

## Newspaper Clips

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# HRD plan: Only 'couple of' innovation universities

**ANUBHUTI VISHNOI**

NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 5

**T**HE government has decided to tone down its ambition to set up the much publicised 14 Universities of Innovation. Instead of setting up 14 such varsities, the Human Resource Development Ministry will now be content with setting up just a couple of them. The ministry has moved a new Cabinet note without the numerical specification.

Sources said the move was being made as it was being increasingly felt that it would not be feasible to set up 14 such varsities. That apart, the fact that even a

few of them will help serve the purpose of fostering a research eco-system, as aimed, has convinced the ministry.

The National Knowledge Commission, led by Sam Pitroda, had recommended setting up of 14 Innovation Universities at an annual cost of Rs 200 crore each.

The Universities of Innovation Bill — expected to come before the Union Cabinet very soon — aims at establishing varsities that will encourage superlative academic quality and research output.

These will be set up either by the government or by private entities or through public private partnerships, and will offer unmatched

academic freedom. The Bill also provides for upgradation of existing universities/institutes to the status of Universities of Innovation provided they fulfil certain criteria — a suggestion made by the Planning Commission.

While the Bill, when it first came before the Cabinet, ran into trouble with 20 ministries/ departments raising red flags over a range of issues, the legislation has now passed muster after being vetted by a Committee of Secretaries.

This Bill promises a flexible framework allowing freedom to appoint a foreign academician as vice-chancellor, invite a promising stu-

dent to join as faculty, allow varsities to devise their own merit-based admission process, individual quality standards free from the UGC or any other regulatory body, and to keep the varsity out of the CAG's ambit.

Such varsities will be free to evolve their own admission criteria but assure that at least 50 per cent students admitted for any programme are Indian citizens.

These will be not-for-profit legal entities, each established after a Memorandum of Association is signed between the Centre and private partner and the same will have to be ratified by Parliament.

## ADMISSIONALERT

# New criteria

Too many entrance exams may not be the right way to evaluate a student's merit level. Vishakha Sharma reports on the recent changes in the admission criteria for medical and engineering colleges

While there have been recent developments in undergraduate admissions at Delhi University (DU) for a Bachelor of medicine, Bachelor of surgery (MBBS) and Bachelor of dental surgery (BDS), a proposal for a change in admission criteria to the Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) and other engineering colleges will require class XII students to focus more on the board exams.

From now on, admission to Delhi University's (DU) medical and dental colleges will be on the basis of one's rank in the All India Pre-Medical Test (AIPMT). Thus, only students appearing for AIPMT 2012 will be eligible to apply to DU colleges — Lady Hardinge Medical College, Maulana Azad Medical College and University College of Medical Sciences — for medicine, and the Maulana Azad Institute of Dental Sciences for dentistry.

According to Dinesh Singh, vice-chancellor, DU, the decision to scrap the undergraduate entrance examination for MBBS and BDS at DU will act as a relief for students. "We have also written a letter to Vineet Joshi, chairman, CBSE, in this regard," he says.

The AIPMT which will be conducted by the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) will have a preliminary round on April 1 followed by the final round on May 13.

Joshi says, "We have no objection if DU wishes to admit students into its MBBS and BDS colleges based on AIPMT scores, but the university will have to take permission from the Supreme Court for the same."

The second development is regarding the IITs and other engineering institutes in the country proposing that 40% weightage be given to class XII board exams for admissions to engineering colleges. It has been recommended by the T Ramasami committee, which is working for an all new Joint Entrance Examination (JEE) where the entry of students into IITs or any other engineering institute will be based on one single test along with a specified 40% weightage on what one scores in class XII.



Entry of students into the IITs or any other engineering institute may be based on one single test along with a specified 40% weightage on what one scores in class XII

According to an IIT-Delhi official, these recommendations were originally made so that students do not neglect classroom learning and stop depending on coaching classes. This recommendation is also for those families who cannot afford to send their children to coaching classes. As of now, no formal decision has been taken, but will be implemented after the approval of the MHRD.

Joshi adds, "Giving specific weightage to class XII scores for admission into engineering colleges will make students attend their classes regularly and fare well in the board exams."

However, a class XII student says, "Changing the JEE pattern at the last moment is unfair for all those students who have been preparing for it since the last two years. If a new system is adopted now, students preparing for IITs will suffer. This decision should have been taken much earlier."

# Roorkee IIT to help standardise silt-monitoring technology

**RAKESH LOHUMI/TNS**

**SHIMLA, FEBRUARY 5**

In an initiative backed by World Bank, the Mid-Himalayan Watershed Development Project has tied up with the Indian Institute of Technology, Roorkee, for the standardisation of the silt-monitoring technology to help quantify the impact of watershed treatment interventions.

World Bank is keen on developing a scientific model to evaluate the outcome of the programmes and projects being implemented for the rehabilitation of degraded watersheds. The IIT, Roor-

The IIT, Roorkee, which has a robust hydrology department, has been specifically selected for the pilot research project to develop scientific tools which can be used to ascertain the impact of specific interventions like check dams, afforestation and other vegetative measures, crop replacement and other such steps in a particular catchment area.

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steps in a particular catchment area.

The silt data is already being collected under the Rs 337-crore project for which three silt observatory posts (SOPs) have been set up in three different 'ecological' zones to gather varied data. Project director RK Kapoor said the high-tech sophisti-

cated electronic observatory posts had the capability to automatically record silt and discharge data with an accuracy up to four digits. Engineers of the IIT had much experience in the field of hydrology and once scientific tools were available for quantifying the impact of various corrective measures, it would be possible to develop intervention-specific models for the rehabilitation of degraded catchments.

The SOPs have been established at Loharkha village on the Nurpur-Chamba state highway, Brampukhar in Bilaspur and Rajgarh in Sirmaur.

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## AT A GLANCE

**IIT Bombay and Wadhvani Foundation announce the inauguration of WRCBB**



Romesh Wadhvani, chairman, Wadhvani Foundation and Prof Devang Khakhar, director, IIT Bombay, recently inaugurated the Wadhvani Research Centre in Biosciences and Bioengineering (WRCBB) by unveiling the ceremonial plaque at IIT Bombay. Ajay Kela, president & CEO, Wadhvani Foundation, and an alumnus of IIT Bombay, was also present.

# Dazzling images do not a shining nation make

In the competitive world of 'emerging nations,' there are limits to how much Brand India can sell itself without actually building an equitable country.

Ravinder Kaur

In the past few years, residents and visitors to Davos during the World Economic Forum (WEF) have become familiar with a spectacular annual phenomenon. Streets, buses, cafés and even billboards in half empty parking lots are covered with colourful images of "emerging nations" competing with one another to position themselves as the "most attractive investment destination" in the world. The most prominent players are some of the BRICS — mainly Brazil, Russia, India and South Africa — while China is conspicuous through its visual absence. This year, however, the dominance of these nations was broken by new players such as Mexico, Thailand and even Azerbaijan which mounted dazzling image campaigns to attract investor eyeballs. The main streets of Davos turned in effect, into a site for exhibiting these "emerging nations" in a never ending mobile exposition of seductive images.

While the idea of nation branding to enhance competitiveness in global market has become unremarkable and ubiquitous by now, it is yet to be seen as part of nation making in the postcolonial world. The history of contemporary India offers a keen insight into the shifts that have rearranged the very idea of postcolonial nation making. To begin with, nation building in post-Independence India has for long been linked to the "temples of modern India," as Nehru tellingly described the massive infrastructure building that was expected to become the backbone of a prosperous nation as it transitioned from an agrarian to an industrialised one. This emphasis on materiality has undergone a fundamental shift in the past two decades of economic reforms. Now the idea of nation-making, first and foremost, has become a matter of "image" rather than concrete in the Nehruvian sense. The strategy of the Indian state is clearly no longer limited to building infrastructure alone; it has moved to a domain where the production and projection of images of a prosperous nation has become as imperative a task as the creation of a prosperous nation itself.

## Social entrepreneurs

This emphasis on images is no better illustrated than in Davos where the WEF meets every January. The annual meeting is a gathering of WEF members comprising corporations worth more than \$5 billion that are said to "drive the world economy forward," political leaders and established NGOs. In recent years, a new category of people called "social entrepreneurs" has been added to show that more benevolent sides of capitalism exist, especially when the notion of free markets is being challenged in the prolonged aftermath of the financial crisis. The attraction of Davos lies in the fact that corporations gain direct unhindered access to heads of government and policy-makers who in turn covet any possibility of attracting investments. This is not particularly surprising given that success of the nation is now increasingly measured on its ability to at-



**VISUAL FRAMING:** 'Incredible India' on the move at the World Economic Forum 2012 at Davos last month.

— PHOTO: RAVINDER KAUR

tract foreign investments rather than welfare of its people and territorial security alone. Thus, the intense focus on creating attractive images of nations as worthy recipients of the global investor's attention.

In many ways, India has been a frontrunner in this trend of image making. As part of the economic reforms in early 1990s, the state had already set up a specific agency to "brand" Indian products for the export markets. This project of branding "made in India" goods took a fresh turn in the first half of the 2000s when India, the nation, itself was turned into commodity. In 2006 a freshly branded India made a spectacular entry in the world of global corporate investors through a colourful and ubiquitous campaign called "India Everywhere" in Davos. The introduction of a reformed India to the global elite began with dazzling posters, gigantic billboards, advertisement on buses, and facts and figures about "new" India. The effectiveness of this campaign is still recalled by nation-branding specialists. Each year, since then, India has had a major visual presence at Davos through cleverly pitched campaigns designed by highly creative advertising agencies.

The India visible in the branding images primarily exists in the consciousness of the elite. It is a world of neat shopping malls, expensive branded products, happy, prosperous consumers, skilled scientists and engineers, white

coats, headphones, smooth highways, high rise buildings, glass facades and green grass that paves one's vision. The images could be from anywhere in the world, while the Indian setting is presented through cultural icons such as *bindis*, colourfully decorated elephants, Gandhiji's spectacles and Taj Mahal. In short, India is transformed into a global place while still retaining its cultural authenticity and ethnic appeal.

While this vision is a powerful tool to attract investors and tourists, it is also its biggest weakness. The images conjure a world that does not really exist outside the limits of the visual frames. Absent from the frames is the "other" India — the poor, the untouchables, the minorities, and all that is un-beautiful — the ruptured body of the nation that has not only failed to "catch up" with the progress, but in fact is seen as holding the nation back in its journey towards prosperity and global power.

## NII nations

It is not uncommon to hear stories of shock and disappointment upon arrival from the very members of the privileged global class that the Indian state so wants to attract. Not surprising, as the questions of poverty, inequality and social inequity in India remain as much part of the Indian growth story as the middle class prosperity despite their effacement from the image world.

As if to compensate for this gap, Indi-

an political and corporate leaders have begun to pepper their sales pitch at Davos with the agenda of "inclusive growth" and the need for equal distribution in a society. Despite high growth rates over the past decades, India remains at the bottom of BRICS in terms of income disparity and human development of its citizens. These inconvenient facts continue to disrupt the spectacle carefully manufactured for an external audience.

Thus, the simulated image of a world peopled with happy, well-nourished, cheerful and skilled Indians who are ready to work long hours at low wages has its limits. These limits become apparent at a time when India no longer seems to be the only high profile actor engaged in the art of image making. Nations like South Africa and Brazil have been quick to move in to the field, followed closely by yet another newly minted group of nations, the N11, the termed coined by the imaginative Goldman Sachs bankers. The idea of 'India Everywhere' has instead become a case of 'Everyone Everywhere,' as one Indian anchor covering Davos put it. As the novelty of dazzling image campaigns levels out, India might need to rework its agenda — to focus on the actual production of a prosperous and equitable nation, rather than producing merely images of it.

(The author is Associate Professor of Modern South Asian Studies, University of Copenhagen.)

# Govt looks to PSUs for Aakash 2

## WARY HRD ministry not satisfied with Datawind, which manufactured Aakash 1

Chetan Chauhan

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**NEW DELHI:** Having burnt its hands once with a private player, the HRD ministry has decided to look at public sector enterprises to manufacture one million Aakash 2 tablets, the enhanced version of world's cheapest machine of the kind.

The HRD ministry, which has developed prototype of Aakash, wants the Indian Telephone Industries (ITI) to participate in the bid to supply Aakash 2 tablets from April this year.

The ministry will require 220 million tablets in the coming years to fulfil its promise to provide a tablet to every college student. The ministry wants to achieve the target by 2014.

For this, the Aakash tablets will have to be sourced from multiple sources and the ministry wants to bank on the PSUs after its experience with Datawind — the company was asked to supply one lakh tablets

### AAKASH 1: TABLET ISSUES

- The HRD ministry found many functional problems with Datawind's tablets (Aakash 1)
- Datawind was supposed to supply 1 lakh tablets by March. The ministry has rejected 3,000 tablets due to poor quality
- The ministry was also not happy that the company was selling Aakash 1 tablets in the market before supplying it to the government
- Govt was prompted to look to PSUs after Datawind was unable to supply Aakash 2 without cost escalation.



■ Students hold up the tablet, Aakash 1, on the day of its launch last year. HT FILE

by March — had not been very good, government sources said.

The ministry found many functional problems with Datawind's tablets tested by IIT students. The ministry was also not happy that the company was selling Aakash tablets in the market before supplying it to

the government. "We have already rejected 3,000 tablets on quality," a ministry official said.

But, ministry officials said it has not been decided to debar Datawind from future bidding.

The government was prompted to look to public sector after

Datawind was unable to supply Aakash 2 without cost escalation.

The new test specification for Aakash 2 by Indian Institute of Technology Rajasthan include operation at -20 degrees, need for it to be water proof including in heavy rains, and can withstand steep and sudden falls.

The new tablet will have a microprocessor of 1.2 gega hertz, making it five times faster than Aakash 1, with a minimum battery life of eight hours.

Datawind founder Suneet Tuli had said such a tablet can cost \$1,500 or more.

HRD and telecom minister Kapil Sibal on Wednesday held a meeting with public sector telecom companies including ITI to gear them up for supplying Aakash 2 at \$35. "We want public sector to participate in the bid to have a balance between public and private sector. It could also help in revival of these companies," a senior government official said.

# Centre plans 6.5-year MBBS

## To Make 1-Yr Rural Stint Mandatory

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

**New Delhi:** India is planning to make its undergraduate MBBS course six-and-a-half years long, instead of the present five-and-a-half years.

In a meeting on Saturday, health minister Ghulam Nabi Azad and the Medical Council of India (MCI) discussed amending the MCI Act that would make a one-year rural posting compulsory for all MBBS students before they can become doctors. The proposal was first mooted by former health minister A Ramadoss in 2007.

Speaking to TOI, MCI chairman Dr KK Talwar said, "It is not that we have cleared the proposal. This was discussed on Saturday. In another two weeks time, we will prepare a module on how we can make MBBS doctors go and work in rural areas. The ministry will then take a call."

Dr Talwar, however, cautioned, "We haven't yet decided to introduce the six-and-a-half year MBBS course from next year. The proposal is still in planning stages now." According to Dr Talwar, if the proposal is cleared, India's 40,000 students will be utilized for a year in the National Rural Health Mission.

"Medicine is a long career. One year of rural posting, in which students will be exposed to unique cases and diseases, will only do them good. However, the students will not be paid as interns but as doctors during that extra year of rural posting," Dr Talwar said.

India is facing an acute shortage of human resources in health

—the sting of which is being faced by the flagship NRHM scheme, and the vulnerable population in rural, tribal and hilly areas is extremely underserved.

In 2006, only 26% of doctors in India lived in rural areas, serving 72% of the population. A study found that the urban density of doctors was about four times that in rural areas, and that of nurses about three times higher. As of March, 2010, undue delays in recruitments resulted in vacancies even in available posts at health centres.



**MCI said the proposal is still in the planning stage. But if approved, the govt will utilize the 40,000 students for a year in the National Rural Health Mission to overcome shortage of doctors**

Over 34% of male health workers, 38% of radiographers, 16% of laboratory technicians, 31% of specialists, 20% of pharmacists and 17% of ANMs and 10% of doctors' posts were lying vacant. As per a Planning Commission study, the country is short of six lakh doctors, 10 lakh nurses and 2 lakh dental surgeons, leading to a dismal doctor-patient ratio.

An earlier ministry report had pointed out while only 6.3% of the posts for doctors were vacant on paper, a staggering 67% of them played truant. The ministry had earlier given incentives to MBBS students if they worked in rural areas for a year. It had said working in rural India could stand MBBS students a better chance of getting a post-graduate medical seat. According to the incentive, MBBS doctors who underwent rural service would sit for the PG exam with an added advantage — they would have 10-30 marks guaranteed. "However none of these incentives have paid dividends till now," said Dr Talwar.

Deccan Herald ND 6.2.12 p-6

# Kepler's finds shed light on solar system

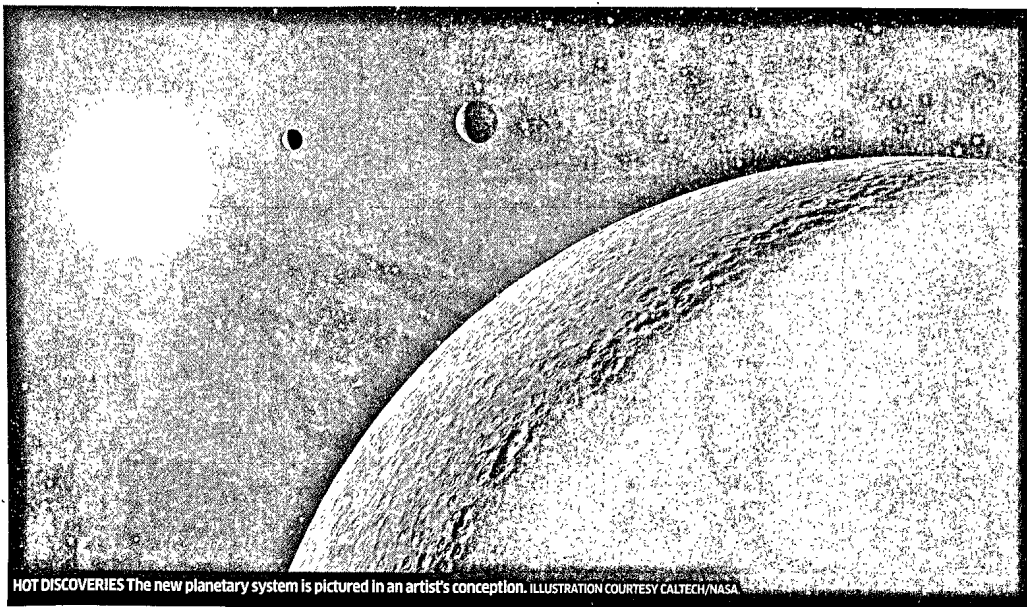
## 3 newly discovered exoplanets, suggest that the solar system is not a cosmic quirk made of weird worlds

Ron Cowen

Adding to its already long roster of firsts, NASA's Kepler spacecraft has found the three smallest extra-solar planets ever detected, all of them smaller than earth, and the most diminutive no larger than Mars. The newly discovered trio forms a miniature planetary system orbiting a cool, dim red dwarf star called KOI-961.

Because they are so close to their star, the three exoplanets are too hot to support life. But unlike most previously known exoplanets, the vast majority of which are Jupiter-scale gas giants, all three are thought to be rocky worlds like earth and the other worlds of the inner solar system. And because red dwarfs are the most common type of star in the Milky Way, the finding suggests that the galaxy may be teeming with rocky planets, with at least some residing in the "habitable region" around those stars, where the temperature would be just right for water to remain liquid and life might have got a foothold. "We need to get a census of how many rocky planets are out there to understand how earth formed, and how common life may be in the Milky Way," notes Sara Seager, an astronomer at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Cambridge who was not part of the latest study.

The discovery bodes well for fulfilling that quest, she adds. "The suggestion, but not proof, is that rocky planets are common and diverse, and that our solar system is not some cosmic quirk composed of weird worlds," agrees study collaborator Geoffrey Marcy of the University of California, Berkeley.



**HOT DISCOVERIES** The new planetary system is pictured in an artist's conception. ILLUSTRATION COURTESY CALTECH/NASA

The Kepler findings were presented at the semi-annual meeting of the American Astronomical Society (AAS) in Austin, Texas, by John Johnson and Philip Muirhead of the California Institute of Technology in Pasadena. A paper describing the discovery has been accepted by the *Astrophysical Journal*.

Most of the stars Kepler examines are similar in mass to the sun, but some are considerably smaller, including one, a red dwarf star some 40 parsecs (130 light years) away from earth, that was among the stars flagged as a candidate for pos-

sessing one or more planets.

### Crucial downsizing

Dubbed KOI-961, for 'Kepler Object of Interest', the red dwarf came under close scrutiny by the researchers. Muirhead realised early on that the Kepler mission team, which concentrates on finding planets around sun-like stars, had over-estimated the brightness and size of the much smaller red dwarfs, which are notoriously difficult to model. On average, the red dwarfs' diameters turned out to be only about half the values listed in Kepler's official star catalogue. And for

KOI-961, in particular, the diameter had to be revised downwards even further: Its actual size is only about one-sixth that of the sun. The revised estimate for the diameter of KOI-961 was crucial to discovering the latest trio, because the size of any transiting planets found by Kepler are measured only relative to the size of their parent star. The tinier the star, the tinier the transiting planet that can be detected.

An essential clue came from a fortuitous e-mail that Johnson received last September from Kevin Apps, an amateur astronomer in Horley, Eng-

land. Apps, a co-author on the *Astrophysical Journal* paper, spends his spare time studying the data on extrasolar planets and nearby stars, and he has an encyclopaedic knowledge of their properties. He alerted the rest of the team that KOI-961 bore an uncanny resemblance in colour and temperature to a well-known dwarf called Barnard's Star.

Follow-up observations with ground-based telescopes confirmed that the two stars were virtual twins. And because the size of Barnard's Star has been very precisely measured, thanks to its location only 1.9

parsecs (six light years) from earth, Johnson's team could gauge the diameter of KOI-961, and therefore its transiting planets, with high precision. At the AAS meeting, the discovery team announced that all three planets orbiting KOI-961 whip around the star in less than two days.

The outermost body is the tiniest, with a diameter half that of earth, or about the same as Mars, and a temperature of about 400 degrees Celsius.

The inner two planets are larger, with diameters about three-fourths that of earth. But that is still smaller than Venus.

Because the planets are all small and close to their star, much of the atmosphere they may once have had would have evaporated, leaving behind bare rock, Marcy says.

Marcy calculates that Kepler could find planets around dwarf stars that are even smaller, with a diameter only 20 per cent that of earth, smaller than our moon.

Finding a multitude of rocky, Mars-sized exoplanets may help shed light on a long-standing problem in understanding the formation of the inner solar system, comments Dimitar Sasselov, an astronomer at the Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics in Cambridge, Mass., who was not part of the study. Scientists have no clear explanation for why Mars, which lies outside the orbits of Venus and earth, is so much smaller than its siblings. The diminutive planetary trio is just the latest in a flurry of discoveries by Kepler.

In December, researchers reported that the orbiting telescope had found the first known earth-sized planets beyond the solar system, although these bodies were also too hot for water to exist on its surface.

Scientists also reported last month that the craft had found its first exoplanet in the habitable zone, although in that case, the orb is much bigger than earth.

The new findings demonstrate that "Kepler is surely robust at finding truly earth-sized planets," says Marcy.

The next goal, he notes, is the mission's reason for being: "to find an earth-sized planet that is lukewarm, where water would be in liquid form to host biology."

**New York Times News Service**

# Now, web helps voters decide

Paromita Pain

**LOS ANGELES:** There was a time when elections meant only sloganeering and long speeches. It is all that now, but just add that dash of technology, and it can be much more. Turning on your phone or computer will give you access to a world of information on what your candidate is all about.

The Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR) and Netapedia are your allies in your search. Set up in 1999 by professors of the Indian Institute of Management (IIM) Ahmedabad, <http://www.adrindia.org/> provides information about all candidates.

It began with a public interest litigation petition they filed in the Delhi High Court, seeking that candidates declare their educational qualification, criminal history and financial assets. "A movement to create an informed voter," says ADR national coordinator Anil Bairwal. The website gets its information from the Election Commission, scans and uploads of all affidavits filed by candidates.

Mr. Bairwal says their first watch was for the 2002 Guj-

arat elections. Now, in conjunction with the National Election Watch, ADR has multiple projects. "We know the reach of our site is small. How many people can access the Internet in the country? But voter literacy is important. That's why we have a toll-free helpline and an SMS system." An offshoot of the main site, <http://www.myneta.info/>, provides information in Hindi.

Literally translated, 'Praja' means 'people.' Praja.Org (<http://praja.org/>), set up in 1998, seeks change by creating a more aware, and thus empowered, citizenry. In a bid to increase "the waning spirit of Mumbai city and increase the interaction between the citizens and the government," the site not just facilitates discussion but also enables the users to get in touch with their elected representatives.

It has information about candidates and goes a step further, addressing the issues in the area and putting up on a discussion board the interactions between the elected representatives and the people of the ward. It works to emphasise the "need for a continuous dialogue and ap-

praisal of the working of the elected representatives" through their many detailed White Papers and newsletters. Information is available in Hindi and English.

Netapedia (<http://www.netapedia.in/>) is among the newer portals around. Started in November 2010 by a group of IITians — Ashish Rathi, Siddharth Bidwan, Rituraj Shukla, Rahul Shrivastava, Premjeet Kumar, Hitesh Lalwani and Sidharth Mishra — it is meant to be an interactive online platform on Indian politicians. It also provides information on political events of note.

"We wanted to set up a portal that would provide information in an easy-to-access style. Our emphasis is on the info as well as the user experience," Mr. Mishra says. Social media is used to encourage visitors to the site to interact.

Newer features are being planned. "Comparative features that will help voters compare, at a glance, the virtues of their candidate of choice as well as a timeline to show which candidate was in the news will soon be available," says Mr. Mishra. Users are encouraged to send in suggestions.



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## PG entrance: Court notice to AIIMS

New Delhi: The All India Institute of Medical Sciences has been asked by the Delhi high court to respond to a plea for scrapping this year's entrance examination for post-graduate medical course, held last month, in the wake of reports of copying at some centres.

Justice Hima Kohli asked AIIMS to file within a week the records pertaining to the examination at all 156 centres where entrance tests were held on January 8.

The court direction came on a petition by a group of PG candidates, who alleged that incidents of cheating and copying, reported from various centres including Noida, was part of a widespread scam.

Seeking a court order for a thorough probe into the alleged scam, the students said the AIIMS, which conducts All India Post-Graduate Medical Entrance Examination, should cancel the January 8 examination and hold it afresh. ■

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## Like! Social networking giant Facebook turns 8

Houston: Facebook, the world's most popular social networking site with an estimated 845 million active subscribers, has turned eight. Since its launch on February 4, 2004 at Harvard University in Mark Zuckerberg's dormitory room, the networking giant that has changed our lives over years has witnessed massive growth and is most likely to have one billion users by August this year.

While, the company CEO Zuckerberg is best known as the man who built Facebook, the company has three other co-founders, all

college roommates and fellow students at Harvard; Eduardo Saverin, Dustin Moskovitz, and Chris Hughes. The four initially built the service exclusively for Harvard students, but it was soon expanded to other colleges and eventually added support for students at various other universities.

Initially before its public launch, it was called 'thefacebook.com'. However, on February 4, 2008, Zuckerberg renamed to domain name and launched what we know today as 'Facebook'.

It now seems almost impossi-



STAY CONNECTED

ble to imagine life without Facebook status updates, friend requests, relationship statuses or

photo tags. Facebook has not only put Zuckerberg in the list of top and youngest millionaires but also helped a lot of start ups, non profits and other companies grow, interact and increase sales.

In January 2009, Compete.com study ranked Facebook as the most used social networking service by worldwide monthly active users. Quantcast estimates Facebook has 138.9 million monthly unique US visitors in May 2011. According to Social Media Today in April 2010, 41.6% of US population had a Facebook account. ■

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## Research activities

Deakin University, Australia, through the 'Deakin India Research Initiative' (DIRI) established in 2008, has partnered with academic institutions and corporates in India to strengthen joint

research activities. DIRI researchers undertake research projects in nanotechnology, stem cells and cancer treatment, amongst others. Indian students working on DIRI projects are also enrolled for

Higher Degree by Research (HDR) programme at Deakin while they are largely based at an Indian research institution with day-to-day supervision provided by a local researcher. Deakin's new office premise in the Capital will be inaugurated on February 20, while the Deakin-TERI Bio Nano Centre in Gual Pahari will be launched on February 22.