

# Newspaper Clips

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INDIAN EXPRESS ND 14/01/2012

p-8

## **EDUCATIONAL PROCESS**

THE race for the UGC top job is hotting up and the 20 shortlisted candidates are all known academicians who are either already holding important positions or were doing so until recently. Prominent among them are Delhi University V-C Deepak Pental, former IGNOU V-C Rajasekhran Pillai, IIT Kanpur director S G Dhande, acting chairman of UGC Ved Prakash, and former V-C of Hyderabad University S E Hasnain. The HRD Ministry was initially in no great hurry to appoint a full-time chairman of UGC, considering the fact that a new super-regulator, National Council of Higher Education and Research, is on the verge of being created. The Bill for NCHER has been introduced in the Parliament but in light of the fate of recent education Bills — many of them have been languishing for a long time and facing objection from Opposition members — the ministry has finally decided that it would be best to get the position filled.

Business Line, ND 14/01/2012 P-8

# Bill on education lacks vision



P.V.INDIRESAN

VISION 2020

**O**n April 19, 2010, Mr Kapil Sibal, Union Minister for Human Resource Development, proposed a new Bill called 'The Prohibition of Unfair Practices in Technical Educational Institutions, Medical Educational Institutions and Universities, Bill, 2010.' He got it approved by the Cabinet a month later on May 19. The Bill has not yet been passed, probably due to strong opposition from the parties con-

This is 320th in the Vision 2020 series. The previous article appeared on December 31.

cerned. Their primary concern lies in its statement that "current national policy supported by several judicial pronouncements is against commercialisation of higher education".

We will consider three of the objectives of the Bill:

**prohibition of accepting admission fee and other fees and charges other than such fee or charges for such admission as declared by the institution in the prospectus for admission;**

**prohibition of admission without specified admission test for selection of the students where such test is required to be conducted as per appropriate statutory authority;**

**prohibition of demanding or charging or accepting, directly or indirectly, capitation fee or demand by donation, by way of consideration for admission to any seat or seats in course or programme of study, by the institutions;**

Further, every person who at the time the offence was committed was in charge of, and was responsible to, the society or trust for the conduct of the business of the socie-

*The proposed law on malpractices in higher education sidesteps the issue of making our universities world-class. Its norms are not in sync with systems in other centres of excellence.*



If Harvard University can accept donations for its endowment fund, our institutions, too, can do the same.

ty or the trust, as well as the society or trust, shall be deemed to be guilty of the offence and be liable to be proceeded against and punished accordingly.

On the other hand, "no suit or other legal proceedings shall be instituted against the Government or officer or authority or person exercising powers or discharging functions under this Act for anything which is in good faith".

#### NO LOFTY INTENTIONS

Thus, the aim of the Bill is essentially negative and not positive. Nowhere does it aim to make our professional institutions world class. When Mr. Sibal took over as minister, he repeatedly expressed his dismay over why no institution in Independent India had produced a Nobel Prize.

Such noble objectives and concerns are absent in the proposed Bill. For a start, let us consider what

changes in national policy may make higher education internationally competitive, even capable of producing Nobel Prize winners and the like. In that case, we should look at how great institutions thrive abroad. For instance, Harvard University has an Endowment Fund of about Rs 100,000 crore and there are many other similar institutions in the US.

They did not acquire such large endowments without accepting donations and incidentally, using them as what we would call "capitation fees". Fundamentally, is there anything wrong in letting institutions accepting donations - with donors naturally getting some returns? That is one issue.

That is, can institutions accept donations and, as a *quid pro quo*, offer to include their names on their buildings, name professorships and even let them have some admissions in return? There may not be

any objection these days to the former two. (When I was Director at IIT Madras even that was prohibited!) The third, relaxing admission criteria is more controversial.

#### ADMISSION CRITERIA

Nowadays, a student may be admitted under relaxed criteria on the basis of caste (or soon probably even religion) and nothing is expected in return from the candidate for the concession shown. Many of them take it as their natural due, and do not even care to support students from their own community.

Suppose, instead, a person offers a substantial donation that will provide scholarships to needy students, or endows a chair at a high salary, or supports a laboratory, or pays for the construction of a building.

Should or should not the institution accept such donations and

even offer admission to the donor's ward if found as fit as a student of the reserved category? That is the first issue.

The second issue pertains to the procedure for admissions. The proposed Bill lays enormous emphasis on entrance tests. I know of a case of the daughter of a student of mine who got an invitation from Harvard University, to the effect that the university was happy to note that she had obtained very high SAT scores and would like her to consider Harvard as a possible option for future study. The university made it clear that the letter was not an offer of admission but only an expression of interest in pursuing further the possibility of the student getting selected.

Please note that Harvard did not offer admission but hinted about only its possibility. Thus, the SAT score was used as a shortlisting criterion and not as the criterion for selection. In fact, the candidate is asked to submit the names of three teachers to whom the university could refer for further evaluation of the personality and other attributes of the applicant.

In this respect, our university institutions are, to put it mildly, arrogant. They never ask the teachers who know their students well what they think of them. In the Western system, those referee reports are crucial. They are used to discover what social and extracurricular activities the applicant is good at.

The overseas university may then ask the candidate to appear for a personal interview. Then, based on SAT scores, performance in the school examinations, referee reports and the evaluation by interview, the candidate is selected.

It may be noted that no suggestion was made in the invitation letter about the fees the candidate would be expected to pay. Such a comprehensive process for admissions is expressly prohibited in the Bill.

(To be continued.)

(The author is a former Director, IIT, Madras. Responses to indiresan@gmail.com and bfeedback@thehindu.co.in)

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# Govt nod to prosecute Google, Facebook, Yahoo

## 18 Other Sites Too Face Stiff IPC Charges

Smriti Singh | TNN

New Delhi: The government on Friday granted sanction to prosecute social networking websites, including Google, Facebook and Yahoo and 18 others, for allegedly promoting enmity between classes and causing prejudice to

### ► Five-year jail, P 17

national integration.

In a report given to metropolitan magistrate Sudesh Kumar, the depart-

## SITES UNDER SCRUTINY

► Dept of infotech says **sufficient material to proceed against Google, Facebook, Yahoo** and 18 other websites

► Grants sanction to proceed against accused under Sec 153-A, 153-B and 295-A of IPC ie **promoting enmity and causing prejudice to national integration**



► On Dec 23, court had issued summons to 21 sites for alleged criminal conspiracy, sale of obscene books and obscene objects to young persons. These **offences carry max jail term of 3 years**

► Court said it **needed sanction of central or state govt or district magistrate** to summon accused companies on tougher charges

► With govt nod, **the new charges carry max term of 5 yrs**

ment of information technology said there was sufficient material to proceed against the 21 websites and

granted sanction under section 196 of the Criminal Procedure Code to "proceed against the accused perso-

ns in the complaint". It said the prosecution was needed for national harmony and was in national interest.

"The sanctioning authority has personally gone through the entire records and material produced before him and after considering and examining the same, he is satisfied that there is sufficient material to proceed against the accused persons under section 153-A, 153-B and 295-A of the IPC," the report stated.

The court had on December 23 issued summons to 21 social networking websites for alleged offences of criminal conspiracy, sale of obscene books and sale of obscene objects to young persons.

MINT ND 14,112 P-10

# IIMs to set up centres to raise funds

By PRASHANT K. NANDA  
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NEW DELHI

The elite Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs) on Friday decided to set up development centres to be run by experts and independent professionals to raise funds from alumni networks and philanthropists.

These professionals will work with the two groups to raise funds. At the IIM directors' meet in Delhi, which was also attended by human resources development (HRD) minister Kapil Sibal, the London Business School (LBS) was invited to present a case

study on how it raises funds.

"The older IIMs can set up centres with an exclusive aim of fostering relationships and raising funds and endowments. The IIMs meet discussed this and (they) are quite positive about the prospect," said a senior HRD ministry official requesting not to be named as "this is an internal meeting of the IIMs".

The above official said the newer IIMs may opt for setting up a single platform as they don't have an alumni network like the older ones. "LBS could be the role model for the entire project."

As *Mint* reported on Friday, the meeting also took into account a

government committee report on the issue which suggested that the IIMs follow a model that identifies prospective fund givers, solicits money from them and keeps them informed about how it is being used.

"Fund-raising is a long process and we discussed why we have not been able to do it successfully," IIM Raipur director B.S. Sahay said. He said two senior LBS officials present at the meeting spoke about their experience.

"LBS is a contemporary B-School to some of our older IIMs, and if they can do it, why cannot we," Sahay said. The people involved here are professionals and have experience of raising endowments, he added.

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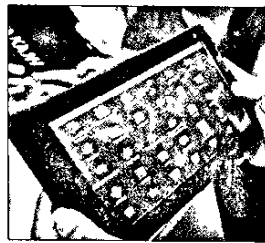
p-8

# Aakash in turf war, govt to bid for new version

ANUBHUTI VISHNOI  
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 13

THE Human Resource Development Ministry's showpiece \$35 tablet, Aakash, is caught in a turf war between the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT)-Jodhpur and Datawind, the private Canadian firm engaged in its manufacture.

Having intervened several times to make the partnership work, the Centre has now decided to junk the pilot project and bring out a completely "made in India" Aakash after inviting bids over the next one month. The Department of Telecom will help develop specifications



for an upgraded version.

Datawind has also been told to stop using the name 'Aakash' for its own commercial tablet Ubislate 7, priced a little higher than the \$35 Aakash.

Aakash was developed following a six-year project, with a Rs 4,772 lakh contract given to IIT-Jodhpur for a "low-cost access cum computing device". The IIT-

Jodhpur's role was limited to procuring and testing around 100,000 devices.

According to sources, the basis of the first row was the decision of the institute to change the technical specifications for 'Aakash' well after Datawind had bagged the contract, with the latter agreeing to incorporate the same within the price cap of \$35. But when Datawind supplied the devices, the IIT found many of these to be unsatisfactory.

The IIT was told to define the testing protocols but Datawind objected to the same, calling these more suitable to the 'rugged' military tablets customised to function in hardy weather.

The two partners also bickered over the commercial aspects of the project, and over Datawind allegedly claiming more than due credit for the tablet.

While IIT-Jodhpur Director Prof Prem Kalra refused to comment, Suneet Singh Tuli, CEO, Datawind, confirmed the differences. "IIT-Jodhpur has come up with a test criterion that is based on Milspec810 (US military specifications for ruggedised devices), which was not part of the original tender...The Ministry is acting to help facilitate matters", Tuli said in an emailed response. He also played down the differences, saying attempts were on to resolve these amicably.

# Contractual dispute brings down Aakash

Jyotsna Bhatnagar & Kirtika Suneja

Ahmedabad/New Delhi, Jan 13

**A**AKASH, the government's ambitious \$50 tablet project for students, has hit a roadblock with the supplier of the gadget, London-based Datawind, running into a dispute with IIT Rajasthan, the nodal agency for implementing the project. Datawind says it has sold out the old version of the tablet and new orders will be taken only for upgraded machines.

The Aakash project, unveiled by human resource development minister Kapil Sibal in October, has been a non-starter owing to the "dismal performance" of the pilot tablets distributed among students, according to an analyst.

Speaking to *FE*, a top official of the HRD ministry

closely associated with the project admitted a new dispute has emerged between Datawind and IIT Rajasthan, but refused to elaborate. Another official clarified to *FE* that there were no problems with the machines already distributed. "IIT Rajasthan wants the delivery by March 31 but Datawind says that it will now give an upgraded version of the instrument. We will see if these issues are reconcilable or not," he said.

When contacted, Datawind CEO Suneet Singh Tuli said: "We put a sold-out sign on the basic Aakash tablet a month back and indicated to the market that version is at the end of its life, and the next generation will be with upgraded features" He, however, said this was not a new stand taken by the company as this product enhancement was

announced during the October launch. "There is no indication that the project will be shelved," he said.

Sources say that Datawind and ministry officials will meet on Monday to discuss the matter.

When the idea of producing an affordable tablet for students was first mooted by the HRD minister in July 2010, the government had indicated that 100,000 tablets

would be available in the market within two months. Subsequent to that, when the formal announcement was made in October last year along with 500 prototypes being distributed on a pilot basis, Sibal had said that the device would be available in the market within two months. That date too was postponed to March 31 and as things stand now, it is unclear when Aakash

tablets will be available in the market.

According to a source, Datawind had committed it would supply 30,000 tablets as per the old specifications and 70,000 as per the new specifications formalised after the trial run. "Datawind has now communicated to us its inability to deliver these as per the March 31 deadline," the ministry official revealed. However, he hastened to add that the glitches now being faced were "routine contractual issues which can occur in any tie-up".

Interestingly, though Aakash has been beset with problems ever since it was conceived, the HRD ministry has been keeping in abeyance the One Laptop Per Child (OLPC) project of the prestigious Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) that has been avail-

able to it for the past four years under the pretext of creating an even cheaper computer than OLPC's \$100 triple operating system laptop. Aakash was developed as part of the ministry's aim to link 25,000 colleges and 400 universities in an e-learning programme. Originally projected as a "\$35 laptop", the device will be sold to the government at \$50 and will be distributed at a government-subsidised price of \$35. A commercial version of Aakash is currently marketed as UbiSlate 7+ at a price of \$60.

Satish Jha, CEO, OLPC India, said: "I advised Mr Sibal very clearly not to go for anything which is not proven or stable. Any new product is bound to have unknown challenges and it would take a couple of years to stabilise them."

■ Continued on Page 2



**DATAWIND IS INVOLVED IN A DISPUTE WITH IIT RAJASTHAN. THE GLITCHES ARE BELIEVED TO BE CONTRACTUAL ISSUES THAT COULD OCCUR IN ANY TIE-UP**

## Contractual dispute...

Commenting on the viability of Aakash, Jha said: "While OLPC India fully supports the HRD ministry's aspiration of a cheaper computer for students, OLPC should be seen as a complete offering including hardware, software, all applications and networking for education. Combining all these costs, OLPC laptops turn out to be cheaper than any other computer even if it was priced at zero dollars. Moreover, the OLPC laptops have been around for four years and are in the hands of 3 million children in more than 45 countries and have made a transformational difference in the lives of children using them."

"The question is not of device but education," he added. "Today, given the status of technologies, it is not possible to create a meaningful computer below the cost of OLPC laptops."

Pertinently, though the Centre has been stonewalling OLPC's forays, the governments of Kerala, Manipur, Himachal Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh had already ordered OLPC laptops totalling more than 400,000 for introduction in their primary and middle schools while Gujarat, Rajasthan, Orissa, Haryana and Madhya Pradesh have evinced interest in procuring the PCs subject to the Centre's contribution.

The Hindu ND 14/01/2012 P-9

# Dreams on wheels

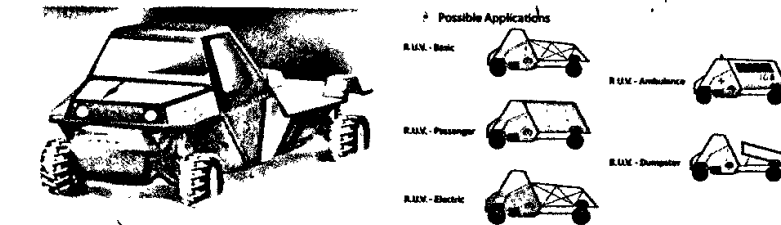
A young engineer is developing a unique rural utility vehicle at the National Institute of Design

Preeti Mehra

If 26-year-old Abhinav Das gets lucky, the rural utility vehicle he has developed will be zooming down our hinterland before long. Currently being incubated at the National Institute of Design, Ahmedabad, it endeavours to be a legal, safer and affordable replacement to the *Jugaad* — the illegal contraption being used in rural areas at present.

Though a wee bit young, this automobile engineer left his job with component company Sona Koyo to pursue his dream of providing the country its first legal rural utility vehicle. "Transportation is the biggest enabler of economic activities and lack of it in rural areas has resulted in the great rural-urban divide. Though I knew it was going to be tough going, I wanted to design a vehicle that would make a difference. While 70 per cent of our population lives in villages, our automobile industry caters largely to the urban areas."

Abhinav fortunately has the solid backing of his family. His sister Sneha has even joined him in the project. Along with friends they set up a start up — EVOMO Research & Advancement Pvt. Ltd. — that has designed the ultra low cost, off-road rural utility vehicle (code named RUV) that is ready to replace the illegal, dangerous *Jugaads* that currently dot the rural landscape. Abhinav re-



DESIGNS ON THE ROAD: Sketches of the RUV

calls how their research showed that though *Jugaads* are illegal, they are hot selling items in rural areas as they carry both freight as well as passengers. "These contraptions have also led to a number of accidents resulting in deaths, to the extent that in October 2010 the High Court of Rajasthan ordered a ban on such vehicles."

Though Abhinav has put together a good team of advisors for EVOMO's vehicle project, his success hinges on the inevitable — funding. The RUV ran its first tests at the NID campus a few months ago and needs just around 14 months to be perfected for the market. EVOMO's inability to attract venture capital for the project is the biggest obstacle that has to be overcome. He, of course is most grateful to NID's director for noticing his work at an Auto Expo and incubating his idea.

"Till now NID and my friends from India and abroad have seen us through, but we need funding to make

it to the market," he says. What he feels is going against him is that he has 'desi' qualifications and no fancy Harvard-like tag.

"To get seed or venture capital funding you need to be well networked, but I'm not going to give up. I will keep trying to convince investors." EVOMO's RUV will cost less than Rs 1.5 lakh, have a steel and fibre glass body and give a mileage of close to 20 kilo-

metres per litre. "We've chosen a Euro II engine from Greaves Cotton. It will be rugged to suit the terrain it is meant for and can be put to several uses — as a basic goods transporter, a passenger vehicle, an ambulance, a dumpster and later could be turned into an electric vehicle as well," he explains. He however admits that as of now the RUV is not meant for a mountain terrain.

Abhinav says that one of his main aims is to provide rural buyers vehicle property rights and easier financing than is currently available. He feels the rural population today has a hard time with the *Jugaad* for if it is lifted by the police, it is not returned as the vehicle simply does not have certification. Nor is organised credit available for it.

The RUV, he says, would be manufactured in small garages in the same way as the *Jugaad*. This would help create jobs in rural areas as well as give a legal transport option in the country side. His

inspiration for the vehicle has come from two international projects — the Mobius in Kenya and the DriveBUV from Haiti.

Mobius Motors builds inexpensive vehicles "by integrating off-the-shelf parts within a durable and safe tubular steel frame". It is known for being a safe, functional and affordable form of transport in Africa. DriveBUV (the abbreviation stands for Basic Utility Vehicle) is a low cost vehicle put together by the Institute for Affordable Transportation that's "bridging the gap between vital services and people in need".

Abhinav says enthusiastically, "The product we are working on has several advantages. It has a proprietary chassis design, can be easily transformed from a people carrier to goods carrier and could perform agricultural functions like pumping water, carrying load etc. with the help of a Power take off. It is powered by a 600 cc diesel engine, which could be changed into a relatively greener power train once the technology is available."

He is as enthusiastic about his advisory board which consists of K L Mukesh, COO of Tata Sky, V K Sinha from IIT-Kanpur who is now with the KK Birla Group, Mahesh Krovvidi; COO of the National Design Incubation Centre, NID Ahmedabad, Barun Mitra of the Liberty Institute and Dr. Abhishek Nirjar, Professor, Strategic Management and Entrepreneurship at IIM Lucknow.

His team of five — young and enthusiastic like him — is mostly working gratis. "I can hardly afford to pay them, but they have stuck on. We are all in it together for the love of it," he says with a commitment rare to come by.



DRIVING AT SUCCESS: Abhinav and Sneha

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# E-journal row: HC blow to AICTE

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

**Chennai:** The Madras high court has restrained the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE), the statutory body established for the development of technical education in the country, from taking any coercive action against any institution for not subscribing an e-journal. The AICTE had recently put out a list of e-journals compelling self-financing engineering colleges to subscribe to them at mandatory rates for the academic year 2012-13.

Justice Vinod K Sharma on Wednesday passed the interim order on the writ petitions filed by the Association of Management of Coimbatore Anna University-affiliated Colleges and the Consortium of Self-Financing Professional Arts and Science Colleges in Tamil Nadu.

“The authorities are restrained from taking any coercive action against the institutions for not subscribing to a

particular journal detailed in annexure 1,” the judge said. The matter will be taken up for further hearing in March.

Saying that the conditions in the new handbook were arbitrary, senior counsel N R Chandran submitted that AICTE could not compel institutions to purchase e-journals of particular publishers at pre-fixed rates that too without consulting the institutions concerned. Since there were about 5,500 engineering colleges in the country, the annual subscription fee would be in the range of Rs 825 crore, he said.

The Association of Management of Coimbatore Anna University-affiliated Colleges, which was the first to approach the court, said it was unfair for the AICTE to insist that colleges should purchase selected foreign e-journals at exorbitant cost through a private agency, the petition said, adding that, “institutions cannot be forced to bear such arbitrary, exorbitant and additional burden”.

Mahamedha ND 14-Jan-12

P-13

## त्रिपुरा में आईआईआईटी की स्थापना होगी :सिब्वल

अगरतला (ए)। केन्द्रीय मानव संसाधन विकास मंत्री कपिल सिब्वल ने त्रिपुरा के मुख्यमंत्री माणिक सरकार को आश्वस्त किया है कि 12वीं पंचवर्षीय योजना में राज्य में भारतीय सूचना प्रौद्योगिकी संस्थान की स्थापना की जाएगी। श्री सरकार ने दोहराया कि केन्द्र ने राज्य में आईआईआईटी और आईआईएम स्थापित करने के लिए जो शर्त रखी है राज्य सरकार उन्हें नहीं मान सकती।

उन्होंने कहा कि त्रिपुरा का भौगोलिक क्षेत्र छोटा है जिसके कारण इन संस्थानों के लिए केन्द्र सरकार द्वारा रखी गई शर्तों को स्वीकार करना संभव नहीं है। श्री सरकार ने कहा कि मैंने श्री सिब्वल से कहा कि राज्य में बांग्लादेश के लिए ही शिक्षा का विस्तार नहीं किया जाए बल्कि दक्षिण पूर्वी एशियाई देशों को भी ध्यान में रखकर यहां शैक्षणिक संस्थानों की स्थापना हो। हम समूचे क्षेत्र के लिए प्रतिभाएं उपलब्ध करा सकते हैं।