Newspaper Clips

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Wasting talents of IIT graduates

Arun Nigavekar

Bloomberg

MONEY MATTERS: Our IIT graduates still feel that corporate jobs, which pay good money and also bring fame, are best bets for their careers. To be competitive not only in India but globally, we require a strong R&D base

ADDRESSING students at the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT)-Bombay, during the recently held "Techfest", Nobel laureate professor Venkatraman Ramakrishnan expressed his disappointment with really smart students, including IITians, joining finance and management jobs and wasting their talents. "One needs to be sufficiently smart to get into finance or management professions. One cannot be an idiot and be successful in finance or management. I agree with that. But, one does not need to be in the top 0.1 per cent, which is what you IITians are; but, you guys getting into finance or management is a total waste of your talents. Why is the government spending all this money in IITs to create engineering and science graduates? It is not for you to go and become an accountant for a multinational company," he said. "So, what you guys should do is think big! Don't settle for corporate jobs. If you aim high and say to yourself that you want to invent new technologies and new sources of energy or technologies that save lives, you will make fundamental discoveries for a better tomorrow; this is what top people should aim for and not settle for mediocre corporate lives."

India, which is branded as an "argumentative society", immediately engaged in discussions on the points raised by Ramakrishnan through use of all social networking sites — Facebook and Twitter, to name a few. The views expressed ranged from one extreme to another. One statement said, "India should remove all reservations from education and jobs market. After that only, can we talk about inventions." A liberal statement said, "Career is not all about money. It is about people too. One needs to ponder about where one can utilise one's full potential with passion, curiosity and happiness. I believe, family and society are the places where we live, so we should not compromise these only for the sake of money. One cannot buy happiness with money."

From the observations made by Ramakrishnan, two aspects come into focus. The first one is that through teaching, we are not creating and nurturing curiosity in the minds of students, so they do not get attracted to jobs that would lead to research and innovations; and secondly, our IIT graduates still feel that corporate jobs, which pay good money and also bring fame, are best bets. In the early '60s, '70s and even the '80s, these issues never were a point of discussion because a majority IITians were going to the US or Canada for higher education and getting jobs in different domains. It is interesting to note that all of them did not pursue science and/or engineering research, but, many of them graduated from management programmes in Harvard or Kellogg and joined corporate sectors. The information and communication technology (ICT) revolution in the past two decades of the 20th century proved to be a great boon not only for IITians, but also for engineering and computer graduates from other public universities and deemed-to-be-universities as well. Thus, getting a job was an easy proposition in the US. The same story was true in India too because both ICT and the manufacturing industries in India were on the upward move. Many talented Indians were and still are the backbone of the technology industry in developed nations where innovations are the path for survival. It was only in the first decade of the 21st century that two factors forced Indian graduates to think in a different way. The recessions in developed countries reduced job opportunities and citizens, be it Americans or Europeans, started to feel that Indian graduates are encroaching on their jobs space and, hence, there were social tensions during that time and continues today as well. Hence, in recent times, many senior people of Indian origin are returning to India and this augers well for the growing Indian industry in different fields. However, all those who are involved in high-tech industries in developed countries still continue to be in demand and each and every country is looking for such talent. In India, our industries are still riding on the path of demand-supply at competitive rates rather than spending time and money on innovations. Few product-driven industries, such as two-wheeler manufacturers and automakers, are developing new products, but, this is abysmally low for a big country like India. We are still not concentrating on innovations in the broader spectrum of agriculture, manufacturing and many other industries that touch human lives. The service sector in consumer products, telecommunications, aviation, healthcare, finance and banking is on a growth path and corporate India is offering competitive and attractive pay packages and the young graduates, whether from IITs or other universities, are finding these opportunities worth pursuing.

Indian industry should realise that the challenges of the future to become competitive not only in India but globally would require a strong research and development base both at the fundamental and also at the applications levels. This can only be done if our industries initiate a meaningful dialogue with the IITs and universities to establish and create a strong research and development (R&D) base and also blend the curriculum with threads of research and innovations.

(The writer is a former chairman of UGC and former VC of University of Pune)

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Indian Express ND 01/02/2012

P-10

Re-engineering exam

Giving 40% weight to Class 12 marks should not distort the level playing field for IIT entrance

STARTING next year, entry into IIT and other engineering schools will be determined by a common aptitude-cum-advanced knowledge test (which will count for 60 per cent), and board examination results (the remaining 40 per cent). A single standard is vastly preferable to the current battery of engineering tests in different states, which presents logistical and financial challenges to students, and often forces them to choose. The new system also aims to correct the imbalance created by the test-prep industry that not all students can afford, and the tendency for school education and IIT coaching to spin in different orbits.

There has been valid critique of the IIT-JEE — a national obsession, it made students devote all their mental energies to a single pursuit, focus on rote-learning and gaming the exam with guesswork and quick calculation. However, while there is broad consensus that too much hinged on this one imperfect measure of intelligence, its replacement should not sacrifice its rigour and its uniformity. The success of the new system depends crucially on school boards, and how they manage to adjust for the skews — and we have seen some bizarre results in recent years — among various school boards. It is possible to create a virtual school board and normalise results across the country. This model must be very carefully crafted — to make sure it does not take away from the aims of a single test.

Admissions to these schools directly reflect the structure of opportunity in this country. For all its flaws, the IIT-JEE, after all, was the closest we had of a meritocratic measure — it threw the IITs' portals open to anyone with the smarts and dedication to crack the test, and it drew students from diverse backgrounds. The new common aptitude test, too, hopes to separate academic ability from other factors like family and quality of schooling. However, the real test would be in how this is implemented — what subjects in the school board will count towards IIT admissions? Could this create another set of biases (for instance, making English part of the results can affect the sorting)? The new system should be a gateway to students across the class spectrum, not a gatekeeper.

PERFORM WELL AT SCHOOL

JEE: Varying weightage to Class 12 results (TOI)

Single Test For All, But Weightage To Cater To Different States & Engg Colleges

Akshaya Mukul TNN

New Delhi: The new single Joint Entrance Examination (JEE) being proposed for admission to Indian Institutes Technology/National Institutes of Technology/Indian Institutes of Science Education and Research/Indian Institutes of Information Technology and state government-run engineering colleges would not have a uniform weightage to class XII results.

Sources said while there would be a single-test, class XII weightage would have variations that would cater to needs of different engineering colleges and state governments. For instance, the source said, "Weightage given to class XII result would be different for admission to IIT and different for other engineering colleges. Weightage would be even state-specific. There would be a band of weightage that institutes and state governments would be free to choose from."

The source said variation has been devised to deal with concerns of the state governments many of whom felt that due to different system of evaluation in each state students from low-scoring states should not be discriminated. He gave the example of Tamil Nadu, where admission to state-government run engineering colleges is on the basis of class XII marks and not any entrance test.

"For states like Tamil Nadu, weightage for class XII has to be different from what it would be in Bihar or Uttar Pradesh," the source said.

The T Ramasami committee, which is working on new single JEE, has not made public findings of analysis of past data of school boards that was done by Indian Statistical Institute (ISI) last year. ISI's report accessed by TOI shows that this report was not even made part of any presentation.

The report, while analyzing data of CBSE, ICSE, Tamil Nadu board and West Bengal board, found that class XII scores from these boards are not comparable.

It said, "Since the subject scores do not appear to be comparable, the question of combining them for comparability of aggregate scores across the boards does not arise."

Sources said that all attempt is being made to evolve consensus and a meeting of state education ministers has been called later this month. In case, state governments do not come on board, the ministry is planning to go ahead with a single entrance test for Central government-run engineering institutions from 2014.

Dissent from even one state government would mean that single test for all engineering institutions, public and private, would come a cropper.

Break The Stress

(TOI)

Common engineering entrance exam brings a whiff of education reform

The decision of the Union human resources development ministry to push for replacing the IIT Joint Entrance Examination (JEE) and the All India Engineering Entrance Examination (AIEEE) with a common aptitude-cum-advanced knowledge test by 2013 is an innovative move. The two exams are currently the most important for engineering aspirants in the country. While the JEE determines admission to the 15 premier IITs, the AIEEE secures admission to 30 National Institutes of Technology, four Indian Institutes of Information Technology and five Indian Institutes of Science Education & Research. However, there is a plethora of other exams that one must take to seek admission to those colleges not covered by the JEE or the AIEEE. As a result, an engineering aspirant invariably ends up taking three to five entrance tests during admission season.

It is precisely to mitigate this burden that the new common test has been designed. Divided into two parts – aptitude and an optional advanced section – the test along with class XII board results will determine admissions to all centrally funded engineering institutions. However, if the aim is to institute a system similar to the American SAT examination, individual colleges must have the freedom to determine how much weight each component should be given. Contrary to this principle, the proposed admission formula mandates 60% weight for common test scores with board marks constituting the rest 40%. This is bound to create discrepancies as state boards across the country have hugely varying standards. If the proposed formula were to be adopted, each state board would try to outdo the others with liberal marking, setting off a race to the bottom.

Having said that, the overall push for a common entrance exam is welcome. The aptitude part of the common test could be used in disciplines other than engineering as well, while the advanced section could be tailored for different disciplines. The existing system of multiple entrance exams has encouraged cram pressure in higher education and created enormous stress for students. Worse still, it has created a wide gap between school curricula and competitive exam syllabi that has aided the mushrooming of coaching centres throughout the country. This in turn has been one of the factors stymieing innovation in our institutes of higher learning, as evident in the poor quality of research output.

That more than 2,500 students commit suicide every year due to examrelated stress is worrying. By focussing on aptitude and creativity, the common entrance test can alleviate student pressure while allowing colleges enough flexibility to determine their own admission criteria.

Times of India, ND 1/02/2012 P-7

IIT hopes brighten for those with good school grades

Neha Pushkarna | TNN

New Delhi: Performing well in school will become more important for IIT aspirants from 2013. It's almost decided now that at least 40% weightage will be given to class XII marks for admission to the 15 IITs as well as other engineering institutes in the country.

No wonder schools are elated. Calling it a step in the right direction, principals say the new policy will make sure that science students preparing for engineering entrance exams in class XII attend classes and focus equally on their Board exams. The move is also aimed at curbing the business of coaching centres which simply 'equip' candidates to crack competitive exams caring little for concept-based teaching.

"It's a right step as now students will focus more on school. Many children in classes XI and XII skip classes to go for coaching. Or they often have long classes after which they do not attend school to do self-study. The coaching institutes only equip students to crack an exam. Parents' money also gets wasted in the process as not all can get through," said L V Sehgal, principal, Bal Bharati School, Ganga Ram Hospital Marg.

D R Saini, principal, DPS R K Puram, added, "Education should be wholesome. But these days some schools have come up which tie up with coaching institutes. These schools just charge fees for enrolment without the need to attend classes. They, instead, let students spend their time preparing for competitive exams at coaching centres. The new admission policy for IITs will put a stop to that practice. Besides school performance, the candidates will be evaluated through a common aptitude test in place of JEE and AIEEE. According to D V Khakhar, director, IIT-Bombay, a single test will also help get rid of the multiplicity of entrance exams. "Students, who have done well in school, are welcome in IITs. It's time coaching centres were regulated."

SCHOOLS ELATED

The Joint Admission Board of IITs will take a final decision on the policy at its February 18 meeting, however, coaching centres say they will not be out of business. "We train students for competitive exams. We will absorb the changes introduced in the entrance test and adapt ourselves to new training methodology. Besides, we make sure our students focus on school," said Ajay Antony, course director, TIME. K Gopal, director, Narayana Institute, added, "With school performance being considered, students will have to perform much better in class XII Boards too. They can't score in the nineties without special assistance. That's where we come in. Not just for competitive exams, students need coaching institutes for doing well in the Boards too."

Aspirants have their own concerns. Shekhar Chaudhry, a class XI student from Janakpuri, who travels to Ber Sarai for IIT coaching every day, said, "Many like me have already enrolled in a two-year programme to prepare for IIT-JEE. Such a change should have been introduced from 2014."

Asian Age ND 1/02/2012 P-5

IIT-B, TN varsity in webpage war

K.A. DODHIYA
MUMBAI, JAN. 31

An online war has broken out on a social networking site between the students of Mumbai's premier institution Indian Institute of Technology, Bombay (IIT-B), and VIT University, Chennai, over the proprietary rights of a page that was put up by the IITians 48 hours ago.

The page, IIT Tips, which aimed at providing some welcome relief to IITians, became the bone of contention after VITians accused the former of plagiarising an idea, which they started nearly six months ago.

The IIT Tips page that was launched about 48 hours ago received nearly 6,400 likes in the first 24 hours itself as existing and former IITians welcomed the initiative.

However, all hell broke loose when a VITian visited the page. The VITian accused the administrator of the page for copying their (VITian) "logo" and format of the tips. His accusation met with snide comments from IITians who were hurt by his claims.

As snide comments turned to abuses the administrator decided to shut out the VITian and the fracas ended.

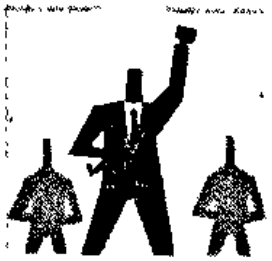
Plagiarism notwithstanding the page received more than 9,000 likes on the second day and the number has been increasing, which according to the administrator of the page was beyond his imagination.

"I was expecting 1,000 likes on the first day, but 1,890 in 12 hours is flattering," the administrator said. When contacted the VITian said that while he was not the administrator of the VIT Tips page on Facebook, he felt that the least that was expected from the most sought after IITians in India "was to be original".

Financial Express ND 01/02/2012 P-8

TEACHING BUSINESS

FT's latest rankings place IIMA & ISB among the top-20 B-schools. However, research still suffers



THE Indian Institute of Management Ahmedabad and the Indian School of Business are the only two Indian business schools that have made it to the list of top 100 in the *Financial Times*' Global MBA Rankings 2012. This doesn't come as much of a surprise, since these two schools were the only entrants in last year's list, as well. What is worth noting is that both IIMA and ISB are among the top 20 business schools in the world—IIMA retained its place at 11th while ISB fell from 13th place in 2011 to 20th place in 2012. IIMA, the premier business school in India, is making its mark worldwide, as well, especially when it comes to the benefit to its alumni. Although its value-for-money rank is only 29, IIMA's alumni currently receive the third-best salaries world-wide, behind only Stanford and Harvard—ranked 1 and 2 in the overall list. Most significantly, as far as career progression goes, IIMA was ranked 1 world-wide. Coupled with the fact that it was ranked 94 in terms of research, this brings back memories of Jairam Ramesh's criticism of the IIMs and IITs, that they are hardly doing any worthwhile research, and that the institutions are excellent only because of the quality of students, not the research or faculty. These rankings certainly seem to imply that. ISB, on the other hand, has fared better in terms of research, with a rank of 70, while it ranks one place behind IIMA in terms of salary of alumni—although the current salary of its alumni has fallen compared to last year. It seems alumni salary is a big deal when it comes to ranking a business school, since even though ISB fell in only three categories (all to do with salaries) and maintained its rank or rose up in all the other parameters, its overall rank still fell seven place from last year.

Inevitably, the comparison with China must be made, and surprisingly, India doesn't compare too terribly to its Asian rival—China has 5 entries in the top-100 list, with only the Hong Kong UST Business School outranking the Indian schools.

Financial Express ND 01/02/2012 P-9

Record caFE G MADHAVAN NAIR
Former Chairman, Isro

'Nothing wrong with Antrix-Devas deal'

After blacklisting former Indian Space Research Organisation (Isro) chairman G Madhavan Nair and three former space scientists from future government assignments for the way the controversial Antrix-Devas agreement was concluded during their tenures, the Prime Minister's Office has now done a U-turn, offering to hear them out. Nair tells FE's **Ajay Sukumaran** *that he thinks there's something not right about the way the issue has been handled, and has shot off a letter to the PM requesting him to review the order.*

The PMO, through minister V Narayanasamy, says it now wants to hear you and the others out. How do you view this?

See, one thing is that I have not received even a copy of the first letter communicating that we are debarred from government service, leave alone the suggestions and all these things. In three days, three different views have been expressed. So unless I see it, I cannot say anything. Today, you have the telex, fax, mail etc. What is the hesitation on the part of the government to communicate directly to me? So, this shows that there is something that is not really open and straightforward.

What have you communicated to the Prime Minister in your letter?

As soon as it came to my notice, I told him this is really an insult to the entire scientific community, especially slamming these four people of international standing. And the entire procedure adopted towards this is not as per any of the existing norms in the country. So the Prime Minister may kindly review and annul the order.

Regarding the procedure followed for the agreement with Devas...

If they have found anything anomalous, or if any one of us had done anything wrong, it is the responsibility on the part of the government to communicate to us and ask for an explanation. And if the explanation is not satisfactory, it should conduct a formal enquiry. And only after a formal enquiry can they take a decision on that. So that whole process is missing in this.

How would you react to the response from the scientific community?

I think the scientific community has responded really positively. All the senior scientists have come out with open statements condemning the action of the government. They know that science and technology cannot be put in a straight jacket. They should have the freedom and if you say that you will tame them, etc, it is never heard of. It is the wrong message to the community. I think CNR Rao has rightly said that scientists have to be given their freedom to work and this kind of thing is not at all conducive to that atmosphere.

Does this mean the scientists were seen as convenient fall guys?

I don't know, I can only quote from what I hear in the media. The so-called panel has given the names of four scientists and three administrators. And action is taken only on the four scientists. So it is clearly a case of discrimination.

The first panel has not found anything wrong. Again I have not seen the report. To quote from knowledgeable sources, they say there is no loss to the government, no spectrum deal has taken place and, if at all, there are some minor anomalies that have to be set right for the future.

At what stage did the anomaly take place? What has been told to you?

Nothing. So I have asked for the information under the RTI. Let us wait.

You have said the same procedures were followed for the Antrix-Devas agreement and that the government was well aware of it all through?

All the decision-making responsibility rests with the Antrix board and the board has nominees from the government. It is those nominees who have to take care of the interests of the government and, once something is discussed in the board and if that has to be communicated to the government, those nominees will take care of it.

So, you do not need to give the name of the operator?

Not at all, because that may change. See, for the same transponders, suppose halfway through one company fails to operate, we will allot it to somebody else. We will simply say that this capacity is reserved for private usage. Here again, the note which went to the Cabinet clearly stipulated that about 90% capacity will be utilised by private operators simply keeping in mind that if Devas does not succeed, I should have the flexibility to give it to somebody else.

Then why did Isro, in 2011, say that the agreement was not mentioned explicitly?

That itself answers it. It is not mentioned explicitly, implicitly yes. So it is not a crime.

Why then would the organisation take that view if it was standard procedure?

They could not find any other reason, so this was highlighted. And this was a wrong interpretation of the procedures and rules. So I will say this is misleading the government.

After 2009, when the new chairman took over, he asked the Suresh committee to look into the deal. Was this rethink purely because the business environment in India's telecom sector had changed?

There could have been some pressures from such lobbies to free this space segment and use it for terrestrial applications. But at the same time, you must remember this particular frequency band is reserved for space based services.

So, it was the case that space spectrum was available and one company had access to it?

No, it was not one company. I tell you, we have built two satellites for this purpose. I can put two more satellites and we can get some more slots if we require. So, anybody who is coming afresh will also get access to that because the frequency can be reused by using different slots and different techniques of modulation and so on.

But the complaint is that it seemed like a back-door entry for the company?

There is nothing like a back-door entry. Though we are leasing out transponder capacity, they cannot do any operation in India without a DoT licence. So, they have to go for spectrum clearance and usage fee, etc, to DoT. That action Devas had not initiated yet. And that doesn't enable them to have access to the ground resources. That's a different story altogether.

Does Isro need to be more open in the way it functions?

It's a bad hit as far as the Isro organisation is concerned, but the truth will come out ultimately. But in that time it will go through a shadow.

What's the truth?

There's absolutely nothing wrong with the Antrix-Devas agreement. That's the truth.

Economic Times ND 01/02/2012 P-14

Call to Innovate

India's success in vaccines cries out for replication in multiple other sectors

Writing in this newspaper on Monday, January 30, department of biotechnology (DBT) secretary Dr M K Bhan called for extending the success India has achieved in vaccine production to yet other vaccines and other health technologies. India supplies 60% of the world's vaccines and 60-80% of annual UN vaccine purchases. This is a striking achievement, made possible by a culture that promotes and funds innovation vaccines and biotechnology. There are multiple strands to this success: public-private partnership, in particular, grants to fund entrepreneurship among researchers and innovators, use of economies of scale, new methods of paying for intellectual property through philanthropic grants — such as from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation — so that vaccines can be sold cheap, concerted efforts to sustain delivery, and mobilisation of political and administrative commitment. In particular, growing collaboration between industry and academia — the Centre for Biotechnology at Jawaharlal Nehru University developed a crucial indigenous vaccine against anthrax and Panacea bought the rights — plays a crucial role.

India has, in the past, eliminated smallpox and guinea worms. Polio is probably on its way out, no fresh case being reported for 12 months. These achievements stand out all the more, given the miserable state of governance in many parts of the country and large-scale diversion of central funds devolved for the National Rural Health Mission. The same framework of innovation, extension and delivery can probably work for universalising access to clean drinking water, sanitation and solid waste management. Similarly, provision of universal healthcare cries out for new forms of public-private partnership, where only innovation and experimentation can arrive at the institutional arrangements that will align assorted interests to deliver quality healthcare. The Prime Minister's call to make this a decade of innovations finds resonance only in a few pockets of the government, such as DBT and the National Innovation Council. A few more innovation champions must step forward.

Hindustan Times ND 01/02/2012 P-4 (EDUCATION)

No signs of a permanent campus

PART 7: IIT-GANDHINAGAR

The temporary property may be one of the best among the new IITs, but construction at the permanent campus has not started since the institute's inception in 2008

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Students of IIT-Gandhinagar have been waiting to move into the promised 400-acre campus on the banks of the river Sabarmati in Palej village near Gandhinagar, but there has been no sign of construction activity at the proposed site since 2008, when the college was first set up. The college currently functions from Vishwakarma Government Engineering College on the outskirts of Ahmedabad, a temporary set-up with no facilities of hostels or faculty residences. Students currently live in private apartments situated at a walking distance from the college. The classrooms are air-conditioned, the mess provides food recommended by a nutritionist and sports is compulsory for first-year BTech students. "Even though, it is just a three-year-old institute, it provides high standard facilities. Students get a chance to do internships with leading companies. The institute also has various courses in humanities and languages such as Urdu and French. Says student Akshay Jain, "Besides studies, the institute places importance on extra-curricular activities like sports. What we don't have is a campus of our own, but I'm sure that will come up in few years."

The institute has well-equipped laboratories for mechanical, civil and electrical engineering

The institute has the potential to grow into a top-ranking school. Hence, we have decided to recruit high-class faculty and experiment with various teaching methods

Sudhir Jain, director, IIT-Gandhinagar

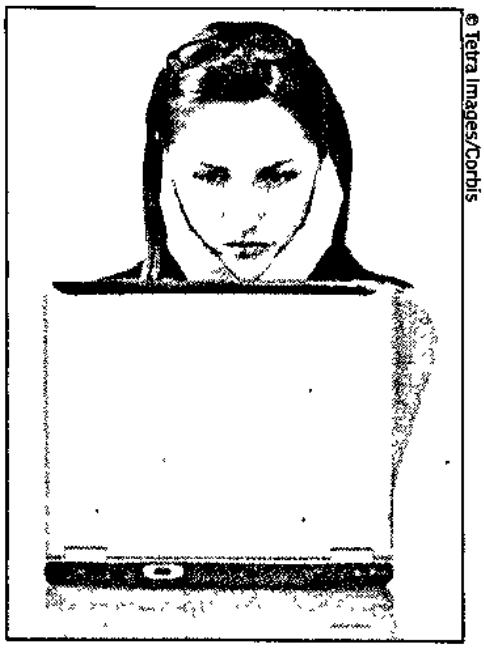
Times of India, ND 1/02/2012 P-19

Soon, relief from email scams

Washington: World's leading email providers including Google, Yahoo, AOL, Facebook and Microsoft have announced to join hands to collectively fight the increasing menace of email and phishing attacks. Following 18 months of collaborative work, 15 email providers on Monday announced formation of DMARC.org (Domain-based Message Authentication, Reporting and Conformance) a technical working group to develop standards for reducing the threat of deceptive emails, such as spam and phishing.

Among other things, it will outline an enhanced vision for email authentication that can scale up to today's internet needs.

The group's work includes a draft specification that helps create a feedback loop between legitimate email senders and receivers to make impersonation more difficult for phishers trying to send



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PHISHING TROUBLE?

fraudulent email. "Email phishing defrauds millions of people and companies every year, resulting in a loss of consumer confidence in email and the internet as a whole," said Brett McDowell, chair of DMARC.org and Senior Manager of Customer Security Initiatives at PayPal. "Industry cooperation — combined with technology and consumer education — is crucial to fight phishing," McDowell said.

The DMARC specification addresses concerns that have traditionally hindered widespread deployment of an authenticated, trusted email ecosystem, the statement said.

"Today, email receivers lack a reliable way to know the extent to which an email sender uses standards like SPF and DKIM for authenticating their messages," it said adding that as a result, providers must rely on complex and imperfect measurements to separate legitimate unauthenticated messages sent by the domain owner from fraudulent phishing messages sent by a scammer. PTI

Business Line ND 01-Feb-12 P9

Google move is not good for netizens, say experts

Balaji Narasimhan
Bangalore, Jan 31

Google's plan to merge data across 60 of its properties, which was announced last week, has drawn criticism from experts on the Internet, who are saying that this is detrimental to privacy.

"Google is doing what is good for shareholders. This is not positive for netizens," said Mr Sunil Abraham, Executive Director, Centre for Internet and Society. "People like you and me have to either accept it or leave."

But what are the alternatives? Mr Somick Goswami, Director Consulting, PwC India, didn't want to comment directly on Google, but in the larger context of data privacy, he asked, "Do users want a free Internet or control over content? There is a lot of advocacy going around it. End of the day, when using the Internet, there has to be trust."

One way that Google could build trust could be by using something pertaining to loyalty, which retailers use in the real world in order to woo customers.

Tips to safeguard your privacy

- Browse using the incognito mode, which hides information of what you are browsing
- Use an anonymizer service to hide your tracks
- Use competing services of Google to ensure that all your data are not present with one company
- If you use Google products like Google search, try a scraper service like Scroogle (https://ssl.scroogle.org/)to hide your tracks
- Even when using competing products of Google, be careful about what you reveal because Google may one day acquire this company

GRAPHIC: VENU

Mr Ram Menon, Executive Vice-President and Chief Technology Officer of Tibco, said that many of his clients make offers that are in context with what users want.

"For example, if you like cappuccino and this knowledge is known to a vendor, he can offer you a cappuccino when you walk past the store." He said that in such cases, there was no affront to privacy because the offer is relevant and in context. "You are a member and have opted in," he said.

Perhaps, the fact that all of Google's services are free has something to do with the privacy issue, pointed out the Australian Privacy Foundation. As its site privacy.org.au noted, "The company's business model is based on advertising revenue. Users pay no fees for their use of the services."

And the merger of its 60 policies apart, there is another issue worrying users — new acquisitions. As Mr Abraham pointed out, "When I was browsing Silk Smitha before YouTube was acquired by Google, I had no idea that one day this information would be known to Google."

And the issue becomes more serious in the context of a growing mobile workforce. As the Australian Privacy Foundation said, "Android mobile phones effectively trap users into having a Google user account."

Using Google services on a mobile – especially Google Latitude, a service that allows you to enable your friends to view your current location – allows Google to track your movements.

And since Google is predominantly an advertising-driven company, it could be argued that one day they might share information about you with a third party, enabling them to market to you more effectively, though this may not necessarily be done with your explicit permission – and this means that you may get an offer for products even if you have not opted in for such a service.

What can be done? Mr Abraham rued the fact that there are no specific laws to safeguard users.

"India needs privacy laws. In the US, law makers will create a fuss. In India, we are at the mercy of companies."

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Times of India, ND 1/02/2012 P-19

How did man evolve: DNA tells the true story

Faster And Cheaper Genetic Analysis Is Helping Scientists Draw A New Picture Of Human Origins

Alanna Mitchell

The tip of a girl's 40,000-year-old pinky finger found in a cold Siberian cave, paired with faster and cheaper genetic sequencing technology, is helping scientists draw a surprisingly complex new picture of human origins. The new view is fast supplanting the traditional idea that modern humans triumphantly marched out of Africa about 50,000 years ago, replacing all other types that had gone before.

Instead, the genetic analysis shows, modern humans encountered and bred with at least two groups of ancient humans in relatively recent times: the Neanderthals, who lived in Europe and Asia, dying out roughly 30,000 years ago, and a mysterious group known as the Denisovans, who lived in Asia and most likely vanished around the same time. Their DNA lives on in us even though they are extinct. "In a sense, we are a hybrid species," Chris Stringer, a paleoanthropologist who is the research leader in human origins at the Natural History Museum in London, said in an interview.

The Denisovans were first described a year ago in a groundbreaking paper in the journal Nature made possible by genetic sequencing of the girl's pinky bone and of an oddly shaped molar from a young adult. Those findings have unleashed a spate of new analyses. Scientists are trying to envision the ancient couplings and their consequences: when and where they took place, how they happened, how many produced offspring and what effect the archaic genes have on humans today. Other scientists are trying to learn more about Denisovans: who they were, where they lived and how they became extinct.

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DRAWING THE CORRECT PICTURE

A revolutionary increase in the speed and a decline in the cost of gene-sequencing technology have enabled scientists at the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology in Leipzig, Germany, to map the genomes of both the Neanderthals and the Denisovans. Comparing genomes, scientists concluded that today's humans outside Africa carry an average of 2.5% Neanderthal DNA, and that people from parts of Oceania also carry about 5% Denisovan DNA. A study published in November found that Southeast Asians carry about 1% Denisovan DNA in addition to their Neanderthal genes. It is unclear whether Denisovans and Neanderthals also interbred.

A third group of extinct humans, Homo floresiensis, nicknamed "the hobbits" because they were so small, also walked the earth until about 17,000 years ago. It is not known whether modern humans bred with them because the hot, humid climate of the Indonesian island of Flores impairs the preservation of DNA. This means that our modern era, since H floresiensis died out, is the only time in the four-million-year human history that just one type of human has been alive, said David Reich, a geneticist at Harvard Medical School.

For scientists, the epicenter of the story on human origins is the Denisova cave in Altai Mountains of Siberia, where the girl's finger bone was found. It is the only known place where three types of humans — Denisovan, Neanderthal, modern — lived. NYT NEWS SERVICE

Business Line ND 01-Feb-12 P21

Bangalore firm, Novozymes to make biofuel from seaweed

Sea6 Energy to contribute offshore cultivation technology

Anil Urs
Bangalore, Jan. 31

Global biotech major Novozymes has partnered with Bangalore-based biotech start-up Sea6 Energy for exploratory research and joint development of a process for production of biofuels from seaweed.

The research alliance is expected to develop and utilise enzymes to convert seaweed-based carbohydrates to sugar, which can then be fermented to produce ethanol for fuel, fine chemicals, proteins for food, and fertilizers for plants.

Novozymes will provide research, development besides manufacturing enzymes for the conversion process, while Sea6 Energy will contribute its offshore seaweed cultivation technology.

The company is currently being incubated at IIT-Madras at its business centre with both the biotechnology and ocean engineering departments providing vital technical inputs.

Mr Shrikumar Suryanarayan, Chairman of Sea6 Energy, said: "We have developed ocean-farming structures in south Tamil Nadu coast that are robust and versatile compared to traditional methods of seaweed cultivation. These structures can be used to create large-scale seaweed farms in offshore locations. In addition, Sea6 Energy has also pioneered approaches to fermenting the sugars derived from seaweed to produce fuel in a manner that requires minimal use of fresh water resources."

"The technology developed by us is sustainable; we have side-stepped by not using fertile land to grow weeds, use fresh water or extensive fertiliser applications. Since the country is close to Equator and has huge coastline with abundant warm sea to grow weeds, we plan to exploit it," he added.

Regarding investment and costs, Mr Suryanarayan said: "Each party bears the cost on 50:50 basis. In this partnership, we look forward to Novozymes developing an efficient enzymatic process to convert seaweed to sugar."

Commenting on the partnership, Mr Per Falholt, Executive Vice-President and CSO of Novozymes, said: "Seaweed is a natural complement to our efforts to convert other types of biomass to fuel ethanol. More than half of the dry mass in seaweed is sugar, and the potential is therefore significant."

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Times of India, ND 1/02/2012 P-19

In China schools, tiny tots face palm-reading tests

Beijing: Several kindergartens in a province in northern China are charging parents $190 for a palm-reading test that they claim can predict their toddlers' intelligence and potential, state news agency Xinhua said.

Many parents have flocked to palm readers for the test, used in kindergartens in northern Shanxi province and designed for children above the age of three months, the report said.

Parents in China are flocking to palm readers and paying $190 for assessment of their toddlers' intelligence and potential

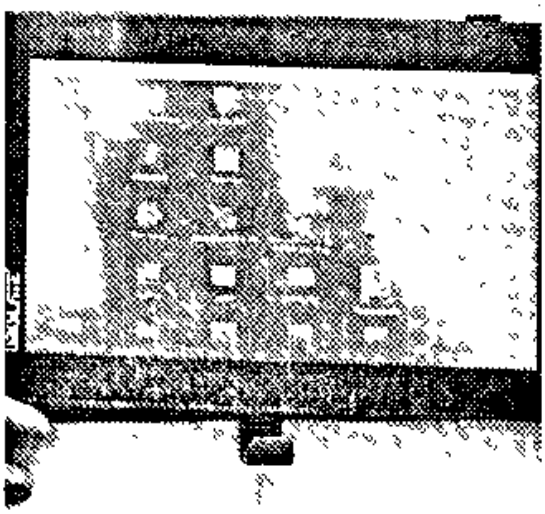
According to the company that designed the tests, Shanxi Daomeng Culture Communication Co, the reading of palms helps "determine the children's innate intelligence and potential," Xinhua news agency reported.

In Communist Party-ruled China, a one-child policy has raised the stakes for parents who place great emphasis on educating their children in the expectation that the offspring will support them when they grow old. Some experts, however, have dismissed the idea of the palm-reading technology.

"This technology remains unaccounted for," Xinhua quote a pediatrics expert as saying. Fortune-telling, including palm-reading, has deep roots in Chinese tradition, although China's leaders have discouraged and punished devotees of the practice which they brand superstition.

Many people, including government officials, seek geomancy masters' guidance on financial, career and personal matters and many Chinese couples go so far as to plan the timing of a child's birth to fall within auspicious times in the lunar calendar. REUTERS

Asian Age ND
1/02/2012 P-4



AAKASH: IT DEPT IN TENDERING PROCESS

New Delhi: The government has decided that the department of information technology will hold the tendering process for rolling out the improved version of the world's cheapest tablet PC, Aakash. The tabled is scheduled to be unveiled in April this year. The development comes in the wake of differences between IIT Rajasthan and Datawind, the manufacturer of the tablet PC, over the issue of enhanced specification demands. The HRD ministry has stated that it will require an additional 22 crore units of Aakash.

HindustanTimes
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Author : USHA ALBUQUERQUE
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Options after microbiology

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careercounselling

USHA ALBUQUERQUE

I am currently pursuing microbiology honours from Delhi University. Please let me know about the options I can explore in this field after graduation.

–Sunaina

Microbiology is the study of the growth, development and behaviour of micro-organisms so as to control and utilise them for the benefit of living beings. The range of job opportunities for microbiologists, therefore, is as diverse as the organisms they work with. Depending on the field of work you wish to pursue, you can choose the field of specialisation. Microbiologists work in laboratories and research organisations linked to hospitals, food and beverage industries, pharmaceutical companies, as well as in the field of agriculture, biotechnology, the environment and public health. After a degree in microbiology, you can go into careers in areas ranging from medicine, where microbiologists study the pathology of disease-causing organisms, to agriculture, where microbiologists can work in areas of plant development, plant disease and tissue culture.

Microbiologists also work in industry, handling the development of new chemical products and processes, in waste management and environmental controls as also in the area of marine microbiology, studying the various micro-organisms from the seas that can be used for medicinal or food resources.

Microbiologists also evaluate antibiotics and develop vaccines, and are involved in the process of drug testing and manufacture. You can pursue an MSc in microbiology or an MSc with a specialisation in the field of choice.

Jewellery design

I am pursuing a PG diploma in molecular and biochemical technology from Delhi University. I hold a BSc degree and will be appearing for the MSc entrance this year. I feel that these subjects are very exhaustive and I'm unsure whether I really want to make a career in this field. I am now thinking of changing my stream and want to take up a course in jewellery designing. Please guide me about whether it's wise to go for this switch. I want to start a business and I think it will be apt to start working for this now. Which are the eminent institutes that offer this course? Is a degree better than a diploma?

–Priya Khetarpal

You can surely move into jewellery design if you have a flair for sketching and designing, creativity, sense of colour and an eye for details. There are other certain personality traits that you can acquire such as being computer savvy, awareness of international fashion trends and an interest in fashion. This is a field where it is not so important which course – a diploma or degree –you pursue, as long as you are able to learn the skills and develop the necessary proficiency required to be successful.

There are many institutes offering specific courses in jewellery design. These include - Jewellery Product Development Centre (www.jpdc-nd.org) affiliated to the Gem & Jewellery Export Promotion Council and the Jewellery Design and Technology Institute at Noida (www.jdtiindia.com). There are several other institutes that offer courses in gemmology and jewellery design, which range in duration and intensity from two-three months to one-two years. These include the Gems and Jewellery Export Promotion Council at Jaipur (www.gtl-jaipur.info), Gemmological Institute of India at Mumbai (www.giionline.com), Jewellery Product Development Centre, Mumbai, (www.gjepc.org/education_intiative/jpde_mumbai); SNDT University, Mumbai, (www.sndt.ac.in); SG Jhaveri Centre for Diamond Technology, Mumbai; and the Indian Diamond Institute at Surat (www.diamondinstitute.net).

Courses in IPR

I am a BTech student. I want to know about online courses in intellectual property rights (IPR), which I can pursue along with my BTech degree.

–Anupam Mandelia

IP or intellectual property is today regarded as an important and effective policy instrument relevant to a wide range of socio-economic, technological and political concerns. It is for this reason that a number of business and law schools have started specialisation courses on IP. Some of these include the Indian Institute of Patent and Trademark Attorney, Delhi, (www.iipta.com); Bio-Informatics Institute of India, Noida, (www.bii.in); and Symbiosis Society's Law College, Pune, (www.symlaw.ac.in). The Global Institute of Intellectual Property, Delhi, (www.giipinfo.com); offers post graduate diploma and certificate programmes on Indian and US patents and IP laws, processes and services. IIT Kharagpur's Rajiv Gandhi School of Intellectual Property Law, (www.iitkgp.ac.in), offers a post graduate diploma in intellectual property law. Ignou, in collaboration with the World Intellectual Property Organisation, is also offering a one-year post graduate IP diploma through distance education. Details are available at (www.ignou.ac.in). A one-year PG diploma course in IPR law is also being offered by National Law School of India University, Bangalore, (www.nls.ac.in). A certificate course in IPR was launched this year by the Confederation of Indian Industries. Called Intellectual Property Capacity, this course is meant for the industry and academia. It may not be possible to pursue all these courses alongside regular graduation degree courses, much will depend on your current programmes and the time you have available for serious academic study.

The Institute of Intellectual Property Rights, Mumbai, (www.iips.ac.in), also offers a post-graduate diploma in patent law and practice and a certificate course in intellectual property. The diploma is a one-year, weekend programme while the certificate course is of four months duration.

Send your queries at htdeducation@hindustantimes.com or to Career Counselling, HT Education, 1st floor, HT House, 18-20, KG Marg, New Delhi-110001

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Bal Bharati alumni organise annual get-together

The alumni of Bal Bharati Public School gathered in large numbers for their annual get-together recently. With many of them flying in from locations across the globe, it was an evening filled with nostalgia, camaraderie and oodles of campus humour. The evening saw performances by renowned Bollywood singer Shibani Kashyap and indie-rock band, Rocktantra.

THIS WEEK'S QUESTION: Is freedom of speech really practised as a fundamental right in our country? Best answer wins a book

The HT Education's Facebook page got many answers to last week's question: Should Team Anna take to campaigning in the state polls to have the Lokpal Bill passed? Why/ why not? An excerpt from the winning response

Winner: Mukesh Rawat

It does appeal to me that Team Anna should go ahead with the said campaigning in the poll-bound states. However, considering a logical approach, I feel that instead of propagating the Lokpal issue, they should rather instigate a sense of belonging in the masses. No amount of laws can change the way individuals think and act. Corruption, to my mind, is a problem related to one's attitude and mental state, and laws alone can not be the solution to something related to the state of mind. We can have hundreds of anti-graft laws and for that matter even double the punishment for their violation, but nothing great can be achieved without ethical and psychological emancipation. A society can never develop unless its members stop being casual and negligent.

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@Harvard University: 34,285 applicants for the class of 2016 "Over 70 percent of students receive some form of financial aid." hvrd.me/yexzT7 #admissions

@Harvard Divinity: HDS student Janae Alvarez spearheaded an effort to get students involved in the annual Cambridge Homeless Census. | bit.ly/waKgiL

@GW University: Federal Reserve chairman Ben Bernanke will give a series of lectures this spring for GW undergrads. bit.ly/xEHPef #gwu

@University of Ulster: Will you be graduating from Ulster? Look out for Rory McIlroy, Sir Alex Ferguson, Sir Ian McKellen & Gary Lightbody news.ulster.ac.uk/releases/2012/...

@Tufts University: Want to know what is going on with student groups at Tufts? Keep tabs on their tweets by following our "student" list. bit.ly/xvHs0i

@Stanford Update: How high stakes corrupt performance on tests, other indicators - WPost (blog) bit.ly/weOkVP

@Oxford University: Do neuroscience techniques that appear to boost brain function raise new ethical issues? #oxsciblog investigates bit.ly/z7pz7W

@MIT Update: Increase your ability to heal yourself and others by amplifying your ability to channel reiki energy -Ad bit.ly/xt61lY

In a first, skin is transformed into brain cells

(TOI)

London: Scientists claim to have turned skin cells directly into brain cells, thus completely bypassing the need for stem cells, probably for the first time in a study on laboratory rodents.

A team at the Stanford University School of Medicine says it's "thrilled" at the potential medical uses though more tests are needed before the technique could be used on humans.

Stem cells, which can become any other specialist type of cell from brain to bone, are thought to have huge promise in a range of treatments. Many trials are taking place, but there are ethical issues around embryonic stem cells.

An alternative method has been to take skin cells and reprogramme them into "induced" stem cells. These could be made from a patient's own cells and then turned into the cell type required, however, the process results in cancer-causing genes being activated. So, the scientists are looking at another option — converting a person's own skin cells into specialist cells. PTI

Drinking milk helps boost brain power

No matter how old you are, drink at least a glass of milk everyday if you want to sharpen your mental skills, say researchers. A new study has claimed that drinking a glass of milk daily not only boosts one's intake of much-needed nutrients, but it also positively impacts one's brain power and mental performance, the 'International Dairy Journal' reported. PTI

Amar Ujala, ND
1/02/2012
P-7

आईआईटी-एनआईटी: 12वीं के अंक जरूरी

नोएडा (ब्यूरो)। वर्ष 2013-14 सत्र से आईआईटी और एनआईटी जैसे केंद्रीय तकनीकी संस्थानों के लिए एक ही प्रवेश परीक्षा की पहल को स्कूली छात्रों ने सही ठहराया है। इस साल 11वीं कक्षा की परीक्षाओं में बैठने जा रहे छात्र इस बदलाव का हिस्सा बनेंगे। एक ही प्रवेश परीक्षा इन संस्थानों में दाखिले का आधार नहीं होंगी, बल्कि 40 फीसदी वैजेट 12वीं कक्षा के अंकों को दिया जाएगा। इस तरह कॉमन मेरिट लिस्ट के आधार पर छात्रों की रैंकिंग दाखिले का आधार बनेगी।

> 40 फीसदी वैजेट 12वीं कक्षा के अंकों को दिया जाएगा

डीपीएस के 11वीं के छात्र आकाश कपूर ने बताया कि एक एंट्रेंस होने से चुनौती बढ़ जाएगी। अभिषेक कायस्थ ने बताया कि दोनों परीक्षाओं को एक करने से एक मौका कम हो जाएगा। 11वीं कक्षा के ही छात्र अमरेंद्र ने बताया कि 12वीं के अंकों को महत्व देने से छात्रों में स्कूली पढ़ाई के प्रति दिलचस्पी बढ़ेगी।

Business Standard ND 1/02/2012 p-14

पिछले साल 5 अक्टूबर को आकाश टैबलेट लॉन्च होने के बाद इसका इस्तेमाल करते छात्र-छात्राएं (बाएं) आईआईटी राजस्थान का एक छात्र टैबलेट का परीक्षण करते हुए (ऊपर), सुनीत सिंह तुली (नीचे)

आकाश में पलाश!

विश्व का सबसे सस्ता टैबलेट कहे जाने वाले आकाश को हाल में आलोचनाओं का सामना करना पड़ा है। आलोचकों का कहना है कि यह उतना बढ़िया नहीं है, लेकिन इसका उपयोग कर चुके कुछ लोग इससे इत्तफाक नहीं रखते। बता रहे हैं ऋषि राउतें...

क्या आकाश टैबलेट नाकाम रहा है? यदि पेशेवर तकनीकी समीक्षकों की मानी जाए तो आप ऐसा सोच सकते हैं। यदि आपने समाचार पत्रों में उन खबरों को पढ़ा है, जिनमें सरकार की इस किफायती एक्सेस डिवाइस (एलसीएडी) परियोजना को लागू करने वाली एजेंसी आईआईटी राजस्थान द्वारा इस टैबलेट की आलोचना की गई है, तो आप कहेंगे हां। लेकिन जब आप इसकी वेबसाइट पर लोगों द्वारा दी गई प्रतिक्रियाएं पढ़ेंगे और इसका इस्तेमाल करने वाले छात्रों से आकाश के बारे में पूछेंगे तो आपकी धारणा शायद बदल जाए।

सोनाली गर्ग चंडीगढ़ के एक कॉलेज में कॉमर्स की प्रथम वर्ष की छात्रा हैं। सोनाली उन छात्र/छात्राओं में से एक हैं, जिन्हें 5 अक्टूबर 2011 को दिल्ली में मानव संसाधन विकास मंत्री कपिल सिब्बल द्वारा पेश किए जाने के तुरंत बाद आकाश मिला था। आलम यह है कि परीक्षण के लिए दिए गए इस टैबलेट को सोनाली कॉलेज प्रशासन को लौटाना नहीं चाहती हैं। दरअसल इस टैबलेट के परीक्षण की अवधि दिसंबर में समाप्त हो रही थी लेकिन अब इसे 31 मार्च तक बढ़ा दिया गया है। हर रोज कॉलेज बंद होने के बाद अपने पिता का इंतजार करते हुए सोनाली अपनी बोरियत आकाश पर इंटरनेट सर्फ करते हुए दूर करती हैं।

अगर यह सही है तो इसका मतलब यह हुआ कि यह टैबलेट मध्य वर्ग के कॉलेज छात्रों की कम से कम मनोरंजन संबंधी जरूरतों को पूरा करने में सक्षम है। पिछले तीन महीने से यह मध्यम वर्ग से ताल्लुक रखने वाले छात्रों के लिए यह ऐसी कोशिश भी कर रहा है। छात्रों ने यह भी बताया कि टैबलेट पर इंटरनेट की स्पीड ठीक-ठाक (कुछ छात्रों की मानें तो बेहतरीन नहीं लेकिन अच्छी) है और इसे लेकर घूमने में भी कोई दिक्कत नहीं होती है। परीक्षण उपकरण होने के नाते गर्ग से इस टैबलेट के लिए कोई रकम नहीं ली गई है। लेकिन यदि यह टैबलेट कम दाम (छात्रों के लिए 1,138 रुपये और 2,999 रुपये में वाणिज्यिक संस्करण) में इतनी सुविधाएं दे रहा है, तो इसे असफल नहीं कहा जा सकता, जैसा कि कुछ लोग मान रहे हैं।

भारत में आकाश का विनिर्माण करने वाली कनाडा की कंपनी डाटाविंड के चेयरमैन और मुख्य कार्याधिकारी सुनीत सिंह तुली ने बताया था कि उनकी कंपनी को आकाश का वाणिज्यिक संस्करण, जिसका नाम यूबीआईस्लेट है, बनाने के लिए 60 लाख बुकिंग मिली हैं। इसमें से 23 लाख व्यक्तिगत बुकिंग और अन्य संस्थानों व थोक में हुई बुकिंग है।

तुली कहते हैं कि 'नकारात्मक प्रचार' के बावजूद अच्छी खासी बुकिंग हुई। वह बताते हैं कि जनवरी की शुरुआत में आकाश की आलोचनात्मक खबरें मीडिया में आने के तुरंत बाद डाटाविंड की वेबसाइट पर रोजाना बुकिंग 30,000-40,000 से बढ़कर 70,000 तक पहुंच गई। दरअसल डाटाविंड की ओर से आपूर्ति किए गए 10,000 टैबलेट में से लगभग 1,000 टैबलेट छात्रों को दिए गए थे। ये सभी खबरें आईआईटी राजस्थान की एलसीएडी टीम द्वारा आकाश पर दी गई प्रतिक्रियाओं पर आधारित थीं। टीम ने रिपोर्ट में आकाश की बैटरी की तीन घंटे से भी कम चलने का दावा किया गया था। इसके अलावा इसके टचस्क्रीन के बेहतर नहीं होने, धीमा प्रोसेसर के साथ-साथ कम ऐप्लीकेशंस और कम स्टोरेज क्षमता जैसी शिकायतें भी की गई थीं।

तुली के अनुसार आकाश मूल निविदा के प्रत्येक मानक, जिसमें 7 इंच की रेजिस्टिव टचस्क्रीन (कैपेसिटिव नहीं, जो बेहतर मगर इसके मुकाबले

> देश में आकाश का निर्माण करने वाली कनाडा की कंपनी डाटाविंड के अध्यक्ष और मुख्य कार्याधिकारी सुनीत सिंह तुली के मुताबिक उनकी कंपनी को आकाश का वाणिज्यिक संस्करण, जिसका नाम यूबीआईस्लेट है, बनाने के लिए 60 लाख बुकिंग मिली हैं। इनमें से 23 लाख व्यक्तिगत बुकिंग और अन्य संस्थानों से थोक में हुई

काफी महंगी होती है), गूगल का ऐंड्रॉयड 2.2 ऑपरेटिंग सिस्टम, 336 मेगाहर्ट्ज का प्रोसेसर, 256 एमबी का रैम, 2,100 एमएएच की बैटरी, दो यूएसबी पोर्ट, एक मेमोरी कार्ड स्लॉट और वाईफाई इंटरनेट एक्सेस शामिल हैं, पर खरा उतरता है। तुली ने कहा कि टैबलेट के स्पेसिफिकेशंस 2009 में तय किए गए थे जबकि इसकी निविदा 15 फरवरी 2011 को बंद हुई और यही समस्या है।

तुली ने एक साक्षात्कार में कहा, 'दुर्भाग्यवश ये स्पेसिफिकेशंस काफी सस्ते थे।' उन्होंने कहा, 'हमने अक्टूबर 2011 में आईआईटी राजस्थान को एक प्रस्ताव दिया था कि वे हमें तय की गई कीमत पर ही आधुनिक तकनीक वाला टैबलेट लाने की अनुमति दें। लेकिन इसके लिए हमें अतिरिक्त समय भी दिया जाए।' जाहिर है, इसकी अनुमति उन्हें नहीं दी गई।

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1 नवंबर 2011 को पीसीवेस्ट की वेबसाइट पर तकनीकी लेखक प्रशांत के रॉय द्वारा आकाश की समीक्षा प्रकाशित की गई, जिसमें उन्होंने पांच बिंदुओं पर इसकी आलोचना की थी। पहला बिंदु था 'ईकोसिस्टम' का अभाव जिसमें ऐप्लीकेशन, सामग्री, प्रशिक्षण व सहायता, विद्यालय की प्रत्येक सीट पर बिजली की उपलब्धता शामिल है। दूसरा, उन्होंने कहा कि आकाश काफी छोटा है और छात्रों के उपयोग के लिहाज से इसकी बैटरी लाइफ काफी कम है। तीसरा, उपयोगिता की दृष्टि से यह ऐपल के आईफोन से बेहतर नहीं है। चौथा, सरकारी मदद इसके तीव्र विकास और सुधार की राह में बाधा बनेगी और पांचवां, शैक्षणिक उद्देश्यों के लिहाज से यह '10 लाख डॉलर का बेहतरीन इस्तेमाल है'?

रॉय के हिसाब से इस समस्या का समाधान 'किंडल' जैसा ई-रीडर है क्योंकि इसमें पर्याप्त सामग्री पहले से ही मौजूद है। इसकी बैटरी भी बेहतर है और कुछ समय तक आसानी से चल जाती है। हालांकि, नैशनल मिशन ऑन एजुकेशन थ्रू इन्फॉर्मेशन ऐंड कम्युनिकेशन टेक्नोलॉजी यानी एनएमई-आईसीटी पहले ही कई वेबसाइट से सामग्री उपलब्ध करा रहा है और ऐप्लीकेशन तैयार करने में जुटा है। डाटाविंड के अनुसार ऐसे लगभग 1,50,000 एप्लीकेशंस उपलब्ध हैं।

चंडीगढ़ की छात्रा प्रियंका भी अपने कॉलेज के उन चुनिंदा 20 छात्रों में हैं, जिन्हें अक्टूबर 2011 में आकाश का परीक्षण संस्करण मिला। प्रियंका बताती हैं कि उनके कॉलेज परिसर में वाई फाई सुविधा है और उनके लिए आकाश के जरिये अपने कॉलेज की ई-लाइब्रेरी से जुड़ना आसान हो जाता है। वह अपने टैबलेट पर किताबों को पीडीएफ प्रारूप में पढ़ती हैं। सरकारी महिला कॉलेज में द्वितीय वर्ष की छात्रा शेफाली मॉंगा के पास भी बतौर परीक्षण आकाश टैबलेट है। वह बताती हैं कि किफायती कीमत के अलावा इसकी सबसे अच्छी बात यह है कि इसे कहीं भी ले जाना आसान है।

आकाश टैबलेट का उपयोग करने वाले विभिन्न कॉलेजों के छात्रों से मिली प्रतिक्रियाओं के आधार पर तैयार सभी रिपोर्ट आईआईटी राजस्थान भेजी गईं। एक कॉलेज ने तो अपनी रिपोर्ट में इसकी खूबियों, खामियों और इसे बेहतर बनाने के सुझावों की सूची भी भेजी। रिपोर्ट के अनुसार वाईफाई कनेक्टिविटी, स्क्रीन की गुणवत्ता, मल्टीमीडिया अनुभव और साथ लेकर चलना आसान है, जो इसकी खूबियां हैं। इसमें कहा गया है कि यह टैबलेट कक्षा में और इससे बाहर एक उपयोगी शैक्षणिक उपकरण बन सकता है। लेकिन बैटरी लाइफ कम होना, चार्ज होने में अधिक समय लेना, जीपीआरएस का अभाव, गरम या हैंग हो जाना आदि इसकी खामियां हैं। सुझावों में बताया गया कि इसे कैमरे के साथ ही 3जी इंटरनेट आदि सुविधाओं के साथ लैस करके ज्यादा रंगों में उपलब्ध कराया जाना चाहिए।

हालांकि तुली का कहना है कि उनकी कंपनी को अभी तक आईआईटी राजस्थान की ओर से कोई रिपोर्ट नहीं मिली है। आलोचनाएं झेलने के बाद जनवरी की शुरुआत में ही डाटाविंड ने घोषणा की थी कि छात्रों को उतने ही दाम पर इसका आधुनिक संस्करण आकाश 2 मुहैया कराया जाएगा जबकि इसके आधुनिक वाणिज्यिक संस्करण यूबीआईस्लेट 7+ के दाम 2,499 रुपये से बढ़ाकर 2,999 रुपये किए जाएंगे। इसके तहत कंपनी आकाश में कुछ अन्य सुविधाएं मसलन 3,200 एमएएच बैटरी, 700 मेगाहर्ट्ज का प्रोसेसर और जीपीआरएस सुविधा देगी। इन उपकरणों की आपूर्ति अगले कुछ सप्ताह में शुरू हो जाएगी और डाटाविंड ने आने वाले दिनों में इसकी मांग में बढ़ोतरी की संभावनाओं को देखते हुए क्षमता विस्तार पर काम करना भी शुरू कर दिया है।

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बहरहाल, जहां तक छात्रों की मांग का सवाल है तो इसमें अभी तक तेजी नहीं आई है। कंप्यूटर सेंटर के निदेशक तानकेश्वर कुमार के अनुसार पंजाब विश्वविद्यालय में 12,000 छात्र पढ़ाई करते हैं लेकिन महज 1,000 ने ही आकाश के लिए ऑर्डर दिए हैं। हालांकि यह आंकड़ा बढ़ रहा है। लेकिन उन्होंने कहा कि अभी तक यह स्पष्ट नहीं है कि सरकारी मदद विश्वविद्यालय तक किस प्रकार पहुंचेगी और टैबलेट का वितरण किस प्रकार किया जाएगा।

भुवनेश्वर के एक निजी उड़ीसा इंजीनियरिंग कॉलेज में 2,700 छात्र स्नातक की पढ़ाई कर रहे हैं। इनमें से 1,195 छात्रों और 133 स्टाफ सदस्यों ने आकाश के लिए पंजीकरण कराया है। ऑनलाइन प्रक्रिया के अनुसार कुछ कॉलेजों और यहां तक कि कुछ डीएवी स्कूलों में भी इसकी बुकिंग शुरू हो गई है, हालांकि इस बारे में पूरी जानकारी नहीं मिल पाई। मानव संसाधन विकास मंत्रालय की योजना पहले कॉलेज के छात्रों को टैबलेट मुहैया कराने और इसके बाद स्कूली छात्रों तक इसे पहुंचाने की है।

बहरहाल, तुली फिलहाल सरकार की ओर से फरवरी में जारी होने वाली निविदा का इंतजार कर रहे हैं। इसके तहत आकाश 2 टैबलेट की 20 लाख इकाइयों की आपूर्ति की जाएगी और तुली को उम्मीद है कि उनकी कंपनी इस निविदा में सफल होगी। इस निविदा का प्रबंधन आईआईटी राजस्थान नहीं करेगा। उनके अनुसार कंपनी को किफायती कंप्यूटिंग के बाजार से काफी लाभ मिल सकता है।

तुली कहते हैं, 'आप यह नहीं कह सकते हैं कि 3,000 रुपये में मुझे ऐसा फोन मिल जाएगा, जिसमें ये सभी सुविधाएं होंगी। सबसे सस्ता स्मार्टफोन आकाश से दोगुनी कीमत का है। ऐसे सस्ते स्मार्टफोन में इंटरनेट स्पीड भी तेज नहीं होती है और इसकी एचडी की गुणवत्ता भी बेहतर नहीं होती है। ऐसे फोन की स्क्रीन भी छोटी होती है। इतने दाम में आकाश के अलावा और कुछ भी नहीं है।' उन्होंने कहा कि हर छह महीने में डाटाविंड आकाश का नया और अपडेटेड संस्करण पेश करेगी। ऐसे में आकाश को असफल करार देना सही नहीं है। शायद यह कहना ज्यादा मुनासिब होगा कि यह ऐसा वादा है, जो अभी पूरा नहीं हुआ है।

(साथ में चंडीगढ़ से विकास शर्मा)

Dainik Bhasker ND 1/02/2012 p-5

आईपैड -2 की तर्ज पर आएंगे दस लाख नए 'आकाश'

नए फीचर के साथ पुरानी कीमत बनाए रखने की चुनौती

पंकज कुमार पांडेय | नई दिल्ली

चुनावी मुहिम में छात्रों को टैबलेट और लैपटॉप बांटने की लुभावनी घोषणाओं के बीच टैबलेट 'आकाश' का फंडा शुरू करने वाले मानव संसाधन मंत्री कपिल सिब्बल छात्रों के लिए दस लाख नए आकाश मंगाने की तैयारी में हैं। इसके लिए बुधवार को सूचना-प्रौद्योगिकी व संचार मंत्रालय में एक बैठक बुलाई गई है। आईपैड-2 की तर्ज पर नए फीचर्स से लैस आकाश के ऑर्डर का काम आईटी महकमा ही देखेगा। हालांकि किन छात्रों, कॉलेजों को टैबलेट दिया जाना है इसकी सूची मानव संसाधन मंत्रालय ही भेजेगा।

आईआईटी जोधपुर तकनीकी विशेषज्ञता तक सीमित

एक बड़े अधिकारी के मुताबिक आकाश के मामले में आईआईटी जोधपुर को पूरी जिम्मेदारी दी गई थी। लेकिन अनुभव के आधार पर मंत्रालय मान रहा है कि मार्केटिंग और करार से जुड़े काम आईआईटी जोधपुर से नहीं हो सकता। लिहाजा उसे तकनीकी विशेषज्ञता में सहयोग देने तक ही सीमित रखा जा रहा है। डेटा विंड कंपनी के साथ करार के खराब अनुभवों को देखते हुए अब नया ऑर्डर किसे दिया जाए, इसकी पड़ताल करने की कमान आईटी महकमे को ही सौंपी जा रही है।

डेटा विंड को समय से पूरा करना होगा ऑर्डर

पहले दिए गए एक लाख आकाश के ऑर्डर में बचे 70 हजार टैबलेट की सप्लाई के लिए भी डेटा विंड कंपनी को 31 मार्च की समय सीमा दी गई है। इस अवधि में अगर कंपनी ऑर्डर पूरा नहीं करती तो उसके साथ करार की फिर से समीक्षा की जाएगी।

ऐसा होगा नया आकाश

नए दस लाख आकाश में प्रोसेसर की क्षमता बढ़ाई जाएगी। पहले इसकी सीमा 766 मेगा हर्टज थी। इसे बढ़ाकर 1.2 गीगी हर्टज करने की योजना है। टच स्क्रीन पहले से ज्यादा असरदार होगी। इम्प्रूव वर्जन में कीमत से कोई समझौता नहीं होगा। गौरतलब है कि डेटा विंड के साथ आकाश के ऑर्डर में कई तरह की अड़चनें आ गई थीं। वितरित किए गए टैबलेट की खामियों को लेकर कई तरह के सवाल उठाए जा रहे थे। अपग्रेड वर्जन के साथ ऑर्डर पूरा करने में कंपनी ना-नुकर कर रही थी। पिछले दिनों अड़चन दूर करने के लिए सिब्बल ने एक बैठक भी बुलाई थी।