

Newspaper Clips

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Unfit deemed univs unlikely to pass muster

Akshaya Mukul | TNN

New Delhi: The human resource development (HRD) ministry's notice to 44 deemed universities points out specific deficiency suffered by each one of them.

Some of the deficiencies — first cited by P N Tandon review committee in 2009 — are difficult to overcome in just over a year. What can add to the woes of these institutions is the fact that the same Tandon panel will evaluate their responses to the notice.

The new committee set up by the HRD ministry on Wednesday, sources said, is not of experts but officials who will not only hear out the institutions but also base their report for the Supreme Court on the advice of experts. Sources cited few instances regarding shortcomings that are difficult to overcome.

For example, a deemed university from Haryana has been asked to explain fragmented courses run by it to "admit large number of students for commercial gains". This deemed varsity has 1,300 students in unrecognised courses. Out of the total faculty of 1,047, only 70 have doctoral degree. Also, only 21 research publications have found their place in Scopus — the largest abstract and citation database of peer-reviewed literature.

To make matters worse, the university runs distance education programme without the approval of University Grants Commission, All India Council of Technical Education and Distance Education Council.

In case of another Uttarakhand deemed university, the ministry has asked why it started as an engineering college, and then branched out to "run-of-the-mill" academic courses deviating from its mandate.

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Looking at source can cut pain, says study

Many people prefer to look away during a painful event such as an injection. But, scientists have claimed that looking at your body at that time reduces the pain experienced. Researchers at the University College London and University of Milan-Bicocca also found that magnifying the body portion – the hand in case of an injection – to make it appear larger cut pain levels further still. The study, the researchers said, sheds light on how brain processes pain and could lead to new treatments.

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Higher level of male hormone lowers empathy

London: Scientists have discovered that male sex hormone testosterone influences the ability to empathise with others, a finding which they say could lead to new drugs and treatments for conditions like autism.

A team of British and Dutch scientists, who gave women a small dose of testosterone, found that it makes them less able to empathise with others. The researchers said their findings add weight to the theory that the hormone is significant in the development of autism and could lead to new treatments for the condition, the BBC reported.

For their study, the team from University of Cambridge in UK and Utrecht University of The Netherlands recruited 16 women volunteers who were given a small dose of the male hormone. It was found that the women were less able to judge the mood of facial expressions they were shown, an indication that suggests

After women were given a small dose of testosterone, it was found that it makes them less able to empathise with others. This finding could lead to new drugs for autism

exposure to the hormone in the womb may be key.

Autism is a disorder which, to varying degrees, affects the ability of children and adults to communicate and interact socially.

While genes linked to the condition have been found, precise combination of genetics and other environmental factors which produce autism is unclear. The rate of autism is much higher among boys than it is among girls. Women, on average, have lower levels of the male sex hormone testosterone than men. ¶¶

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Diet soda raises heart attack risk

Also Ups Chances Of Strokes, Says Study

London: Diet soda may be a wise choice for those who are keen to look after their health, but a new study has claimed that sugar-free fizzy drinks could actually raise the risk of having a heart attack or stroke.

The study of more than 2,500 people found that those who had diet drinks every day were 61% more likely to get vascular problems than those who did not have any carbonated drinks. "If our results are confirmed with future studies, then it would suggest that diet soda may not be the optimal substitute for sugar-sweetened beverages for protection against vascular outcomes," said researcher Hannah Gardener, an epidemiologist at the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine.

For their study, Gardener and colleagues recruited about 2,560 participants who had to report whether they drank diet fizzy drinks, regular fizzy drinks, a mixture of the two or none at all, the Daily Mail reported. The researchers, however, said the survey did not include data on the types of diet and regular drinks consumed, which could have given further information on how drinking different brands affected participants.

Doctors have no chemical or biological explanation for why diet soda may be risky. It could be that people who drink lots of it also fail to exercise, weigh more, drink more alcohol or have other risk factors like high blood pressure and smoking. However, the researchers took these and many other factors into account and didn't see a change in the trend.

Further studies would have to be carried out to explore how consuming diet drinks potentially raised the risk of vascular problems, said Gardener. Sharlin Ahmed, from The Stroke



FAT CHANCE: The study of more than 2,500 people found that those who had diet drinks every day were 61% more likely to get vascular problems than those who did not have any carbonated drinks

Association, said: "According to this study, drinking diet fizzy drinks on a regular basis could pose the same or even higher risk for cardiovascular disease as standard fizzy drinks, providing a word of warning to those who often opt for diet versions in order to be 'healthy'." "Everyone can reduce their risk of stroke by consuming a balanced diet and exercising regularly," Ahmed added.

Earlier studies have tied diet and regular soda consumption and greater risk of diabetes and a group of weight-related problems. ❧

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Curry cure: Turmeric can rebuild brain after stroke

Washington: Studies on animals suggest that a new hybrid drug, made in part from the chemical in the yellow spice turmeric, could help regenerate brain cells after a stroke, according to US researchers.

The molecular compound is made with curcumin, a yellow pigment that originates from turmeric. Human trials on the drug, which works by restoring pathways that feed neurons, could begin soon, according to scientist Paul Lapchak.

The new drug does not attack clots, but if administered to rabbits in one hour, which translates to three hours in human time, it "reduced stroke-caused 'motor deficits' — problems of muscle and movement control," the study said.

The compound, CNB-001, "crosses blood-brain barrier, is quickly distributed in the brain, and moderates mechanisms involved in neuronal survival," Lapchak said. The findings were presented at the American Heart Association International Stroke Conference. AFP

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April 13, 2036 date for Armageddon?

Melbourne: Russian scientists have predicted that the asteroid Apophis is most likely to hit Earth on April 13, 2036.

"Apophis will approach Earth at a distance of 37,000-38,000 kilometres on April 13, 2029," News.com.au quoted professor Leonid Sokolov of the St Petersburg State University as telling Ria Novosti.

"Its likely collision with Earth may occur on April 13, 2036," Sokolov added. Asteroid 99942 Apophis was first discovered to be

The asteroid Apophis is likely to hit Earth on April 13, 2036. At 300m wide, it is estimated to hit Earth with the force of two massive volcanic eruptions

in the Earth's impact zone back in 2004, and at roughly 300m wide, is estimated to be able to hit the Earth

with the force equivalent to somewhere around two Krakatoas.

The asteroid could land anywhere in a streak that runs from the Middle East through the tip of South America to the west coast of Africa, according to a paper delivered to the 2007 Planetary Defense Conference.

A simulation tool devised by the University of Southampton in the UK shows that, depending on where it hits, it could cause up to 10 million deaths. ANI

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Top scores in CAT, but not good enough for IIMs

ht FOLLOW UP

Charu Sudan Kasturi

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NEW DELHI: Deepesh Dhoundiyal's gamble in leaving a secure job in an insecure economy to study for the Common Admission Test (CAT) appeared to have paid off mid-January when his test score placed him among the top 1,000 candidates.

Less than a month later, the Delhi-based engineer is distraught, sitting at home preparing for job interviews, his dream of studying at the prestigious Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs) shattered despite a 99.49 percentile CAT score.

About 9,000 students with CAT scores below his will, however, be appearing for the second stage of IIM admissions.

A draft of pre-exam criteria that the IIMs either changed or

never disclosed till after the CAT results were announced, as HT reported on Wednesday, have denied 24-year-old Dhoundiyal and others like him seats.

"I would never have quit my job if I knew that the IIMs would set eligibility criteria that my past academic records do not allow me to meet irrespective of my CAT score. Why couldn't the IIMs announce these criteria earlier," asked Dhoundiyal, who worked in

Why couldn't the IIMs announce these criteria earlier?

DEEPESH DHOUNDIYAL,
rejected topper

Ahmedabad at a top oil and petroleum firm.

These students — with CAT 2010 scores of over 99 percentile but denied calls for the second stage of IIM admissions because of unspecified or changed pre-

exam criteria — are forming a group and plan to approach the Supreme Court to seek a stay on the second stage of IIM admissions.

The eligibility was listed — and is still listed on the official CAT website — as 50% in the bachelor's degree. But the IIMs in Rohtak, Trichy and Shillong announced higher bachelor's degree marks as eligibility criteria to be considered, after the CAT results were announced. These higher cri-

teria varied from 65% in IIMs in Rohtak and Trichy to 87% in IIM Shillong.

The other IIMs are calculating eligibility for the second stage of admissions using weights given to class X, class XII and bachelor's degree scores also announced after the declaration of CAT results.

Top IIM officials are accepting that the students may have a "legitimate argument," but are insisting that there had been no discrimination.

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TRI-VALLEY STUDENTS CAN STAY; US WORKS OUT OPTIONS

Yashwant Raj

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WASHINGTON: A sense of relief swept through the hundreds of Indian students of the shuttered Tri-Valley University with the US authorities on Wednesday announcing guidelines enabling them to apply to be allowed to stay and study.

They are not being put on the first flight home, as most of them feared.

"Students who contact SEVP (Student and Exchange Visa Program) representatives will be advised they have three options," US immigration and customs spokesperson Virginia Kice told HT.

One of the affected students called the announcement a "great opportunity".

About 1,500 students — mostly from India — were left without a valid status to stay here in the US after their university was raided for allegedly running an immigration racket enabling job-seekers to come in as students. A few of them were detained for questioning by Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents, and radio-tagged.

The rest feared the worst, arrest or deportation — or both. The three options before them now are:

One: Students who contact ICE to be processed for voluntary departure can choose when they want to leave and will remain in the US until without the fear of being arrested. "And this keeps their immigration history clean," Kice said. Does this mean these students can go home, start the process all over again, apply to a US university and return if accepted? Not clear.

Two: Leave the US on your own.

Three: Stay and file for re-instatement of the status as student with the US Citizenship and Immigration Services.

The authorities will decide this on a case-by-case basis and much will depend on admissions.

Clock starts ticking for UGC

COUNTDOWN Part of reason behind winding down UGC is that institution came under a cloud

Charu Sudan Kasturi

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NEW DELHI: The wait has begun for the quiet burial of the country's apex higher education regulator. In a clear signal of the winding down of the 54-year-old behemoth, the government plans to avoid appointing a full-fledged chairman to the University Grants Commission after economist Sukhdeo Thorat, officials concede.

The proposed National Commission for Higher Education and Research (NCHER) will subsume many of the roles of the UGC and other regulators, including the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE).

"But the end of the UGC is more than just the creation of a new regulator. It epitomises the end of an era when the government micro-managed higher education. We now want to act as a facilitator," a senior government official said.

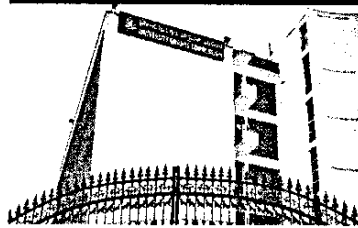
While the NCHER will set standards in higher education, the new regulator will relinquish direct control of many other functions of the UGC, including funding universities and testing candidates for teaching jobs.

The NCHER will act against institutions on complaints under a self-disclosure regime that human resource development minister Kapil Sibal is pushing. But the change in philosophy of the Centre isn't the only reason behind the decision to wind down the UGC and AICTE.

The recommendations of the National Knowledge Commission and the Yash Pal Committee — both set up by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh — to replace these institutions with a single overarching regulator came amid a corruption cloud over Indian higher education. AICTE chairman RA Yadav was suspended and is set to be prosecuted by the CBI.

Thorat, who ended his tenure at the

UGC: MILESTONE YEARS



■ UGC building in New Delhi FILE PHOTO

- 2008: PM sets up panel under eminent physicist and former UGC chairman Yash Pal to propose a blueprint to reform higher education
- 2009: Yash Pal panel seconds National Knowledge Council proposal on replacing multiple regulators. President announces — in her first speech to Parliament in UPA-II — that the government will create a single regulator
- 2011: Process of closing down UGC begins — government does not appoint a full-fledged chairman to UGC.

UGC earlier this week, has faced repeated corruption allegations though he has rejected all charges.

IAS officer Raju Sharma was repatriated from his post as UGC secretary after he locked horns with Thorat, accusing him of corruption in a ₹230-crore e-governance project and in the award of recognition to deemed universities.

Final nail in the UGC's coffin possibly came from differences that emerged between the regulator and the HRD ministry over the mess in deemed universities — for which the Centre blames UGC.

The minutes of a meeting of the parliamentary standing committee on HRD on a proposed law to punish colleges that cheat or mislead students state that Thorat told the panel the UGC was not consulted by the Centre.

Thorat has subsequently changed his stance, and said he had clarified to the panel that the UGC had been consulted. The damage, however, has been done.

big picture

A CLOSE LOOK AT ISSUES THAT MATTER



Business Line ND 11/02/2011 P-24

Scientists recreate heart defect in laboratory

Reuters

Chicago, Feb. 10

Using skin cells taken from children with a rare heart defect, US researchers have created beating heart cells in the lab with the same heart defect, allowing researchers to test new drugs in human cells instead of mice.

While most heart drugs had no effect on the cells, a cancer drug being studied by Cyclacel Pharmaceuticals Inc appears to help, the team led by Ricardo Dolmetsch of Stanford University reported on Wednesday in the journal *Nature*.

The study is among the first to use powerful new technology to create human models of disease by reprogramming ordinary cells to behave like embryonic stem cells, the body's master cells that can give rise

▶ *While most heart drugs had no effect on the cells, a cancer drug being studied by Cyclacel Pharmaceuticals Inc appears to help.*

to any tissue in the body.

"Because every cell in our body has the same genetic programming, that means we can take skin cells and reprogram them to generate stem cells, and we can take those cells to make heart cells," Dolmetsch said in a telephone interview.

Discovered in 2006, induced pluripotent stem cells or iPS cells can be collected from people with genetic diseases and grown in batches that live for months and years in the lab.

Dolmetsch's team collected skin cells from children with Timothy syndrome, a rare genetic disorder that causes au-

tism and long QT syndrome, a defect in the timing of the heart's contractions that makes the heart beat out of sync.

People with long QT syndrome have irregular heart beats and are vulnerable to ventricle fibrillation, a potentially deadly heart rhythm in which the heart beats chaotically.

"We generated these reprogrammed cells from these kids and over the last four years or so we developed these methods for converting these cells into cardiac cells," Dolmetsch said.

Hindustan ND

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आईआईटी को दिखानी होगी प्रवेश परीक्षा की उत्तर पुस्तिका

नई दिल्ली। तकनीकी विकास को नई उड़ान देने के लिए दुनियाभर में अपना लोहा मनवा चुके इंडियन इंस्टीट्यूट ऑफ इंजीनियरिंग (आईआईटी) में पढ़ाई के लिए प्रवेश परीक्षा में असफल रहे छात्रों को यह पता चल जाएगा कि आखिर उनसे चूक कहां हुई।

गलतियों और चूक को सुधार कर छात्र नये सिरे से तैयारी कर अब आईआईटी में प्रवेश पाने के अपने सपने को सकार कर सकते हैं। दिल्ली हाईकोर्ट ने अपने महत्वपूर्ण फैसले में कहा है कि आईआईटी कॉलेजों को प्रवेश परीक्षा में शामिल होने वाले छात्रों को उत्तर-पुस्तिका (ओएमआर शीट) दिखानी होगा। न्यायमूर्ति एस. मुरालीधर ने केन्द्रीय सूचना आयोग के फैसले को बरकरार रखते हुए आईआईटी की अपील को खारिज कर दिया है। आईआईटी द्वारा खुद को सूचना कानून के दायरे से बाहर बताए जाने के दलील को हाईकोर्ट ने कहा कि यदि सबकुछ सही है तो उत्तर पुस्तिका दिखाने में एतराज नहीं होना चाहिए। हाईकोर्ट ने यह भी कहा कि प्रवेश परीक्षा देने वाले छात्र यदि खुद से अपनी उत्तर-पुस्तिका देखेंगे तो किसी अन्य छात्रों को नुकसान नहीं होगा। (का.सं)