

Newspaper Clips**August 27, 2014****Pioneer ND 27/08/2014 P-13**

Watch out for

SPORTS GET-TOGETHERS

In an effort to engage the alumni community, the IIT Delhi Alumni Association is organising sports events for recent graduates. The first of these is a football fixture for alumnus who have graduated since 2009 and is scheduled on August 31. The evening will comprise friendly matches among alumnus with fun activities like dodgeball and cornhole for non-footballers. Alumni will be meeting at the institute football ground by 4 pm. Further information is available on IITDAA website— www.iitdalumni.com.

Mail Today ND 27/08/2014 P-22

JEE Advanced set to go online

By **Anubhuti Vishnoi**
in New Delhi

IN a bid to take the much sought after Joint Engineering Examination (JEE) to the next level, the IITs have quietly begun working on a plan to take the JEE Advanced online by 2016-17. JEE Advanced determines admission to all the 16 IITs in the country.

It is learnt that at the meeting of the Joint Admission Board of IITs held on August 23, 2014 in the Capital, the IITs agreed that JEE Advanced should completely go online from 2016.

Near 1.5 lakh students screened after appearing for JEE Main are eligible to appear for the JEE Advanced. JEE Main determines admission to all NITs and other engineering colleges and also decodes eligibility of candidates to appear for JEE Advanced. JEE Main has already gone partly online. IITs own Joint Admission Test for Masters (JAM) and Graduate Aptitude Test in Engineering (GATE) for Masters courses offered at IITs are also online.

The online JEE Advanced will continue to consist of Paper I and Paper II and will have to be taken on the same day at one

shot. However, the IITs are also looking at revisiting the nature of the JEE Advanced question paper ahead of the online debut. Apart from ensuring that the exam format can be delivered online, the IITs are also looking seriously at replacing the MCQ testing format.

While it is currently Multiple Choice Question (MCQ) based, the IITs are considering a questioning technique which is objective but drives a student to attempt the whole problem solving exercise and arrive at a written answer. The written answer sheet will be read and assessed through sophisticated Optical Character Readers (OCR) as envisaged by the IITs. The shift from a MCQ based exam to one that compels a student to come up with an original answer derived through problem solving is proposed because many in the IIT system feel that the existing questioning style may be allowing in several students who may score high just by guessing correct answers instead of applying their mind.

Unlike the IIMs that have tied up with a single vendor Prometric for holding the Common Admission Test (CAT) online, the IITs are attempting to bring in multiple vendors for the JEE Advanced.

The online JEE Advanced will have Paper I and Paper II, and have to be taken on the same day

JEE Advanced to go online from 2016

<http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/jee-advanced-iit-admission-online-2016/1/379210.html>

In a bid to take the much sought after Joint Engineering Examination (JEE) to the next level, the Indian Institutes of Technology have last week quietly begun working on a plan to take the JEE Advanced online by 2016-17.

At a meeting of the Joint Admission Board of IITs held on August 23, 2014 in New Delhi, the institutes agreed that JEE Advanced, which determines admission to all 16 IITs, should go completely online from 2016.

Near 1.5 lakh students screened after appearing for JEE Main are eligible to appear for the JEE Advanced. The JEE Main determines admission to all National Institutes of Technology (NITs) and other engineering colleges and also decodes eligibility of candidates to appear for JEE Advanced.

JEE Main has already gone partly online. The IITs own Joint Admission Test for Masters (JAM) and Graduate Aptitude Test in Engineering (GATE) for masters courses also offered at the institutes are also online. The online JEE Advanced will continue to consist of Paper I and Paper II and will have to be taken on the same day at one shot.

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That apart, after a two-year tussle with NITs and the Union Human Resource Development ministry, the IITs have last week finally come up with a formula to enable an online joint counseling of students for admission to IITs and NITs.

It is learnt that a team of computer scientists from various IITs have together come up with a formula to ensure an error-free mechanism for joint online counseling for admission to IITs and NITs. This counseling formula will now be handed over to the National Informatics Centre (NIC) for implementation.

So a student will indicate his top institute and course choices at the time of filling the admission form - a JEE aspirant can fill up to 250 choices. While students will not have to go for separate IIT and NIT counseling, the online format developed by IITs will communicate to each students who clears the JEE Main which courses he is eligible for based on his rankings.

The much-hyped common entrance exam for admission to NITs and IITs that was introduced in 2013 - JEE Main and JEE Advanced - saw IITs and NITs in opposite camps with the former refusing to participate the joint seat allocation system citing reservations about the software prepared by Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (CDAC) for the same.

Super 30 founder calls IITians to use skill for growth of rural areas

<http://indianexpress.com/article/business/business-others/super-30-founder-calls-iitians-to-use-skill-for-growth-of-rural-areas/>

The founder of the renowned 'Super30' coaching centre of Bihar, Anand Kumar, has appealed to students of IITs to devote their skills for the development of rural areas of India instead of leaving the country in search of greener pastures.

"The time has come for (students) to share their knowledge and skills for the benefit of their countrymen instead of pursuing career goals and personal success. It is the need of the hour," said Kumar to the students of IIT – Kanpur during an interaction with them last evening.

Talking about the pattern of the IIT-JEE, Kumar said there was a need for changing the same as it was not favourable for students from the weaker sections.

Kumar said that the celebrated coaching system would be now expanded to include Uttar Pradesh.

The Super30 programme selects 30 meritorious candidates each year from economically-backward sections of society and trains them for the IIT-JEE, the examination for entrance into the premier Indian Institutes of Technology.

No encroachment on IITs autonomy: UGC

<http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/education/no-encroachment-on-iits-autonomy-ugc/articleshow/40937627.cms>

NEW DELHI: Amid a raging controversy over its directive to the IITs to align their degrees with recognised ones, UGC has made it clear that the communication should not be "misconstrued" as an encroachment on the autonomy of IITs.

It said the provision for specification of degrees by UGC was a "conscious" decision taken by the Centre for a number of reasons which not only includes ensuring the uniformity in terms of award of degrees but also for the purposes of employability and mobility of the students across the country.

"Each and every degree awarding institution has full autonomy to offer the kind of program that their statutory bodies deem fit," the UGC said.

"But if a particular degree that they wish to award is not in the list of specified degrees the same can be added in the list after obtaining the approval of the central government following the due process," it said in a clarification.

The clarification came in wake of IITs heads expressing "surprise" over the directive to them as they are governed by their own set of rules and laws.

UGC Chairman Ved Prakash asked where is the question of encroaching upon the authority of IITs or any other institution as the Commission has been given the authority of specifying degrees by the government of India.

"It is a question of ensuring uniformity in nomenclature of degrees. It is a question of facilitating mobility of students from one institution to another. It is a question of ensuring employability," he said.

RESEARCH TIE-UPS WITH INDIAN INSTITUTES

Hindustan Times (Mumbai)

The University of Waikato with Jamia Millia Islamia University in New Delhi The University of Auckland with Anna University in Chennai The University of Auckland with Madurai Kamaraj University in Tamil Nadu The University of Otago with the University of Delhi The University of Auckland with the University of Calcutta University of Canterbury with the University of Delhi Victoria University of Wellington with Guru Nanak Dev University in Amritsar



Bridging the gap

This year, around 15 lakh engineering students graduated from various institutes in India. Unfortunately, very few have the required employability skills, so much so that the industry is facing a problem about how to bridge the gap between what the job market requires and what is being taught.

SHALINI SAKSENA speaks to professors and experts to tell you how there is urgent need to address the situation at all levels — from the admission criteria, to the curriculum, to changing an aspirant's mindset

Every year, the number of students who pass out from engineering colleges — be it Government-run or private — has gone up. Approximately, 15 lakh students graduated this year. However, the available jobs have static at 10,000 for many years. This means that only the best of the best get placed in top-notch companies.

"Today, it is not just about the selection process in campus interviews. It is also about rejection process. So, one has to be the best if one wants to excel. There was a time when the demand and supply were at par. Today, the supply is 15 fold more but the demand has remained constant. This has added to the problems that exist in a majority of the private engineering colleges," RL Trikha, director FIIT-JEE, says. He adds that it is time that all industry players sit down and discuss the ways to bridge the widening gap between demand and supply.

The problem, experts say, is a cycle that is difficult to break. More and more private institutions are coming up because the number of students wanting to study engineering is on the rise. Therefore, many colleges are compromising on the quality of the knowledge they are imparting. This means that the skill sets required by the industry are not being met. Compounding this problem is the fact that, in India, there are only three professions a son is told to pursue — he either has to study to become a doctor, an engineer or an MBA.

"It is unfortunate that parents don't take into consideration their child's aptitude. Just because the neighbour's son is going to an engineering college doesn't mean that their child also has to do the same. Parents need to understand that today, there are far better options available. Engineering is just one of them," Deputy dean (academics) and assistant Prof Manoj Kumar Gopaliya, Department of Mechanical Engineering, ITM University, Gurgaon, tells you.

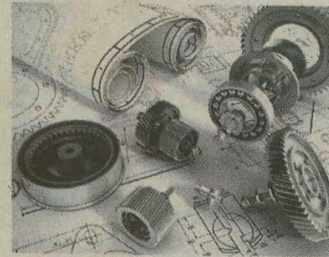
He tells you that in order to address the problem, there is need to follow strict admission guidelines. "Institutions should not admit anybody who has the money to pay the

fee. A student's calibre must be judged. Otherwise, in the end, everybody will be at a disadvantage. The student, who will not get a job, the institute that will lose its reputation and the industry that needs good engineers," Gopaliya opines.

Recent findings in the Institution of Engineering and Technology's (IET) ninth annual *Engineering and Technology: Skills & Demand in Industry* report says that the demand for engineers remains high but more than half of employers are having difficulties recruiting the staff they need for their businesses to expand. "This is because in today's competitive world, the employers don't have the time or the money to train a recruit on the job. They want engineers to get down to work from day one. However, the down side is that what is being taught in engineering colleges is not at par with what the industry wants. There is so much competition but engineers don't have the ability to club theory with practical. Therefore, there are bound to be gaps," Shekhar Sanyal, director and country head, IET says.

So how does one address the situation. "First, there must be a capping in all engineering colleges for the next 10 years or so. Second, the focus should shift from quantity to quality. Third, colleges should cater to what the industry needs. Finally, time and energy should be spent on R&D. There is no point in importing technology and rehashing it to suit Indian market. Hence, engineers are not upgrading their knowledge which in turn is hampering the organisation they are working for," Gopaliya explains.

The industry on the other hands opines that if a doctor can upgrade his knowledge and a lawyer needs to be abreast of the latest laws, an engineer needs to know what is happening around the world and create things. "An engineer should be a people's person. He must know the cultures of the world, how the common man thinks and what he wants. Interdisciplinary learning is a must today. Something that is lacking our institutions. A student needs to gauge where his passion lies. Following a herd mentality will not help. One can only teach a child. At the end of the day, he has to give the exam. The effort has to come from the student. To be a good engineer, just doing your job is not enough. One has to be extremely dynamic to be the best among the best," Trikha says.



- 59 per cent of companies indicated concerns that a shortage of engineers would be a threat to their businesses.
- 53 per cent of employers believe they should get more involved with schools, colleges and universities to help change the perception of engineering among young people.
- 44 per cent of engineering, IT and technical recruits do not meet the employer's expected levels of skills.
- 52 per cent of organisations anticipate employing more apprentices in four to five years' time.
- Since 2013, the number of Intermediate Apprenticeships (Level 2) offered by employers has more than doubled but the number of Higher Apprenticeships (Level 4) has remained static.

HT.Com ND 27.08.2014 P-6

Do you have a winning idea in business or robotics?

HT Education Correspondent

The entrepreneurship cell of IIT Kharagpur shall organise the next edition of Empresario, the annual flagship competition on developing global business models. This competition is open to students across the world.

Empresario is a contest whereby business ideas in all fields ranging from products and services to product design are given an opportunity to win a prize and incubation money of around ₹ 2.5 crore. Last

year's prizes were worth ₹15 lakh. This year, Empresario will be held in association with the International Business Model Competition (IBMC). The best entries in all categories will get an opportunity to participate directly in the semi-final round of IBMC 2015, which shall be conducted overseas.

In the first round of the contest, participants will be required to fill up a questionnaire that briefly captures the essence of their business idea. This questionnaire can be found on the IIT website www.ecell-iitkgp.org/empresario. The deadline for submission is October 20, 2014. The contest is about recognising the fact that any new venture is just a carefully calculated solution/offering in terms of a problem or opportunity and that ideas can be turned into real-life solutions. The shortlisted entries will also receive mentorship and the winners will get a chance to pitch their ideas in front of organisations such as the National Entrepreneurship

Network. The winners will also get startup services like legal advice, taxation, financial, technical aspects of running a startup, co-working space, HR needs, and incubation opportunities. IIT Bombay is also inviting enthusiasts in the field of robotics to learn more about this niche area through Project e-Yantra, which is essentially an initiative to spread education on embedded systems and robotics.



Economic Times ND 27/08/2014 P-4

Bridging Gap, IITians Offer to Handhold NE Students

Along with IISERs, 16 IITs offer to host 2,016 students on their campuses during vacations

Ritika.Chopra@timesgroup.com

New Delhi: In a move prompted by PM Narendra Modi's call for integration of northeastern states, the Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) have now collectively proposed to offer internships and exposure trips meant exclusively for students of this region.

The premier engineering schools made a presentation to PM Modi and HRD Minister Smriti Irani last week in which they proposed to host 2,016 schools students from NE on their campuses during vacation and also offer internships to 250 college students for a monthly stipend of ₹8,000.

The presentation was made by director of IIT Guwahati Guatam Biswas.

"There is an imbalance between the educational facilities available in the NE and the rest of the country. Students here not aware of the opportunities in higher education and therefore lack the ambition to succeed. The proposal made on behalf of the IITs is aimed at helping them spend time at the country's best institutes to hone their approach to academics and life," said an IIT director, who did

IITs to also offer internships to 250 students for a monthly stipend of ₹8,000

not wish to be identified. Integration of NE states is one of the thrust areas of the HRD Ministry and the programme has been proposed by the IITs at the behest of Irani. "In June, the minister had asked the IITs to come up with a proposal for NE students. This is a stop-gap measure till the government can improve the education standards in the region," said a government officer.

Under Ishaan Vikaas, the 16 IITs and 5 Indian Institute of Science Education and Research (IISERs) will host 2,016 students of classes IX and XI selected from 504 schools (63 schools from each of the seven states) in one academic year.

DETAILED PLANNING

X Each of the 21 institutions will invite two batches of 32 students each during the summer break and one batch during the winter break. Each batch will have an equal number of class IX and XI students

College No More A Distant Dream

16 IITs & 5 IISERs will host 2,016 students of Classes IX and XI from 504 schools across seven northeast states every year

95,000 STUDENTS studying in classes IX and XI across private and govt schools in Northeast



GOVERNMENT WILL bear the travel and stay expenses of the students. IITs and IISERs will need ₹5.4 crore every year to host these students

Economic Times ND 27/08/2014 P-18

Looking for Life Partner? Your IIT, IIM Degree Can Help

litiimshaadi.com to help find matrimonial alliances for people passing from about 100 top educational institutes worldwide, which includes the venerable IITs and IIMs



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NEW DELHI: Matrimonial alliances in India have forever been based on criteria like caste, religion, social and economic status, but attempts are being made to move beyond and look for likeminded people on the basis of which college they went to.

litiimshaadi.com, for instance, is one such website for people passing from about 100 top educational institutes worldwide, which includes the venerable IITs and IIMs besides toptech foreign universities like Harvard and Yale. The website so far has over 1,800 registrations and some 120 people have connected with each other, mostly pushed by parents.

"Match-making of the educated and well placed people is like executive search," said Ajay Gupta, the 51-year-old founder of the website. He gets queries not just from India, but across the world.

"Often parents send the professional resumes of their kids seeking our help to create a profile," he said. His team filters the "right candidates" from a pool of people who

have applied. "We ask for scanned copy of the degrees," he added.

Gupta runs a consultancy for jobs in rural areas and is working to a plan to expand his new business, currently free and with a small database, by taking it offline and creating a community of likeminded people who boast of fancy degrees.

He is confident of his business plan given the need for specific requirements of people wanting to get married in India.

"Matches are made on the basis of caste, economic, social, ad cultural backgrounds. In the same way there are people looking for partners of similar education backgrounds for better understanding and compatibility," he says.

Pankaj Varma, 30, went to IIM Bangalore and works in a multinational company. He chose to register on Gupta's website hoping to find filtered results. "I am looking for a competitive and compatible match with similar education background. Caste for me is not a criteria," Varma said.

A Bangalore-based senior scientist, who has spent thousands of rupees on matrimonial sites already to find a match for his

Stanford-educated daughter working in the US, has been struggling. "There is a total bankruptcy of suitable guys," he said, but does not wish to be identified as he works for a multinational company's research wing.

"There is an ocean of boys looking for good educated girls in India, but they still ask the same questions — can you cook? can you perform household jobs?" he said. "Why should I marry my daughter off to someone just because he is a boy?"

In order to cater to specific requirements of those looking for life partners, people like Gupta have tried and are creating niche offerings in the matrimonial space.

One of the first movers, BharatMatrimony.com, for instance, has more than 300 websites targeting different communities, religions and castes. That's not all, the company has also launched separate services like one for the elite and another for those above 40.

Bharatmatrimony's founder and CEO Murugavel Janakiraman says unlike before, individuals are getting more active in taking the initiative compared with earlier when parents would take control.

"Even the ratio of women men registering

on the websites has gone up to 30:70, compared to 20:80 five years ago," said Janakiraman, whose sites get 2.5 lakh new users each month. Close to 80% of the profiles are posted by individuals.

And it is good business. He declined to provide details of the company's revenue but a basic subscription on BharatMatrimony.com comes for a minimum of ₹3,600 and a website like Elitematrimony.com, dedicated to serve the rich, charges ₹50,000 for three months.

Earlier, most matches were made on the basis of caste and social status, but now there are options open on the basis of education, for the divorced or for those opting for late a marriage. "Like any other market place, this business has also been segmented to cater to different requirements of different individuals," said Santosh Desai, a social observer and commentator.

If not caste, people move on to surrogate measures like degrees. However, a research of matrimonial advertisements of the last 40 years done by Desai suggests that the caste criteria still remains and has not changed over the years. "Caste is mentioned in every ad," he added.

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HT Education Correspondent

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The winners will also get start-up services like legal advice, taxation, financial, technical aspects of running a startup, co-working space, HR needs, and incubation opportunities.

IIT Bombay is also inviting enthusiasts in the field of robotics to learn more about this niche area through Project e-Yantra, which is essentially an initiative to spread education on embedded systems and robotics. It is sponsored by the ministry of human resource development through the National Mission on Education through ICT (NMEICT). This project was conceptualised by professors from the department of computer science and engineering at IIT Bombay.

This year's project was launched on August 1, 2014. So

LEADING IITS ARE PROMOTING TALENT IN BUSINESS ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND EMBEDDED TECHNOLOGY

far, over 800 teams (3200 students from various colleges across the country have registered for this competition. Things begin in an interesting manner: Students register as a team of four and take an online selection test. Selected teams are given a problem specified as a theme in a rule book. Teams get a robotic kit along with accessories to solve the problem. Thereafter, they are taken through the project life cycle in a systematic way and proceed to solve the problem in a step-by-step manner. "This means that even students with no prior exposure can learn the concepts and come up with innovative solutions.

Thus, this competition is used to impart project-based learning through hands-on experiments on a robotic platform where students do not have to pay any registration fee nor spend any money to buy the robotic kit. In addition to learning the concepts and micro-controller programming students also learn soft skills such as teamwork, video-editing, and presentation skills," says Professor Kavi Arya, principal investigator, e-Yantra project.

Themes from the domain of 'urban services' will be assigned this year to student teams, challenging them to develop ingenious solutions using robotics to engineer services such as waste management, house management, and emergency fire services.

The last date to register is August 31, 2014. Visit <http://portale-yantra.org> for details.



THINKSTOCK

UGC, Don't Stifle Teaching Innovation

Let IITs and private varsities experiment

The University Grants Commission (UGC) is needlessly pushing IITs to scrap their four-year undergraduate programmes (FYUP). Conformity with the UGC's national policy was used as the instrument to end Delhi University's misguided FYUP. Now, the UGC wants to straitjacket that national policy on the Indian Institutes of Technology, the Indian Institute of Science and some innovative private universities. This is a grave error. India needs reform in higher education to compete in an increasingly knowledge-intensive economy. Students graduating from our universities should have the ability to think out of the box and to innovate. All this calls for a change in culture including how courses are designed, and how institutions are run. The UGC should not be a stumbling block in nurturing innovation. Rather, its policy framework should not just leave room for but also encourage innovation and experimentation.

UGC's fiat infringes on the autonomy of IITs that are governed by a separate Act of Parliament. There is every reason for these institutions to experiment with varied programmes. The UGC and the government must encourage, rather than thwart, innovation in pedagogy. Centres of excellence such as the IITs and the IISc and small, private universities



are ideal for carrying out such experiments. If found successful, these can then be deployed in larger universities across the country.

An FYUP is a prerequisite for admission to the masters' programme in the US and some other foreign varsities. If some Indian students want to pursue a four-year degree in preparation for a Master's abroad, why should the UGC stand in the way? The DU experiment was ill-conceived and rushed through without proper consultations with all stakeholders. The extra one year in the DU programme was devoted to 12 compulsory but substandard foundation courses. Not just poor course design. DU also lacked the capacity for additional seats to house the fourth batch of students. A flawed DU experiment should not throttle innovation elsewhere through the UGC.



M.M. ANSARI

Under Government Control

UGC's apparent missteps cannot be blamed on its inefficiency alone

THE ministry of human resource development has constituted a committee under the chairmanship of Hari Gautam for the "review of University Grants Commission for its restructuring and strengthening to address the challenges of higher education". The government's order shows that as many as 14 terms of reference (ToRs) have been identified for the committee. A cursory glance at them indicates that the UGC is unable to fulfil its mandate to promote, coordinate and maintain standards of university education, or to disburse funds to eligible institutions. This is probably due to the internal inefficiency of the UGC.

The ToRs, however, do not take note of external factors, particularly the legal handles through which the functioning of the UGC is tampered with by the HRD ministry. The problems that are not included in the ToRs but are responsible for the ineffective functioning of the UGC are as follows. First, the UGC is the only national commission which functions with part-time, non-executive members (10), most of whom are serving vice chancellors or college principals, funded and regulated by the UGC themselves. The government does not feel it necessary to appoint full-time experts to guide and manage the vast education system. Nor does it see any conflict of interest in appointing serving heads of educational institutions as members. Such an organisational structure was deliberately created and is being retained

by the Central government. In effect, the UGC functions as a subordinate office of the HRD ministry, toeing the Centre's line.

Second, under the UGC Act, the HRD ministry has the power to declare any institution a "deemed to be university" (DU). In exercise of this power, as many as 130 universities, largely under private management, have been established. Sensing the preferences of successive governments, the UGC from time to time gives the "desirable" advice, whenever sought by the ministry, to create such institutions. Of late, the credibility of a few DUs has been ques-

The Centre and states should act responsibly in providing a policy framework and resources to promote quality education rather than casting aspersions on the UGC.

tioned. The Tandon Committee, which scrutinised the performance of DUs at the behest of the HRD ministry, recommended the closure of at least one-third of them (44). But this has not been done, mainly because of a lack of political courage.

Education is a subject on the concurrent list. Since 2009-10, the Centre has not been entertaining proposals for establishing DUs. Most state governments have encouraged the establishment of private universities and colleges as profitable ventures to reduce their burden to support higher education. Business houses and industrialists have established their own colleges and universities with the support of political parties in power. Over 80 per cent of univer-

sities and colleges are under private management and over 60 per cent of students study at these institutions. Public universities are hardly effectively operationalised in terms of infrastructure or staff, which is why none of them makes the top 200 in global rankings. The Centre and states should act responsibly in providing a policy framework and resources to promote quality education rather than casting aspersions on bodies like the UGC, which is heavily dependent on the ministry for legal and administrative support, for funding higher education and for hiring the services of specialists.

Third, the functional autonomy of the UGC is compromised by the UGC Act. Recently, the commission tried to rationalise decisions on a number of issues, but it was not allowed to function autonomously or in a transparent and objective manner. For instance, government directions under Section 20 of the UGC Act reversed a number of UGC decisions, or were issued without regard for efficiency in the delivery of educational services — take the rollback of Delhi University's four-year undergraduate programme, to which the UGC had already provided tacit support.

The purpose of this discussion is to demonstrate that the relevant laws governing the management and regulation of higher educa-

tion and the manner in which these are implemented by the HRD ministry should also be reviewed to improve the responsiveness of higher education institutions to the society and economy. Unfortunately, the scope and coverage of the ToRs, as submitted to the review committee, is confined to operational areas of the UGC. Certain aspects of the role of the central bureaucracy have been ignored. Is this not an attempt to find a scapegoat in the UGC for the malfunctioning of higher education systems?

The HRD has constituted different committees, the reports of which have already been submitted to the government, with a view to creating separate regulatory authorities for open and distance education, and for carrying out accreditation of institutions and amendments to the UGC Act. Yet these areas of concern have also been mentioned in the ToRs, which would lead to the duplication of efforts and waste of resources.

To conclude, in the context of today's knowledge economy and the globalisation of education, we ought to evolve a comprehensive approach to reform higher education systems so that they are more responsive to societal aspirations. The constitution of the review committee by the government does not meet such expectations.

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HT.Com ND 27.08.2014 P-6

HRD MIN ADMITS DISTANCE LEARNING POLICY VIOLATED

UGC Irani recently responded in Rajya Sabha to MP's query referencing HT reports

Jeevan Prakash Sharma

After HT Education highlighted the plight of thousands of students who spent good money on distance learning programmes not approved by education regulator University Grants Commission, the matter came up for hearing in the upper house of Parliament, when it was in session.

On August 11, 2014, BK Hariprasad, member of parliament representing Karnataka; questioned Smriti Irani, the union minister for human resource development, about the number of state and private universities violating UGC norms by offering distance learning courses though institutes outside their territorial jurisdiction. In her written response, Smriti Irani acknowledged the violations, saying, "The University Grants Commission (UGC) has informed that a university established or incorporated by or under a state act shall operate and function only within the territorial jurisdiction defined under its act and in no case beyond the territory of its location."

"Contrary to this provision, a few state universities and private universities set up under state act have violated this policy of the UGC. The Commission has asked these universities to close down such centres and to comply with the UGC's instructions in the matter," responded Irani.

Despite the HRD minister's statement in Parliament, however, no concrete moves have been evident in curbing this malpractice. For instance, Karnataka State Open University in Karnataka (KSOU) and Mewar University in Rajasthan are still openly offering affiliations in distance learning mode to institutes outside state boundaries.

When questioned, the registrar of KSOU, PS Naik, had said, "We can offer courses beyond our territorial jurisdiction as our state act allows us to do so. We don't need

VIOLATING RULES

WAITING GAME Why are the HRD ministry and UGC, which were in a great hurry to roll back Delhi University's four-year degree programmes, turning a blind eye to UGC rules being violated by institutes offering distance learning degree courses?

Jeevan Prakash Sharma



THEIR DEFENCE State Universities insist that they are all aligned to UGC norms. They claim that they are in a great hurry to roll back Delhi University's four-year degree programmes, turning a blind eye to UGC rules being violated by institutes offering distance learning degree courses?

Course content does not count, just pay ₹1.5 lakh

BIG ANEED Even heart of BSc courses in dry cleaning is mobile recycling? The regional head of a state open university, in a secretly recorded conversation, promises affiliation for such courses

Jeevan Prakash Sharma

CRUCIAL QUESTIONS

- Instead of issuing public notices to sensitise students and parents, why is UGC, the regulator for distance education programmes, not taking any action against erring private, state and deemed universities which are openly violating its order?
- Is UGC unable to stop private and state universities from offering hundreds of unapproved degree courses such as MSc in fashion communication, MBA in interior designing, BSc in operation theatre technology etc?
- Many private and state universities have hired national collaborators (private companies) who work as agents between universities and private institutes. Who is regulating these companies?

■ HT Education on July 23, 2014, had reported cases of many state and private universities offering courses in violation of UGC norms.



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SMRITI IRANI, the union minister for human resource and development

to follow UGC." Even an assistant director of Mewar University had admitted to giving affiliation to institutes for training. "Thousands of students who have enrolled in reputed institutes in Delhi for degree courses through distance learning offered by other states' universities do not hold valid degrees. However, nobody is talking

about taking action against these institutes and universities," says a senior UGC official. In addition to this, violation of territorial jurisdiction is not the only worry for students and parents. Replying to another question related to unapproved courses run by some universities, the HRD minister said

that the UGC had never approved courses such as MSc in fashion communication, MBA in interior designing, BSc in operation theatre technology and MBA in fire safety etc. "The minister says that the UGC will consider approving such courses. Thousands of students have passed out or are at present enrolled in these courses. What happens to their future as such courses are not approved now?" asks Hariprasad. "The response raises many serious issues. If the UGC hasn't approved some programmes, how are these being offered to the students. All these degrees are fake. The minister also says that the UGC has published advertisements to inform students, but the responsibility does not end here. It should take strict action against these universities. We will pursue this issue," he adds.

UGC distance learning policy violated, admits HRD minister

FOLLOW UP Smriti Irani recently responded in Rajya Sabha to MP's query referencing HT Education's story series on degree courses being offered by private and state universities without UGC approval

Jeevan Prakash Sharma
 ■ jeevan.sharma@hindustantimes.com

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In addition to this, violation of territorial jurisdiction is not the only worry for students and parents. Replying to another question related to unapproved courses run by some universities, the HRD minister said that the UGC had never approved courses such as MSc in fashion communication, MBA in interior designing, BSc in operation theatre technology and MBA in fire safety etc.

This means that the state and private universities cannot offer these courses through distance learning programmes even in their own states because they don't have UGC approvals.

"The minister says that the UGC will consider approving such courses. Thousands of students have passed out or are at present enrolled in these courses. What happens to their future as such courses are not approved now?" asks Hariprasad, when contacted by HT Education.

"The minister's response raises many serious issues. If the UGC hasn't approved some programmes, how are these being offered to the students. All these degrees are fake. The HRD minister also says that the UGC has published advertisements to inform and educate students, but the UGC's responsibility does not end here. It should take strict action against these universities. I am not satisfied with the minister's response. We will pursue this issue," he adds.

The Man who Made a Dent on India's Steel Frame

IIT-Roorkee alumnus Mukesh Jain is spearheading the anti-English UPSC agitation

Vasudha.Venugopal
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New Delhi: This is one IITian who will not fit into your mainstream aspirational narrative. He has a dream alright, but one that runs counter to what we have come to associate with the IIT types.

Meet Mukesh Kumar Jain, 52, alumnus of IIT-Roorkee, also one of the driving forces behind the agitation against the new CSAT format for civil service exams. Jain is chief patron of the Akhil Bharatiya Angrezi Anivarya Virodhi Manch, an organisation that's devoted to wiping out English from the coun-

try, and installing Hindi in its place, north or south.

The Manch operates out of the Hindu Mahasabha Office near the historic Birla Mandir complex in the national capital. The office too boasts of a bit of history, having hosted one of the earliest RSS shakhas, and a certain Nathuram Vinayak Godse once graced its rooms, in-
forms one of Jain's volunteers.

Since 1986, be it the IIT-JEE exam, the NDA-CDS entrance, bank exams, or tests held by PSUs, Jain and

his friends have been carrying out protests for changing the language of the exams from English to Hindi.

Sitting in a room adjacent to a Veer Savarkar statue at the office, Jain, a metallurgical engineer from the 1984 batch at Roorkee — the 168-year-old institution was upgraded to an IIT in 2001 — recalls that as a student, he had a tough time convincing authorities to let him write his exams in Hindi. "It was not because I didn't know English, but because I consider it humiliating that English should be a medium to test our knowledge," said Jain, who also runs a manufacturing firm in the city.



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Hindu Outfits have Backed Jain

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"Students made fun of me but I told them they are betraying our motherland by looking West. We have to learn from China, Germany and France that respecting our languages is the way forward," said Jain.

Jain says his first success came when violent agitations in the IIT-Kanpur campus forced the institute to issue forms in Hindi in 1986. "We had started burning their English question papers a year before, after which they relented." His anti-English activities have only scaled up since then, and, in fact, found support from several right-wing Hindu outfits. His 1,200-odd cadres based mostly in Delhi and UP in the past two months fanned out in the villages of the Hindi

heartland, moving from one coaching centre to the other "educating" students against the need to agitate against the "Christian conspiracy" to impose English.

"Unlike Muslims who only loot, the Christians manipulate our brains and rob us of our national identity slowly using their educational institutions," he says.

In his office, Jain is surrounded by various books the group has published over the years — mostly on the "threat" of Christian conversions in India. 'Anna Hazare ka Isai Aatank', 'Deshdrohi Kejriwal', 'Yesu Main Shaitan Hai', 'Indian Bureaucracy Under Christian Siege' are just some of his several quick-read books that are widely distributed during the Manch's agi-

tations. "Many of our members got injured when the police acted tough (during the anti-CSAT protests). All this is part of Sonia Gandhi's Christian terrorism. Now under Modi's Hindu-Hindi-Hindustan approach, her tactics won't work," Jain says.

Not everyone agrees. Other organisations that have been at the forefront of the anti-CSAT protests say outfits such as the Manch that made the UPSC agitation a nationalist and a language issue have only done disservice to the cause. "There were several volunteers from Hindu organisations who made it an issue of 'self-respect'. By making it an only 'No-English' debate, the original cause of bring non-science students on par with others got lost," says Sant Prakash, one of the leaders of the agitation.

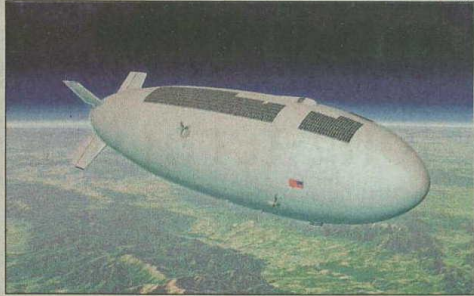
Modern airships brace for space odyssey

Sleek Telescope-Armed Vehicles Steered From Below To Unlock Mysteries 65,000Ft Above

Joshua A Krisch

Airships are dusty relics of aviation history. Lighter-than-air vehicles conjure images of the Hindenburg, in its glory and destruction, and the Goodyear Blimp, a floating billboard that barely resembles its powerful predecessors.

But now engineers are designing sleek new airships that could streak past layers of cloud and chart a course through the thin, icy air of the stratosphere, 65,000 ft above the ground — twice the usual altitude of a jetliner. Steered by scientists below, these aerodynamic balloons might



An illustration of the stratospheric airship observatory concept

be equipped with onboard telescopes that peer into distant galaxies or gather oceanic data

along a coastline. "Stratospheric airships could give us spacelike condi-

tions from a spacelike platform, but without the spacelike costs," said Sarah Miller, an astrophysicist at the University of California, Irvine.

High-altitude airships are still in their relative infancy. None has ever flown at 65,000 ft for longer than eight hours. But a recent study from the Keck Institute for Space Studies at Caltech suggests a more capable airship may not be far off. And Nasa is expected to sponsor a contest to build better airships, breathing new life — and funding — into the idea.

These would not be the first vehicles to venture into the stratosphere, of course. Rockets and satellites rou-

tinely whiz past 65,000 ft into earth orbit and beyond, and weather balloons already bob about in the upper reaches of the atmosphere.

But unlike free-flying weather balloons, a blimp can be actively manoeuvred, providing the control necessary to carry out advanced missions with expensive equipment. For years, climate scientists have used low-altitude blimps — and their lighter-than-air cousins, weather balloons — to sample atmospheric gases and have a bird's-eye view of local ecosystems. But high-endurance, high-altitude airships would allow scientists to study phenomena

like the carbon cycle over extended periods at varying altitudes. Meteorologists could fly these airships over hurricanes and tropical storms, tracking extreme weather in real time. Geologists have said that they would use such airships to explore layers of volcanic plumes.

Barth Netterfield, an astrophysicist at the University of Toronto who was not involved in the Keck study and has been launching lighter-than-air telescopes over Antarctica for years, said that bigger obstacles lie ahead. "It's a long road ahead. But if they pull it off, it could be quite interesting." NYT NEWS SERVICE

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US firm plans to put life-detector on Mars

Srinivas Laxman | TNN

Mumbai: A private American space organization, Explore Mars, has announced a new method of detecting life on the Red Planet by employing military technology.

It has devised a simple system capable of being delivered to the Martian surface to detect micro-organisms living on or under the surface.

The mission, codenamed ExoLance, essentially leverages a delivery system originally designed for military purposes. The project, which is very much at the conceptualization stage, envisages use of small, lightweight penetrator probes or arrows.

They will impact the Martian surface, leaving be-

hind a radio transmitter to communicate with an orbiter, and then kinetically burrow to emplace a life-detection experiment one to two meters below the surface.

According to Explore Mars, the system involves a metabolic test that clearly distinguishes non-living chemistry from the chemistry produced by the metabolism of living micro-organisms.

What makes this experiment even more intriguing is that if it detects life, it may also be able to determine whether that life is related to that on earth or is a new strain of life.

The project will combine the experiments of the 1970s Viking landers and the Curiosity rover with bunker-busting weapons technology.