

Newspaper Clips

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**Times of India
ND**

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Astrology is a science, rules HC

Mumbai: The Bombay HC on Thursday dismissed a PIL seeking a ban on “articles, advertisements, episodes and practices promoting astrology and related subjects like vastu, reiki, feng shui, tarot, palmistry and zodiac signs”. The PIL had called for action against “bogus astrologers, tantriks and vastu shastra practitioners”.

A bench heard the PIL that an NGO had filed. The PIL questioned validity of astrological predictions.

“The SC has already ruled that astrology is a science. The court had directed the universities to consider if astrology science can be added to the syllabus. The decision of the SC is binding on this court,” the bench said. TNN

'Our dream is a small fusion power generator in each house'

There is renewed interest across the world in cold fusion. The International Conference on Condensed Matter Nuclear Science in Chennai next week will be attended by 60 scientists working in this field from across the globe. M Srinivasan, chairman of the organising committee of the conference, is a retired BARC scientist and a pioneer in nuclear technology involved in the construction of India's first fast reactor. He spoke to B Sivakumar about current trends in cold fusion research and why it could be a source of limitless energy in the future:

■ What is the role of Indian scientists in this research?

Based on a small report in the Times of India on March 24, 1989 about cold fusion, 12 teams of scientists in BARC set up independent electrolytes and observed the phenomenon that

was first made public by two US scientists. We were the biggest group responsible for the research at that time in the world. We found evidence of production of tritium and neutrons in the electrolysis. A separate book on the scientific findings was published by BARC. A US team visited BARC in December 1989, saw our findings and gave a positive report to the institute. Based on this report, funds

Q&A

were released for research in a US university.

■ What is the current status of research in cold fusion in India and abroad?

For all practical purposes, research in India has come to a standstill since the mid-1990s. I have been trying to keep scientists and the public informed about the breakthrough in nuclear energy. Unfortunately



scientists still remain sceptics. Since 2008, some scientists in India have started to look at cold fusion with an open mind. But there's still a long way to go for research to begin. At the international level research is underway in Russia, the US, Europe, South Korea, Japan and China. Around 300-400 scientists are involved in the research. On

January 14, two scientists in Italy demonstrated production of 20 KW of energy using hydrogen and nickel in a lab.

■ What are the new findings on this issue in the past decade?

Transmutation reactions in electrolytic and gas loaded devices is one of the important observations made by the scientists involved in cold fusion research in the past decade. Use of nano-technology has also played an important role in the last three years.

■ What is the agenda of the forthcoming conference in Chennai?

This is the 16th International Conference on Condensed Matter Nuclear Science, held in rotation between Russia, US, Europe and Asia. For the first time it is being held in India. The main aim of the conference is to draw the attention of the Indian

scientific community to cold fusion. It is also an opportunity for the scientists to listen to the original researchers. Around 60 scientists from nine countries are participating in the meet.

■ Why is there opposition to the cold fusion theory?

There is opposition because the findings do not tally with textbook nuclear physics. However, scientists will have to think about nuclear and chemical reactions in a holistic way.

■ What is the future of this research?

Our dream is to have a small fusion power generator or pack with a capacity to produce 20-100 KW of energy in each house. Mankind needs a new source of energy and this could be a major source to meet the ever-increasing demand for power. The findings of this research could change the face of science.

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Zapping brain brings out the genius in you

London: Ever wished you could have thought more laterally to solve a problem? Well, you will now be able to do so by using a new mind-boosting technology — zapping your brain with mild electricity.

Researchers at the University of Sydney in Australia have shown that a blast of gentle electrical current to the brain helps one discard preconceptions and think outside the box. Donning such a “thinking cap”, the scientists said, could help us solve infuriating problems from balancing budgets at work to cracking the final crossword clue, the Daily Mail reported.

For their study, researchers recruited 60 university students happy to have a gentle electrical current passed through their brain in name of science. The men and women were shown a series of sums in which the numbers were replaced by Roman numerals made out of matchsticks. Each sum contained a mistake that could be corrected by moving just one matchstick.

After solving numerous problems containing the same

Researchers at the University of Sydney in Australia have shown a blast of gentle electrical current to the brain helps one discard preconceptions and think outside the box

sort of error, a weak current was passed through a region — called the anterior temporal lobe — which lies just in front of the ears. The students were then given another set of matchstick problems to solve, this time with a different type of error. Those who were zapped on the right side of the head did three times as well at solving the problems as the others, the researchers reported in the journal *PloS ONE*.

This is likely as electricity boosted the activity of brain cells key to insight. In addition, the activity of the cells on the left side of the brain we usually use to quickly process the familiar may have been inhibited, the researchers said. PTI

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Blood vessels made in lab to revolutionize heart ops

London: Off-the-shelf blood vessels could soon be a reality, as scientists have come up with a way to grow new human veins in the laboratory.

The lab-made blood vessels, which can be stored for up to a year and safely transplanted into any patient, could revolutionise heart surgery, said the experts. They also claimed the blood vessels could soon replace artificial versions — which easily clog and cause infection — in a number of operations, including thousands of heart bypasses a year, the Telegraph reported.

Scientists have already developed a technique to engineer blood vessels from a patient's own cells, but this process takes over nine months and patients usually cannot wait that long for surgery. The new technique involved making the vessels in advance by using random donor cells from human tissue to grow collagen on a biodegradable "scaffold" tube or mould made from a polymer.

When the scaffold dissolves away, fully formed blood vessels are left behind. These are then "washed" of the original human cells so that they were completely benign and unlikely to cause any rejection in the body of a recipient, the researchers reported. PTI

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This stem cell spray can heal severe burns

London: Embarrassed of your burn marks? Don't worry, as scientists have developed a revolutionary spray gun which they say could heal severe burns "within days".

Researchers at the University of Pittsburgh who are behind the innovation said the spray gun can generate healthy skin stem cells from the victim and sprays it on burned skin. The stem cell shooting gun, the experts claimed, can treat the skin in just one-and-a-half hours and reduce healing time to a few days, the Daily Mail reported.

Though scientists have been able to regenerate sheets of skin for decades, it is a lengthy process and the resulting skin is extremely fragile. Patients are open to dangerous infections as they heal and some burns victims can die while they are waiting, even with the right care and dressing. But there won't be any such problem in the new spray gun, said lead researcher Doctor Jorg Gerlach of McGowan Institute for Regenerative Medicine at the University of Pittsburgh. PTI

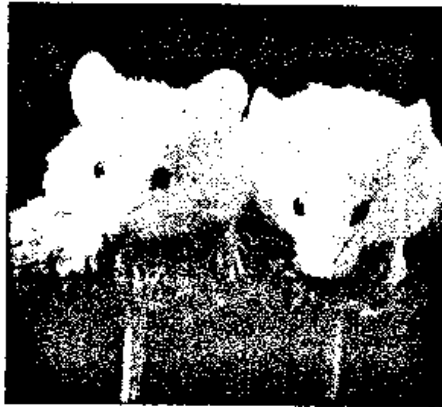
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Forget dogs, airports to have 'sniffer rats' soon

London: Besides intrusive pat-downs and full-body scanners, you may soon encounter another hurdle while passing through security at an airport — sniffer rats.

The mice are part of a bomb-detecting unit developed by Israeli researchers who claimed the trained critters can be better than full-body scanners and pat-downs at detecting any would-be bombers and drugs couriers. The device looks like a metal detector or full-body scanner, but one side of it houses three concealed cartridges, each containing eight specially trained mice.

The animals work four-hour shifts, milling around in



RODENT SECURITY: The mice are part of a bomb-detecting unit developed by Israeli researchers

an allocated cartridge while sniffing air pumped in from outside. When they pick up traces of explosives or drugs, they will flee to a side chamber, triggering an alarm, New

Scientist reported.

To set the pattern of shifts, air is pumped to a different cartridge every four hours. This gives the rodents eight hours to sleep and play before they are required to clock on again. The mice take around ten days to learn their first smell. Subsequent odours take just a few days each. Unlike sniffer dogs, mice do not require constant interaction with their trainers or to be plied with treats to keep them motivated.

It is believed the concept may appeal to those who fear that the full-body scanners introduced at many airports are exposing them to harmful radiation and invading privacy. PTI

A kisan's Harvard moment

They are farmers with their finger on the latest technology, and they travelled all the way from Jalgaon, Maharashtra, to share their success story with an Ivy League audience.

RASHEEDA BHAGAT

He is appalled when I ask if he managed to catch enough sleep and see some movies on board as this was the first flight he had ever taken in his life, and such a long one at that.

"Arrey nahi, picture tau hum kabhi bhi dekh sakte hei (Oh no, I can watch a movie any time). And though I was sleepy I felt I had to collect vital information about the plane and the journey to be shared with other farmers later... That the plane was flying at 1,022 km per hour, at a height of 39,000 ft, and all the countries we crossed before reaching America."

Meet Rajendra Patil, a banana farmer from Jalgaon district of Maharashtra, who, along with Hemchandra Patil, was recently invited by Harvard Business School to make a presentation at an international symposium on Food Security. Their topic: how improved technology has helped increase their yield and income several-fold.

Both have a story that will inspire small farmers. Rajendra used to work as a private schoolteacher and was devastated when he suddenly lost his job in 1998. But he recalled a lecture given by a Jain *sadhvi* where she had said: "Suraj nikalney hi roshni deta hai, phool khilney hi khusboo deta hei, zindagi mei kuch karne ki tamanna ho dil mei tau zamin tau kya aasman bhi saath deta hei" (Like the sun gives light and flowers fragrance, if there is resolve in you then not just land, even the sky will help you).

"I had 1.5 acres of family land (in Warey, about 90 km from Jalgaon) and I decided to grow bananas on it." As he had more water than needed by his tiny farm, he leased another 10 acres. In 2005 he read the story of a farmer whose income had gone up by using drip irrigation. "He told me about Jain Irrigation, they guided me on drip irrigation.



►For organic products American farmers get double or triple the price, which doesn't happen here, so where is the incentive to grow organic products?

HEMCHANDRA PATIL

Next year, I consulted a banana expert in the company and introduced tissue culture plants." Starting with 10,000, he bought an additional 18,000 in 2007 and "my earnings went up three times by following the Jain technology. This way every farmer can increase his output and income. *Unki system itni powerful hei ki zamin me sey sona nikal sakthey hei.* (Their system is so powerful that farmers can get gold from their land).

In three years, under his direction, his village had planted 7 lakh tissue-culture banana plants. Ploughing back his earnings into his land, Rajendra today farms on 70 acres, of which he owns seven acres.

RESPECT FOR INDIA

Hemchandra, the other farmer from Jalgaon, who grows bananas and onions, is still starry-eyed from his America visit. His main takeaway: "I was amazed to find that Americans have so much respect and affection for Indians... and treat Indian farmers with so much respect." Also, even though he was allotted only 15 minutes to make his presentation, the international delegates at the seminar had so many questions that his session ran into a good 30 minutes.

On the kind of questions asked, he says "When I mentioned the technological help given to me by Jain Irrigation Systems, I was asked why big industrial houses in India such as Tata, Birla, Reliance, etc, were not doing such schemes for farmers. I said I can't answer this... *yeh tau sahi sawal aap galat admi se pooch rahy hei* (It's the right question but asked of the wrong man). For that answer I got many compliments... What I did tell them was that Bhuu (many farmers use this endearing term for company Chairman Bhavarlal Jain) has been working with farmers for long years, and that has helped not only us but the company too. It's a profitable collaboration for both of us."

LAWYER-TURNED-TILLER

Hemchandra is a qualified lawyer; his father, Dagaji Patil, is a retired schoolteacher; "we had 24 acres, and in 1977 when we got electricity and the Government gave some money for digging wells, I quit my job and took up farming," he says.

Even though he knew his son would have to take up farming one day, "I educated him so that he could use modern farming methods." When the son was ready to take on the mantle, his father had already installed drip irrigation, on "an experimental basis" on three acres. After bringing the entire land under drip irrigation, he bought 26 acres more and today grows bananas, cotton and onions.

When I quip about high onion prices, the farmer grins from ear to ear, even though farmers get only 30 per cent of the market price, and says: "*Har saal tau aise nahi hota*" (Every year we don't see such profits).

Anil Dhake, Vice-President (R&D), Jain Irrigation Systems, explains that Hemchandra was chosen for the symposium - Harvard had asked Bhavarlal Jain to recommend two farmers - because he has been a contract farmer with Jain for 10 years, growing white onions to feed its dehydrated-onion producing plant in Jalgaon. "We chose



him for his achievement... that a dryland farmer can go up to 18-20 tonnes of onions per acre... India's average is 5-6 tonnes per acre. For 10 years now, he has done hi-tech cultivation using so many different types of irrigation systems - inline, sprinkler, drip and overhead irrigation systems."

Asked whether he might be harming the interests of small farmers by leasing their land, Rajendra replied: "Certainly not. They didn't have water, so they could not cultivate the land. But I have excess water and by using it on their land I have tripled their yield, so it's a win-win for all of us."

Hemchandra says they also spent two days in New York and "we were so struck by the cleanliness of the place. We met an organic farmer and found that for organic products they get double or triple the price, which doesn't happen here, so where is the incentive to grow organic products?" Both farmers were amazed by the prosperity of their US counterparts and the kind of support they get from their government. And also, the status they enjoy. "We wanted to meet more farmers, but were told one had to take appointments," says Hemchandra in awe.

At the symposium both were quizzed on government help not really reaching farmers, as well as farmers' suicides. "But when they asked about corruption, *mujihe bahut feel hua* (I felt bad)."

On the support the Indian Government gives farmers, he smiles and says: "*Subsidy ke sivay kuch na!* (Except subsidy, nothing)."

But Indian farmers face several problems, such as the vulnerability of crops to newer diseases. He is convinced that technology in agriculture is the only way forward. To keep abreast of the latest in farming practices he has now

bought a laptop and regularly surfs the Net using his broadband connection. "I am still learning, but there are some Web sites I see regularly," he says.

He is also unhappy that the MNREGA scheme has made labourers "*zalsi aur nish-kriya*" (lazy and unproductive).

HELPING FELLOW FARMERS

Rajendra, on the other hand, is all excitement after his America visit. "I now want to own 100 acres to grow banana, ginger, *mo-sambi* (sweet lime), *sitalal* (custard apple), etc, go in for the latest irrigation systems and use the latest technology." Every three months he wants to organise workshops for farmers, guide them on ways to improve yield through improved farming practices.

"In one campus I want to provide models

Rajendra Patil at the Harvard symposium; (below) Bhavarlal Jain, Chairman, Jain Irrigation (centre), with the two farmers.



explaining how to plant a crop, look after it... Just as Bhuu has done for farmers, I want to follow his example."

He knows he will hit an "economic road-block" as the entire project will cost Rs 3 crore. "I have saved some money and will take the rest as loan from NABARD."

When I express surprise that he lives in a rented house despite such resources at his command, he says: "I've decided not to build a house till this dream is realised. A house is only a building, but your land gives you income once or twice a year."

Hemchandra's future plans include horticulture and floriculture. He wants to plant pomegranate and exotic vegetables in greenhouses. "I hear that in big hotels and restaurants vegetables such as red and green peppers, gherkins, broccoli, etc are in great demand and that the market will expand. This has strengthened my resolve to go in for value-added farming. Our Government should encourage farmers who opt for hi-tech farming and help us with marketing so that when prices rise, farmers - instead of middlemen, traders and hoarders - can benefit."

But he is sad that there is little cooperation or unity among Indian farmers. "Because of this, middlemen take away the cream from our earnings. Whenever there is an attempt by farmers to come together, the leader of that movement is invariably sucked into one political party or the other. Just like politicians divide Hindus and Muslims, they divide farmers too. And this is the curse of farmers."

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What do I tell my father, asks duped student

TRI-VALLEY Varsity had no accreditation, classrooms, fee receipts

Yashwant Raj

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WASHINGTON: A student of Tri-Valley University has said he was picked up from his New York apartment Monday morning, taken into a waiting car handcuffed and treated as a common criminal before being freed 48 hours later.

He didn't give his name.

But let's call him Reddy. He is one of the victims of Tri-Valley University belying up under investigation by the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) of the Department of Homeland Security.

He responded to a mail to a closed google group of Tri-Valley students by HT, which was tossed out within hours of being let in because of the group's growing worries about rules.

He didn't wish to be identified because, one, he doesn't want to anger the authorities. And, two, he has not had the courage to tell his parents yet.

"What do I tell my father," Reddy he asked, "that I am in trouble..that I need more money." He fears for his father's health. But he knows he will

have to tell them soon enough.

This 25-year-old from Hyderabad came to the US to study healthcare management at the University of Northern Virginia last summer. But transferred to Tri-Valley University in California in September.

Lower tuition fee was his main reason for choosing Tri-Valley.

The difference in fee — \$5,500 a year against \$9,000 — was a crucial.

The university was shut down by the authorities on January 21 for allegedly violating immigration rules by offering foreigners — specially from India — an easy entry into the US, for a consideration.

But how did he hear of this university, which was not exactly Ivy League?

From an Indian-origin lawyer in New York, Reddy said. He mentioned a name, which will not be printed as he couldn't be contacted for comments.

Whenever I asked for the fee receipt, they told me the server was down

"He told me, this new university is good and that he would help with the processing of my application." The lawyer was true to his word. Reddy was on the rolls of Tri-Valley in September.

But red flags began popping up soon enough.

There were no on-site classes, for one. The classes were held online, albeit live, from somewhere in the US. And, two, when he asked for a receipt for the bank transfer of the tuition fee, he never got one. "I was always told the server was down, which seemed strange."

Suspicious, he decided to take a transfer. Tri-Valley told him to wait as the necessary accreditation was coming. It never came.

The university was raided by Immigration and Customs Enforcement on January 19. And the game was up. This man, like hundreds of others, turned

A lawyer told me the university was good and that he would help me get in

into a 'criminal'.

Three ICE agents walked into his Long Island apartment looking for his room-mate, also a Tri-Valley student. But he had finished his course, and left for India. Anxious and worried that Reddy was, he offered himself to the agents, saying he was also a Tri-Valley student. "They handcuffed me," he said.

At the Federal Plaza office he was asked, he said, to sign some papers, which he did. He said he had trouble following the instructions because of the officers' accent.

Later in the evening, he was transferred to another facility and then to the Hudson County Correctional Centre in New Jersey — this time, cuffs around his wrists and ankles.

Reddy was asked to take off his clothes, which is mandatory for inmates checking in.

He said, voice choking with emotion, "I am a skinny guy... and I was cold, I told them."

He was taken to a small room for the night, with four bunks and a toilet. The room was no bigger than a restroom, he said.

He waited for day break. He was released the next day in the evening.

REDDY (NAME CHANGED), a Tri-Valley student

Hindustan Times ND 04/02/2011 P-11

Indian students hit by fraud

Charu Sudan Kasturi

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NEW DELHI: California-based Tri Valley University is only the latest in a series of frauds stretching across continents that have claimed Indian students seeking foreign education as victims, exposing the vulnerability of students to cheat institutions.

From massive Australia to tiny Malta, traditionally attractive hubs like the UK and the US to China, Russia and countries in Eastern Europe, Indian students are increasingly finding themselves duped, complaints and government records accessed by HT suggest.

“What is particularly troubling is that the cases appear to be growing in frequency,” a government source said, adding that on several occasions, Indian missions have been left embarrassed because of the absence of details on Indian students in different countries.

In 2006, a stunned Indian high Commission in Britain

STUDY ABROAD

- 2005: Indian embassy in China received complaints from students, who had joined the medical course at the Xinxiang Medical College
- 2006: Indian high commission in Britain was alerted about London College of Management, that was misleading Indians
- 2009: 5 Indian students were detained in Malta, treated as illegal immigrants
- 2010: Indian mission in Australia received complaints claiming students were cheated into joining courses.

had to be alerted by MP John Randall about a scam, under which a fraud institution called the London College of Management was misleading dozens of Indians.

The LCM was attracting students by advertising in Indian newspapers, promising students UK degrees and laptops. The students who had com-

plained to Randall found on arriving in the UK that the LCM was offering “worthless degrees from a Ukrainian university,” the report from Smita Purshottam, then minister in the Indian mission to the HRD ministry concluded. “It was embarrassing the students found it easier to approach a British MP than their own mission,” an official said.

A year earlier, in 2005, the Indian embassy in China received a series of complaints from students, who had joined the medical course at the Xinxiang Medical College. The students accused the institution of luring them with the “false promise” that it had qualified English-speaking faculty.

In 2009 and 2010, the Indian mission in Australia received repeated complaints claiming students were cheated into joining courses by “fraudulent institutions.” In December 2009, five Indian students in Malta were detained who were treated as illegal immigrants.

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HRD plans website for Indians studying abroad

Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI: Concerned over the fate of Indian students who were enrolled in the now-de-recognised Tri-Valley University (TVU) in the United States, the Human Resource Development has asked Educational Consultants India Limited (EdCIL) to prepare a

project report on creating and maintaining a web page that could be dedicated to students abroad.

EdCIL, a public sector undertaking, offers consultancy and technical services in different areas of education, not only within the country but also on a global basis.

The Ministry proposes to

set up the web portal where all information regarding universities and educational institutions abroad would be available with the click of a mouse. The website would be updated so as to provide the latest information on the authenticity of the institutions and the courses offered by them.

HINDU ND 04/02/2011 P-5

IIM-A 11th among global business schools

Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI: The Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad, has been placed 11th in The Financial Times Global MBA Ranking of the world's top 100 business schools in 2011.

This debutant showing of the institute's postgraduate programme in management for executives (PGPX), a one-year, full-time MBA for executives with substantial work experience, firmly establishes it as a peer among the best

management schools in the world.

The average salary of its students is \$174,440, higher than those who passed out of the London Business School and the Harvard Business School. PGPX was started in 2005 to develop bright, enthusiastic and ambitious executives into management leaders and change agents in the global arena. The average work experience of the current PGPX batch is 10 years, with several students having notched up significant expe-

rience overseas.

Placement Success

PGPX has also been ranked first in 'Career Progress,' a measure of the change in seniority of its participants and the size of the company its participants were in between joining the programme and upon graduation. The programme is ranked 14th in 'Placement Success,' a measure of the effectiveness of the institute's career services. The IIM-A is also the preferred business school of

recruitment by its alumni: it is ranked 10th in 'Alumni Recommendations.'

Top three

The impressive showing by the IIM-A and the Indian School of Business, which is ranked 13, announces India's arrival on the global education scene. The London Business School, the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania, and the Harvard Business School are the top three management schools in that order.