

Newspaper Clips

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NOT A 'SUPER COP' BUT A THINK TANK

The Union Cabinet's approval to set up the National Council for Higher Education and Research (NCHER) is being seen as a step forward by both the academia and industry. Diptiman Dewan reports



■ NCHER is the first step towards integration in higher education

A HOLISTIC APPROACH

Sanjay Govind Dhande
Director, IIT Kanpur

We inherited the British model of higher education, which went through many distortions in the last 60 years. The only recent reference is the Higher Education Act of 1986, which is also getting outdated in the light of the evolution and explosion in higher education in the country today. Rather than taking an old model that gets outdated with every decade, it is important to work on a higher education model in keeping with the needs of the present millennium. We need a body that will react to the societal, economic, and aspirational changes in a manner that is different than under the Nehruvian model or even the act of 1986. This is what the NCHER will do.

The NCHER will result in the

integration of higher education which is a pressing need in the country. It is a framework for higher education which needs to be conceived and adopted by the entire subcontinent. It states, for example, that there should be a semester system, credit based courses, a minimum number of credits required to graduate, etc. However, this does not mean that every course or university function will be defined by the NCHER. This authority will be akin to a think tank which will direct different units like regulation and quality assurance, controlling malpractices, etc, which is a holistic approach, instead of becoming a 'super-cop.' In this new paradigm, the funding, regulatory, and academic coordination roles are also well defined.

There is a need to envision higher education in a holistic manner and to build an ecosystem of higher education in India. The NCHER is defi-

nately a step forward in the right direction.

A POSITIVE STEP

Rahul Mullick
Partner, PwC India

The approval by the Union Cabinet for setting up the NCHER is the first step towards greater integration than what can happen through multiple bodies and autonomy for higher education institutions in the country. It is expected to enhance the development of higher education in India.

The private sector welcomes any development towards the promotion of quality education and research in the country, and in that aspect, we view this as a step forward. On the NCHER being tasked with developing a national curriculum, it is a positive step too, as the larger goal is setting higher quality standards — an urgent requirement in the higher education space in India today. The NCHER would comprise a strong list of experts representing different states and professional bodies

who will bring their individual competencies and perspectives; this, we believe, leads to a consensus driven policy-making exercise, which should support lesser roadblocks during implementation.

A consolidation of thoughts and ideas will only add value. The industry requires highly skilled manpower, but leaving aside the IIMs, IITs and a few leading institutes/colleges, the standard of students passing out of a majority of institutions today has much left to be de-

sired. We expect this body to help improve the quality of education and focus on employability rather than just being academic. It is expected to result in greater stakeholder engagement, autonomy, and better research facilities that will all lead to innovation, which is the mantra for qualitative improvement of a nation. What should happen is an optimisation and streamlining in processes like approval and quality, which a single agency will help facilitate and implement faster.

HindustanTimes

Title : Tech-IT-Easy - Is Internet democracy under threat in India?

Author : N Madhavan, Associate Editor

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Is Internet democracy under threat in India?



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LOOKING BACK at 2011, we could describe it as a great year for democracy — both on and offline. While the Arab Spring brought down totalitarian regimes, both in India and the US, anti-government protesters stood up for economic justice. In both instances, social media played a major role, with sites such as Twitter, Facebook, Wordpress and Blogspot helping people rally.

Now, as the year draws to a close, it seems Internet democracy is under threat in India, and it is important to recognise the importance of social media — which is the best thing that happened to democracy in India since the Right To Information Act — and then make sure that its vagaries are not used to justify censorship of some kind.

Communications and IT minister Kapil Sibal suggested that offensive content may be “pre-screened” by authorities to stop content

that promote obscenity or religious hatred before denying any such more. And then, last week, a Delhi court ordered 22 social media site companies to remove all “anti-religious” and “anti-social” content.

But even more ominous are the IT (Intermediaries guidelines) Rules, 2011 notified by the government last April.

Software Freedom Law Center (SLFC), an advocacy group, says the rules have sweeping criteria that can result in ambiguous and broad interpretation to crack down on user-generated content on social media. “The crux of the rules is that any

SOCIAL MEDIA FIRMS ARE ONLY COMPUTER HOSTS. THEY CANNOT & SHOULD NOT BE HELD RESPONSIBLE FOR EVERYTHING. WE NEED TO FIGURE OUT A WAY.

person aggrieved by any content on the Internet can ask the intermediaries to take down such content,” it says in a note — and this needs to be done within 36 hours, with no redressal mechanism.

The rules have been tabled in parliament, and it is for democracy lovers to ensure that it does not result in a “private censoring mechanism” as SLFC says.

Is the IT Ministry the right one to govern social media? With this becoming an extension of media, perhaps the Information & Broadcasting Ministry needs to step in.

Social media firms are only computer hosts. They cannot and should not be held responsible for everything. We need to figure out a way for that.

I would prefer a “highway patrol” style of regulation where unlawful content is monitored by authorities and taken down with transparent rules for redressal (like traffic violations) rather than a “private security check” system where everybody and everything comes for painful screening.

The motives of censorship of any kind should always be questioned.

Cloud services, smart devices to lead technology

Forecast 2012: Big data storage, social enterprises also to dominate

S SHYAMALA

Chennai

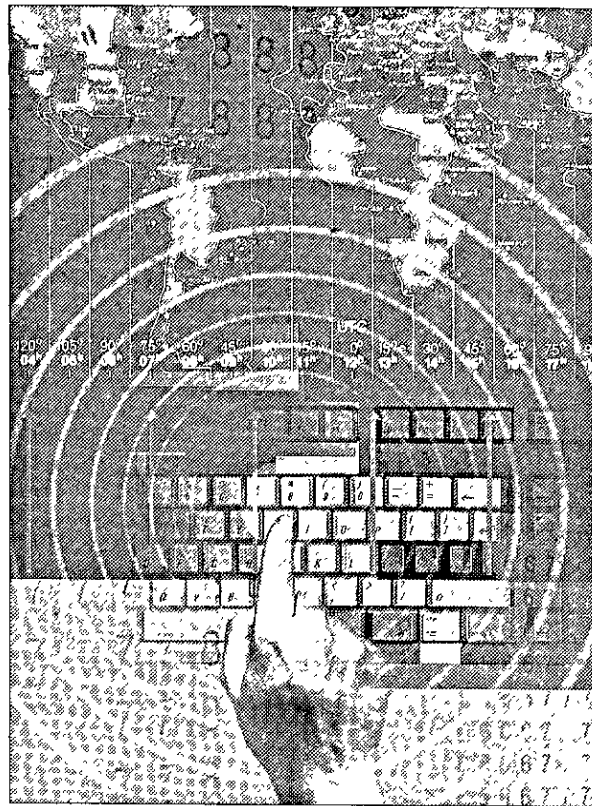
LIKE every passing year, 2012 is also hoped to bring bigger and better changes to the technology world. Nobody can precisely predict how 2012 would turn out to be. Nevertheless, here are some broad fore-sights that may become realities during the coming year.

Going into 2012, there is an explosive increase in the amount of information available to organisations. Data collected from business applications such as ERP and CRM; internal and external communication including emails, chats and instant messaging; content posted and received on company websites, the list is endless. The challenge lies in the management of this deluge.

According to Gartner, there is no regulatory help on the near horizon, leaving each business to decide for itself how to handle the introduction of big data.

The first step towards proper data management would be to have a retention plan in place, says Vijay Mhaskar, vice president of information management, Symantec. Data should be sorted and indexed in relevant order to retrieve when required. The plan should also be reviewed at regular intervals to maintain its relevance, he adds.

"On an average, Indian organisations need to respond to legal, compliance and regulatory requests for electronically stored infor-



BRAVE NEW WORLD: Going into 2012, there is an explosive increase in the amount of information available to organisations

mation at least four times a year. For instance, the government has now mandated telecom companies to store all SMSes sent through their network for at least six months. They are supposed to give information about any of the messages whenever the government asks for it," he says.

Smartphones and tablets represent more than 90 per cent of the new net growth in device adoption for the coming four years, says Gartner. Increasing application platform capability across all classes of mobile phones is

spurring a new frontier of innovation, particularly where mobile capabilities can be integrated with location, presence and social information to enhance the usefulness.

In 2011, Gartner estimated that app development projects targeting PCs to be on par with mobile development. Future adoption will triple up over the next three years and will result in the vast majority of client-side applications being mobile only or mobile first for these devices.

Enterprise cloud will finally come of age and de-

liver substantial benefits to businesses by reducing capital expenditures and creating business efficiencies and better economics. Cloud services will give new options to move workloads easily between the corporate data center and the cloud of a company's choice.

Whether a public, private or hybrid cloud model, the enterprise cloud will play an essential role in mobilising enterprise apps that enable both workforce mobility and new business paradigms, says John Samuel, president, Verizon Business India.

The already web-centric enterprise will become even more social and the ability to tap intelligence at all levels of the organisation will become the new norm.

Vendors in the consumer social network space are competing with each other at a rate and pace that are unusually aggressive. The net result is a large crop of vendors with overlapping features competing for a finite audience.

In the enterprise market, many small independent social networking vendors are struggling to reach critical mass at a time when market consolidation is starting and mega vendors such as Microsoft, IBM, Oracle, Google and VMware have made substantial efforts to penetrate the enterprise social networking market, says Gartner.

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IIT-B alumni play Santa, give ₹2.5 cr to institute

Mumbai: Former students of the IIT-Bombay played Santa to their alma mater by signing a cheque of Rs 2.5 crore. The money will go to institute a counselling programme for students and to support the economically weaker IITians.

Alumni day on Sunday saw thousands of IITians come back to the campus and connect with old friends and faculty. The class of 1986, which celebrated its silver jubilee reunion, felt it was essential to improve the quality of life of students. So with the money, IIT-B will set-up Counselling Services Programme (CSP) to address the academic, emotional, psychological and spiritual needs of students. TNN

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Teenagers losing sleep over excess use of tech: study

Press Trust of India

New Delhi, Dec. 25

Teenagers spend maximum time on gadgets such as computers, video games and cell phones, which causes sleep deprivation, resulting into health problems like obesity and depression, a study has said.

These days children spend over eight hours a day playing video games, browsing Internet, sending SMSes and watching TV, an Assocham study said.

“Easy access to technology with lack of parental supervision is the main reason for increasing technology addiction among youths. Activities like watching TV and chatting online have greatly reduced teenagers’ sleeping time,” it said.

The chamber surveyed 2,500 youths (both males and females) in 10 major cities including Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai and Pune.

The study said majority of youngsters, mainly in the age group of 10-18 years, are getting

less than eight hours of sleep.

“Children of working parents are found to be more technology addictive in the absence of parental supervision as compared to those whose single-parent is engaged in employment,” it said.