

# Newspaper Clips

## February 17-18, 2013

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# Nobel laureate says Food Bill is weak on children's entitlements

Girija Shivakumar

**NEW DELHI:** Nobel laureate Amartya Sen on Friday said the idea of a National Food Security Bill was "a matter of appreciation and support" and the tabling of the Bill in Parliament was a big achievement in itself. Dr. Sen was addressing 1,500 students and faculty members at IIT-Delhi.

However, he noted several shortcomings in the Bill, especially with regard to children's entitlements.

Stressing the significance of early childhood for ensuring lifetime health and well-

being, Dr. Sen said children's entitlements under the Bill were weak.

Present at this panel discussion on "Hunger and Nutrition: Time to Act" were Montek Singh Ahluwalia, Deputy Chairman, Planning Commission, and Shantha Sinha, Chairperson, National Commission for the Protection of Child Rights.

"The country can afford a reduction in subsidy. For example, we may not be able to subsidise petroleum [and] can do without it," said Mr. Ahluwalia.

He said the amount of subsidy provided by the gov-

ernment was around Rs.74,000 crore for 2011-12. The proposed Bill would require an additional Rs.20,000 crore. The Bill would be introduced in the budget session of Parliament, which begins on February 21.


"I don't think the government or anyone else should say that we can't afford the food subsidy because of the fiscal deficit... that would be actually dishonest," said Mr. Ahluwalia.

Pointing to the politics behind subsidies, Dr. Sen said that while there were powerful lobbies for diesel

and LPG subsidies, and exemptions of customs duties on gold imports, there was none for children's rights. This reflected not only the imbalances arising from power and influence but also those in spending priorities.

Dr. Sen argued that the improved practice of democracy was the way to bring constructive change. He cautioned that health, nutrition and elementary education were important in themselves as well as for long-run economic success. Neglecting children was unjust and an economic blunder.

# Hi-tech IIT power unit to be set up in village school



**RED HOT RESEARCH**

**SOLAR THERMAL PROJECT**

**IIT-Madras and IIT-Roorkee**  
Setting up a direct steam generation-based 500KW solar thermal power plant

**IIT-Bombay**  
Liquid desiccant-based solar airconditioning system of 30 tonne capacity

**IIT-Guwahati**  
Thermal storage system of 3 gigajoules (GJ) capacity

Cost **₹15cr**

Model unit to be set up at Pathashaala School, Chengalpet

M Ramya | TNN

**Chennai:** A solar thermal plant that will push the envelope for hi-tech power generation in the country will be set up in a school in Vallipuram, 17km from Chengalpet, and even farther from the advanced facilities people in a metropolis like Chennai use every day.

The unit, being set up as part of the Pan-IIT Solar Thermal Project and funded by the department of science and technology, will demonstrate research by students from the campuses of Indian Institutes of Technology in Bombay, Guwahati, Roorkee and Madras.

When the ₹15-crore model unit is up and running at Pathashaala School, it will generate enough power to meet the requirements of the school. The steam-based thermal power plant will meet the needs of Vallipuram and villages nearby.

It will also have a liquid desiccant-based solar airconditioning system and a thermal storage system that uses technology developed by the students.

IIT-Madras and IIT-Roorkee will work on direct steam generation with solar energy and team from IIT-Bombay will develop the solar airconditioning system. IIT-Guwahati will work on the thermal storage system.

"This will be the first time in the country that someone is attempting to achieve extremely high temperatures," said project coord-

inator T Sundararajan, head of the mechanical engineering department at IIT-M. He said this would involve the use of a lot of "first-time technologies".

Achieving high temperatures has been a challenge, he said, because it requires the use of materials such as evacuated tubes to withstand intense heat. "Another area that requires special technology is to minimise heat loss. This is done by using a special coating on the components," Sundararajan said.

IIT officials said the system, which the researchers wanted to be put to good use, required a lot of open land. Pathashaala, which has an expansive campus, was ideal for the project and its administrators offered the researchers an acre of land to set up the system.

The demo facility at the school will also be used for research, though a lab-scale facility will be set up at IIT-M. The research work will continue to be conducted at the IITs and integrated into the system in the school.

In the first phase of the project, researchers will set up a 50KW solar energy system. The output will meet the school's power requirements for cooking and washing. The system will be upgraded to a 500KW turbine system.

The foundation stone for the pilot system will be laid by department of science and technology secretary T Ramasami on Sunday.

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# Crowd-pullers in Kharagpur

CrowdBeans offers an alternative way to test mobile applications. They distribute the apps to be tested to a crowd, which checks and reports bugs. Testers get paid for every bug reported

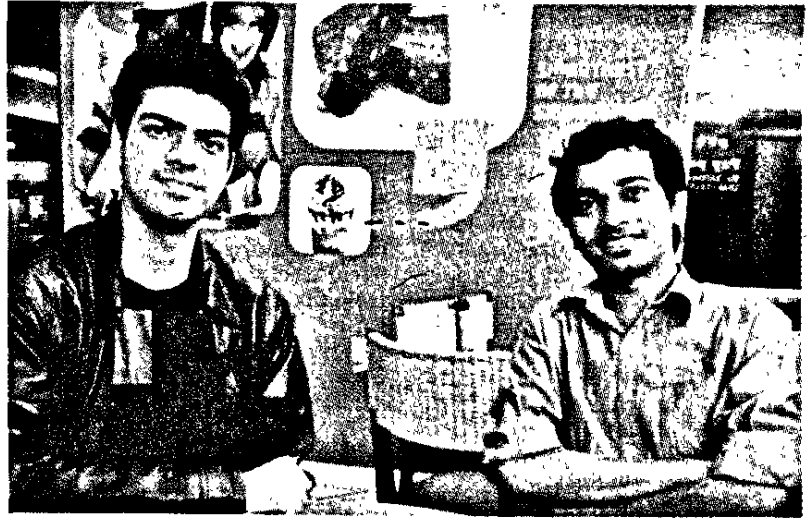
**A**MRITANSHU ANAND and Anshul Singhal have the best possible ecosystem needed to start a company. They are students at the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Kharagpur, where incubating start-ups are the norm. There are currently close to a dozen start-ups on the campus and the number is only increasing. The campus proved to be a fertile ground for Anand and Singhal, too, to seed their business called CrowdBeans, which offers an alternative way to test mobile applications. The campus also gives them access to a large universe of IIT alumni to link with and learn from, besides access to ideas and, when needed, a door to angel investors and seed funds.

Anand acknowledges that being at IIT has its advantages when it comes to ideating, networking and mentoring. Even though he is privileged to be a part of the institute, things back home in Patna, Bihar, are changing too, says Anand, with more

and more college students looking at start-up options.

Engineering colleges have also started adapting to the trend, says Anand. Lots of youngsters, who left the state to work in IT hubs, are now returning to set up their own companies, he says, and there are today many start-ups in the fields of education and agriculture, among others. But it's a trend that will take some time to build up.

A fourth-year student studying earth sciences, Anand says CrowdBeans, a crowd-powered mobile app testing platform, provides in-the-wild testing services that span the entire software development lifecycle, including functional, security, load, localisation and usability testing. So far, CrowdBeans has created a community of 200 testers, all from IIT Kharagpur, who put mobile applications through their paces by testing on real devices under real-world conditions. The CrowdBeans community provides developers a chance to test their



Amritanshu Anand and Anshul Singhal are students at the Indian Institute of Technology, Kharagpur

apps on various platforms and across a wide range of handsets. It speeds up the whole testing process, taking just 15-25 days instead of the usual 45. The costs are much lower too.

While developing mobile applications, the challenge is to test whether these apps work well on various mobile phones and their variants, besides spotting bugs and fixing them before launching the applications. It is tough and expensive for those developing apps to have access to a vast range of smartphones and their different versions. They

have to depend on their family and friends, a method that's not very reliable. Using professional testers also involves more cost, besides a lot of effort and time.

Therefore, Anand's idea was to distribute the app to be tested to a crowd. This crowd could be from anywhere in the country and would have different kinds of phones. The people in the crowd check the compatibility of these applications with their phones and send reports for which they are compensated. Testers get paid for every bug reported.

Mail Today ND 17/02/2013 P-20

# Heat on IIPM head for slamming UGC

By Ritika Chopra in New Delhi

ARINDAM Chaudhuri, head of Indian Institute of Planning and Management (IIPM), on Saturday kicked up a row describing University Grants Commission (UGC) and the All India Council of Technical Education (AICTE) "full of bribe-seeking corrupt officials".

Chaudhuri attacked the two regulatory bodies a day after the government ordered Internet Service Providers (ISPs) to block 78 URLs, of which 73 had content on IIPM.

He said: "With respect to UGC links, I should say UGC and AICTE are organisations full of bribe-seeking corrupt officials where, even at the top, they have a track record of being caught red-handed and being jailed. The standard of education they have created in the nation is shameful, to say the least. IIPM is proud to have no affiliation with them."

The comments have irked the heads of UGC and AICTE. "It's a very irresponsible



UGC and AICTE are organisations full of bribe-seeking officials where they have a track record of being caught red-handed and jailed. The standard of education they have created is shameful. IIPM is proud to have no affiliation with them.

—Arindam Chaudhuri,  
IIPM director

statement and I take strong exception to that. I will speak to my lawyer to see what legal action can be taken," Ved Prakash, UGC chairman told MAIL TODAY.

Echoing Prakash's view, S.S. Mantha, chairman, AICTE, said "You cannot absolve yourself of doing something illegal by declaring it publicly."

Chaudhuri's rant stems from the fact

that both AICTE and UGC have repeatedly issued public notices informing that IIPM is not recognised by them and hence its technical programmes are not valid.

The blocked URLs also include the UGC notifications. Complying with the Gwalior court order, ministry of communications and IT issued the order for blocking the URLs.

HT Lucknow

## Are varsity campuses safe for girls? UGC seeks to know

HT Correspondent

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**LUCKNOW:** At a time when the nation is drawing a new road map for women's safety, the University Grants Commission (UGC), the apex body for regulation of higher education in India, too has decided to play an active role.

As step one, it has sought details of complaints of sexual harassment registered in universities and institutions across the country.

In a missive sent by chairman Prof Ved Prakash, the UGC has asked institutions to provide wide-ranging information on the issue of women security on cam-

pus including whether they have a mechanism to deal with cases of women security and sexual harassment.

The missive is supplemented with a four-page questionnaire to be answered by vice-chancellors and principals and sent back to it through e-mails by March 4.

A task force formed to recommend measures on women safety and gender sensitisation on campuses across the country would assess the feedback.

The set of questions prepared by UGC are aimed at identifying inadequacies in existing procedures and practices.

The questionnaire is full of queries ranging from the num-



■ Safety of girl students is on UGC's agenda.

ber of women students enrolled, public transport, toilet facilities, accommodation and health facilities available for them.

One of the questions asked is whether there are different timings for boys and girls hostellers

to return to hostels.

"What are the differences in the rules for each? For example the number of 'late nights' and 'night outs' allowed," reads one of the questions.

The UGC questionnaire is a follow-up of various initiatives undertaken and planned by the commission post-Delhi bus gangrape incident.

The UGC missive makes it clear that the special task force would like to visit campuses to interact with officials, teachers and also students "to learn how best it can facilitate and support the task for the improvement of existing mechanisms of redressal." Details of policy and procedure for dealing with sexual

harassment including efforts made to publicise it, number of meetings of the panel held, number of complaints received during the past two years, their outcome, etc all have been asked by the UGC.

Institutes have also been asked to provide information on measures which they have in place for raising awareness against harassment or violence in institutions.

Answering these questions could well prove embarrassing for many institutions and its constituent colleges having poor mechanisms and facilities for women. That many universities lack common rooms and an adequate toilet for female students is a fact common otherwise.

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**WHISTLEBLOWER ROW**

# IIT paid ₹6L extra to Inquiry Officer for five meetings

DEEPAK KUMAR JHA ■ NEW DELHI

In defiance of a Central Government order, the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Kharagpur made excessive payment to the Inquiry Officer (IO) of the case related to IIT whistleblower Professor Rajeev Kumar.

A retired judge of Calcutta High Court, the IO was paid ₹7 lakh for five inquiry meetings. The HRD Ministry has taken cognisance of the act by the institute which has defied the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) order dated July 31, 2012. The order stipulates a maximum of ₹75,000 that any inquiry office can be paid.

This is the second defiance of Central Government directives by IIT Kharagpur pertaining to the inquiry proceedings against suspended Professor Rajeev Kumar of Computer Science & Engineering. Last week the institute defied HRD Ministry directives to place the procedural matter of allegations against Kumar before the Visitor (President of India) for a review. After four months, the institute responded to the Ministry saying an inquiry has already been conducted against the whistleblower and report submitted to IIT Kharagpur Director

**The HRD Ministry has taken cognisance of the act by the institute which has defied the DoPT order that stipulates a maximum sum of ₹75,000 that any inquiry office can be paid**

The board of governors of IIT Kharagpur will now meet on March 23, 2013 to decide on further action.

Kumar was suspended on May 13, 2011 on charges of misrepresenting and defaming the institute. The institute then appointed Retired Judge Ronojit Mitra as the Chairman of one-man "Standing" Enquiry Committee for all disciplinary cases against faculty and officers of the Institute.

The said payment to the IO also includes an amount of ₹2, 05,000 at three stages when the proceedings was at very initial stage taking the total amount paid to ₹7, 05,000. The DoPT office memorandum (OM), dated 31/07/12, fixed a ceiling of maximum ₹75,000 per case for the retired judge as IOs. "The DoPT OM

is applicable to autonomous bodies, including IITs. They may retain their own provisions so long as they are not more beneficial than what has been proposed in this DoPT orders," said a top HRD Ministry official.

According to the information made available to the HRD Ministry, the official said that in addition to the above excess payments, the IO was even provided facilities like free transport and all other kind of hospitality extended which do not fall within the purview of the order.

Ironically, it has also been brought to the notice of HRD Ministry, Council of IIT and CVC that four of the five Inquiry meetings were conducted on the hearing days of a case of IIT Kharagpur vs. CIC & Others in which under suspension professor Rajeev Kumar had to appear in-person as he is the sole respondent in Calcutta High Court.

As a whistleblower, Kumar had pointed discrepancies in the Joint Entrance Examination (JEE) towards IITs. He was hailed as an "unsung hero" last year by the Supreme Court regarded Kumar as an 'unsung hero' for revealing the flaws in the JEE and also asked the IITs to water-tight the entrance test.

Times of India ND 18/02/2013 p-6

# Jamia VC for original research

**New Delhi:** The quality of higher education in India is worrisome with the accent more on “job-oriented courses” rather than “broad-based, good, solid education backed by original quality research”, says Jamia Millia Islamic vice-chancellor Najeeb Jung.

“I am concerned about the quality of teachers coming into higher education in the country,” said Jung, reflecting a concern recently expressed by no less a person than President Pranab Mukherjee. Jung said the present changes being done in the education system were “pretty cosmetic” and felt private universities had “no commitment to higher education” at all.

“We are not looking at the quality of research that the faculty should be doing. You cannot progress higher education unless there is original quality research,” Jung said in an interview at his office.

Jung, who was the chairman of the core committee of vice-chancellors formed by the HRD ministry to map out improvement in the higher education sector, felt that whatever changes brought about by universities, like semester system and making the bachelors course a four-year one, were cosmetic.

“I still think that this is pretty cosmetic. I really think that we are not talking of broad-based, good, solid education. I think that people are focussing on their own particular subject.” IANS

# Meteor fall a warning against space threats

William J Broad

For decades, scientists have been on the lookout for killer objects from outer space that could devastate the planet. But warnings that they lacked the tools to detect the most serious threats were largely ignored, even as skeptics mocked the worriers as Chicken Littles.

No more. The meteor that rattled Siberia on Friday, injuring hundreds of people and traumatizing thousands, has suddenly brought new life to efforts to deploy adequate detection tools, in particular a space telescope that would scan the solar system for dangers.

A group of young Silicon Valley entrepreneurs who helped build thriving companies like eBay, Google and Facebook has already put millions of dollars into the effort and saw Friday's shock wave as a turning point in raising hundreds of millions more.

"Wouldn't it be silly if we got wiped out because we weren't looking?" said Edward Lu, a former Nasa astronaut and Google executive who leads the detection effort. "This is a wake-up call from space. We've got to pay attention to what's out there."

Astronomers know of no asteroids or comets that pose a major threat to the planet. But Nasa estimates that fewer than 10% of the big dan-

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## WHAT'S OUT THERE?

gers have been discovered.

Lu's group, called the B612 Foundation after the imaginary asteroid on which the Little Prince lived, is one team of several pursuing ways to ward off extraterrestrial threats. Nasa is another, and other private groups are emerging, like Planetary Resources, which wants not only to identify asteroids near Earth but also to mine them.

"Our job is to be the first line of defence, and we take that very seriously," James Green, the director of planetary science at Nasa headquarters, said in an interview on Friday after the Russian strike.

"No one living on this planet has ever before been hurt. That's historic." Green added that the Russian episode was sure to energize the field and that an even analysis of the meteor's remains could help reveal clues about future threats. NYTNEWS SERVICE