

Newspaper Clips

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IIT-K alumni honour Rahul Sharma

Ajay Umat | TNN

Ahmedabad: The IIT-Kanpur Alumni Association has decided to confer on Gujarat IPS officer Rahul Sharma the prestigious Satyendra Dubey Memorial Award. The award is to be presented on March 3 at Kanpur but Sharma has not made up his mind yet on whether to attend the function.

Best-known whistleblower Satyendra Dubey (1973-2003) was a project director at the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI). He was murdered in Gaya, Bihar after fighting corruption in the Golden Quadrilateral highway construction project. Like Dubey, Sharma is an alumnus of IIT-Kanpur. The award is meant for IITians and had gone to Arvind Kejriwal, a graduate from IIT-Kharagpur, in the past.

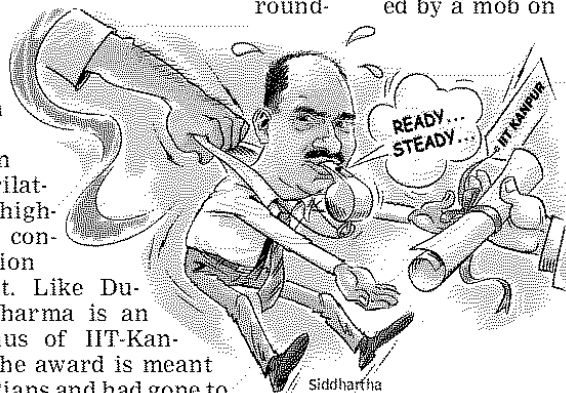
But, there is a big catch here. Clause 12 of All India Service Rules states that if an officer gets an award, he/she has to seek permission of the government before accepting it. The chances of the government granting permission to Sharma to attend the event in Kanpur are nil.

Sharma has been charged-sheeted by the Narendra Modi government for not taking permission before submitting call data records of certain persons to judicial inquiry commissions to prove their

complicity in the 2002 post-Godhra riots. The records had helped nail the truth in the Naroda Patia case where former minister Maya Kodnani was among those who were convicted.

Sharma's records include the phones of Modi's office, politicians and police officers and, besides revealing who was talking to whom, it shows their movements during the peak hours of rioting on February 28, 2002.

A 1992-batch IPS officer, Sharma is also being recognised as a saviour of 200 children in a madrasa in Bhavnagar which was surrounded by a mob on



Siddhartha

the same day. Sharma was moved out of his position as SP, western railway, on February 26 — a day before the S-6 coach of Sabarmati Express was burnt in Godhra.

He was transferred as SP Bhavnagar and he tackled the Godhra aftermath effectively. Even the Union home minister L K Advani had praised his actions in parliament. But after he submitted the CD in 2004, he has been given sideline postings and harassed by bosses with dozens of memos on the smallest of issues. Presently, he is posted as DIG, Special Reserve Police, Vadodara.

HT Indore

IIM-I FACULTY UNDER SCANNER FOR HARASSMENT

HT Correspondent

■ editorbhupal@hindustantimes.com

INDORE: The gender sensitivity committee of the Indian Institute of Management, Indore (IIM-I) has started a probe into the allegation of sexual harassment by a faculty member and a decision would be reached soon, sources in the institute said.

The committee, comprising of nine members, held its hearing for the second consecutive day on Friday.

Speaking to HT, IIM-I spokesman Akhtar Parveez said the institute received a complaint from a female faculty member two days back. In her complaint, she alleged that a male faculty member had harassed her. Parveez said the complaint was lodged against the accused and the relevant disciplinary action will be taken as soon as the institute receives the investigation report.

When contacted by HT, IIM-I director N Ravichandran refused to comment on the issue. A committee member said the report might come in a day or two.

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आईआईएम के प्रोफेसर पर यौन शोषण का आरोप

इंदौर, 22 फरवरी (भाषा)। इंदौर के भारतीय प्रबंधन संस्थान (आईआईएम-आई) की एक महिला प्रोफेसर ने अपने सहकर्मी पर यौन शोषण का संगीन आरोप लगाया है। देश के प्रतिष्ठित बी स्कूल की लिंग संवेदनशीलता समिति ने मामले में पीड़ित और आरोपी पक्ष के बयान दर्ज करने के साथ जांच शुरू कर दी है। आईआईएम-आई के प्रवक्ता डाक्टर अख्तर परवेज ने शुक्रवार को कहा- हमें संस्थान की एक महिला प्रोफेसर से शिकायत मिली है कि उसके सहकर्मी ने उसका यौन शोषण किया। यह स्वाभाविक रूप से गंभीर शिकायत है और इस पर फौरन कार्रवाई शुरू कर दी गई है। परवेज ने विशिष्ट और विस्तृत जानकारी दिए बगैर बताया कि महिला प्रोफेसर के यौन शोषण के मामले की जांच का जिम्मा आईआईएम-आई की नौ सदस्यीय लिंग संवेदनशीलता समिति को सौंपा गया है।

Two IITians Make GMAT Fun to Crack

BenchPrep, founded by Gupta & Rangnekar, revolutionises test preparations in the US



BENCH STRENGTH:
Ujjwal Gupta (left) & Ashish Rangnekar

NIHARIKA MOOKERJEE
GLOBAL INDIA NEWSWIRE

When IIT-Mumbai graduate Ashish Rangnekar was preparing for GMAT four years ago, he found it very frustrating and boring, especially the lack of interactivity. "The only way to crack a standardised test like the GMAT was to pay through your nose for a special class or to lug around a huge book," says his friend Ujjwal Gupta, also from IIT-Mumbai. The two began to brainstorm on "how could this process work better?" and make it more interactive. Two years and thousands of hours of tech crunching later, an education technology and custom teaching startup was born. Last Wednesday, Gupta was among the

select few — honchos of eight institutes in total — chosen to meet the new secretary for education, Arne Duncan, in Washington DC, as the new administration goes about its job to formulate a new educational policy.

BenchPrep, founded by Gupta and Rangnekar, builds apps for smartphones, tablets and other devices, and delivers content from its partners, among them leading publishing industry players such as McGraw Hill, Cengage Learning and Wiley, across platforms in an interactive manner. "Whether it's a free lecture from MIT or a paid practice test from Princeton Review, BenchPrep provides a place for the content to come alive for the user," says Gupta.

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Interactivity One of the Key Aspects

"A student looking for Algebra help will have a range of courses to choose from a variety of publishers, all in one place."

Today, the Chicago-based firm has a user base of 300,000, four-fifths of them in the US. Interactivity is one of the key aspects of the firm's teaching method. "It follows a student's performance on certain questions and exams, and customises the course based on that analysis," says Gupta. "The course is tailored to the student's strengths and weaknesses and to what he or she has identified as the end goal."

BenchPrep also tells students how much time they spent taking a chapter test, which problems they got wrong, and which reading sections they needed to improve upon. In other words, after collecting all usage data, it personalises a study schedule based on students' strengths and weaknesses.

For less than \$300 a year, BenchPrep offers more than 200 courses. The company's goal is to make available a thousand courses by the end of this year.

So far, BenchPrep has had great success in attracting investments. Last summer, it got \$6 million in venture funding. In 2011, in the first round of funding, it had raised \$2.2 million.

Gupta believes digital delivery will increasingly become part of the education in future. He says, "Content is no longer shackled to traditional methods of delivery; there is a plethora of amazing content out there. The

true bottleneck is the capacity to deliver it in the best way possible."

Gupta, who leads BenchPrep's marketing, product and project management initiatives, also spells out the company's long-term goals. "We want to be the first global interactive library with a value proposition that it is a no-brainer for anyone to subscribe to," he says. "Education sector is one of the very few sectors

that need a lot of help for technological advancement, and investors can see that."

Today, the Chicago firm has a user base of 300,000, four-fifths of them in the US

Gupta compares studying on BenchPrep with shopping on Amazon. He says: "[instead of] running around a mall from store to store, you can find everything in one place. This provides additional advantages to the student."

Gupta, who has a PhD in chemistry from The Pennsylvania State University, says the BenchPrep method has been found very successful and cost-efficient. "We have seen an average increase of 18% in students' scores when they complete more than 80% of a BenchPrep course in less than three months," he says. "If you add the cost to it and compare it with our competitors, we are providing almost 10 times the value for every dollar spent."

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2.5 lakh fiber optics for DU students soon

TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 22
Nearly 2.5 lakh fiber optics will be introduced in Delhi University (DU) pretty soon for the students to derive maximum benefits of technology, Union Minister of Communications and Information Technology Kapil Sibal said today.

Speaking at the inaugural ceremony of DU's cultural

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festival, Antardhwani, Sibal said that the new technology, much advanced than the internet, will be groundbreaking for the university. "A student sitting in one college will be able to attend a lecture in any other college through fiber optics connectivity. A doctor at Safdarjung will be able to detect any ailments in any sick student at North Campus in a fraction of seconds. Tech-

nology is very powerful and students should utilize it to the fullest," he said.

The much-awaited annual event that sees participation from all DU colleges and even outsiders today started with a spectacular NCC parade, followed by an array of activities, competitions and seminars at 14 separate venues at North Campus. The first day of the festival also saw

the inauguration of the Sports Plaza.

Along with felicitating the women football players of the university, Sibal and DU Vice-Chancellor Dinesh Singh also inaugurated the annual flower show. "The festival, over the next three days will hold 16 competitions, including rock band, debate, music, dance, photography and poetry. A

unique feature is a short film contest to capture "life in Delhi U" made with a mobile phone.

Another special attractions will display plazas for innovation projects, sports trophies, international culture, science, NSS along with "Akhyan" — an art exhibition on storytelling, book stalls and gender sensitization projects," said Singh.

The Chaudhuri Effect



VIEWPOINT

DEVANGSHU DATTA

The resistible rise of Arindam Chaudhuri, Dean of the Indian Institute of Planning and Management (IIPM), is an unusual liberalisation success story. Recently Mr Chaudhuri claimed on TV that IIPM has processed over 40,000 students. He has been at the helm for over 15 years. The annual intake is now roughly 5,000 students across multiple campuses. He also said each student was worth ₹15 lakh.

Arithmetic suggests IIPM's standalone revenues are upwards of ₹350 crore per annum. Mr Chaudhuri also

controls Planman Group, which includes multiple companies with varied interests clubbed under an umbrella "Planman" brand. Planman Media publishes periodicals. Planman Consulting provides management consultancy services.

Planman Technologies is an IT outfit. Planman Motion Pictures produces movies.

Mr Chaudhuri has also written best-selling books and bears partial responsibility for turning the ponytail into a fashion accessory for North Indian males. By any standards, he is a wealthy man and has no hesitation flaunting it. He wears expensive suits. He drives expensive cars and he is the Delhi franchisee of the 11 Super Series Motorsports league.

His key insight was noticing a demand-supply gap in higher education. By the mid-90s, the demand for management qualifications, far exceeded the seats available at management institutes. His father had established IIPM,

a small institute where Arindam Chaudhuri himself studied, and then scaled it up hundred-fold.

He did not waste much time seeking accreditation from the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) or recognition from the University Grants Commission (UGC). Both bodies, he says, "are full of bribe-seeking corrupt people. IIPM is proud to have no affiliation with them."

Instead he built the brand using market forces. IIPM is one of the ten biggest advertisers in India. Mahesh Murthy of Pinstorm, a digital advertising and marketing outfit, has examined the statutory annual returns filed by Planman Group companies and estimated Mr Chaudhuri spends between 24-67 per cent of total revenues on marketing.

Unquestionably, he deserves kudos for finding a hole in the market and exploiting it

shrewdly. Others have followed in his wake. Some of them, including the Indian School of Business, don't have UGC certification either. The lack of recognition isn't really a problem. It is the gap between promise and delivery. IIPM's advertisements make tall claims about global affiliates and placements. Multitudes of bloggers,

education-focussed magazines and mainstream media publications have investigated those claims in detail and alleged that they were at variance with reality.

IIPM has neither toned down the ads, nor does it appear to have rectified the lacuna that people see in its service standards. Instead, its channel partners (that is, recruiters) have filed defamation suits in obscure places to prevent damaging information becoming public. In theory, truth is a defence against defamation charges. In prac-

tice, Himalayan glaciers move faster than cases mired in the Indian justice system.

However, IIPM has run into the (Barbara) Streisand Effect: attempts to suppress information on the Web leads to more widespread dissemination. The latest gambit, a defamation suit in Gwalior blocking a laundry list of 70-odd URLs including a UGC notice, has of course, brought IIPM into confrontation with both an enraged HRD Ministry and an embarrassed IT Ministry.

This is not just a free speech issue. It is about the right of consumers to complain about quality of service. Management theory places great emphasis on businesses taking positive action on consumer feedback. IIPM possesses the resources to make positive changes to its business model. If it had attempted to address the points raised by its critics, it would have been hailed as an educational pioneer. Instead by trying to suppress criticism, it is making a cardinal strategic error.

Disclosure: The list of blocked web pages includes some on my wife's blog, and I have friendships or professional links with several other entities on that list.

HT Chandigarh

Search is on for new PEC director

Yet to zero in on final candidate; likely to select an IIT faculty for the job

Jyotsna Jalali

■ jyotsna@hindustantimes.com

CHANDIGARH: The quest of the UT administration to search for a new director of Punjab Engineering College (PEC) University of Technology is still on as the panel given this responsibility has not been able to decide on a final name.

The term of the present director ends on March 31. PEC officials are keen to have someone from an Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) as the new director, though only two of the nine applications received by it

It is a challenging task. We will have to look at all parameters before finalising the name. We will ask the present director to continue for some time

VK SINGH
chairman, PEC board
of directors

so far are of candidates from the background.

An official said faculty members of IITs are given a preference

for the post. VK Singh, the UT finance secretary and chairman of the PEC board of directors, said the selection committee for the director was yet to meet. "It is a challenging task. We will also have to look at all parameters before finalising the name," he said. "We will ask the present director to continue for some time."

The engineering institute's preference for an outsider for the post has been criticised by its faculty. Applications have only been invited from institutes like IITs, NITs etc. Talks are also rife that the present director, Manoj Datta, may stay back for a few

months if the institute is not able to zero in on his successor in time. Datta, who has earlier said that he does not want an extension in his tenure, has denied this.

A source in the institute said it was politics among faculty that Datta has decided against staying back. Datta, however, says that he has given his decision to the administration. Reportedly when nine months were left for Datta's term to end he had approached the administration and told them his intentions of not continuing after his term ends. After his tenure, Datta will join IIT-Delhi.