco Systems, Samsung Electronics and telecom giants Vodafone and Verizon are betting heavily on internet device-connected homes for future revenue and profit.

Google has also been working on providing faster internet with its Google Fiber service in some US cities.

It also aims to expand the reach of the internet through Project Loon, under which it is floating balloons 20 kilometres above the Earth's surface to beam internet connection to rural and remote areas.