

# Newspaper Clips

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## Lagging in science

More funds alone won't do

**P**RIME MINISTER Manmohan Singh's observation — voiced at the 99th Indian Science Congress at Bhubaneswar on Tuesday — that China has overtaken India in science should not surprise anyone, given the widespread neglect of this area. Apart from poor spending on research and development, which is less than 1 per cent of the GDP and needs to be doubled, there are no incentives for school/college/university students to excel in sciences. Educational institutions in general and those in the rural areas in particular lack the infrastructure necessary for the pursuit of science. There are no role models to motivate students.

As society values commercial success more than academic excellence, IITs have emerged as the most sought-after academic destinations for students. IIT graduates and MBAs are offered jobs with fat salaries, which make newspaper headlines. Scientists, technologists, doctors, agronomists and the like work hard quietly in their chosen field, retire and then die unsung. Barring those who join private firms or hospitals, they lead a modest life. We as a country do not value science and do not respect our scientists. The best of the scientists and doctors have to work under some IAS officer or an ill-qualified minister.

Even when it comes to issues where scientists should have the last word, the generalists brush their opinion aside. Take the case of Bt brinjal. A panel of scientists had cleared it for cultivation but the minister concerned opened the issue to public debate. Social activists resorted to street protests, putting the years of hard work and field trials in cold storage. Bt cotton, fortunately, was spared and has benefited farmers immensely. India needs to push up food production and power generation to meet the needs of a growing population. But nuclear energy evokes strong emotions among certain people. It is not enough to allocate more funds and rope in private firms to boost research in sciences. The mindset that distrusts scientists needs to change. Indians by and large have not yet developed a scientific temper.

# To Boost R&D

## India must tackle these four challenges to get ahead in science

India has fallen behind China in scientific research, the Prime Minister said at the 99th session of the Indian Science Congress. Lamenting the obvious is easy. To change things, four things need to be tackled. One, Indian industry must have the incentive to invest in R&D, hire PhDs in droves, fund research in universities and lay the ground for a qualitatively different supply response from those who generate scientific resources. For this, what we need is not more tax incentives for R&D, but further and sharp reduction in protection from external competition. Only when driven to a situation where technology purchasable off the shelf will no longer suffice to stay in the reckoning will industry begin to invest in R&D. The second thing to be tackled is to end the colonial legacy of separation of research from teaching. Universities are, with some honourable exceptions, teaching shops while research is carried out by specialised institutes. This is not how research takes place in any advanced country. To make the change, huge investments are needed in universities, to upgrade infrastructure and to attract talent. Research leaders at universities must share in the value of the intellectual property they produce. The third challenge is to end the sclerotic, hierarchy-driven, bureaucratic administrative structure in Indian research units. We need to bring to India not only talent bred in labs doing cutting-edge research abroad but also their culture. For that, stop appointing people schooled in the old culture to head new institutes. The Department of Biotechnology has some impressive initiatives to stimulate entrepreneurship among researchers. Build on and expand such initiatives.

The National Innovation Council has sought to tackle the fourth challenge: creating a fast communication infrastructure. High-speed broadband must be ubiquitous and cheap. The government is building optical fibre networks connecting panchayats. But from these nodes to users, data will need wireless broadband to travel. The current policy stance makes that broadband costly by making spectrum pricey. This, too, must change.

## 'We are well prepared for CMAT'

IT training and education company Aptech has bagged the contract to conduct the AICTE's maiden management entrance test – Common Management Admission Test (CMAT) – for admission to post-graduate diploma in management institutes. The test will begin next month. PRAVIR ARORA, executive vice-president (enterprise business) at Aptech, tells M Saraswathy how Aptech is prepared to ensure smooth conduct of CMAT. Excerpts:

### How is Aptech preparing for CMAT scheduled this February?

CMAT is a very big and good opportunity for us. The way we are executing CMAT is exactly the way people are expecting it to be. We are conducting the test in 61 cities across the country. A student can also choose the date on which he wishes to appear, apart from choosing his examination centre. There will be more than one centre in places where

there is a surge of additional students. Trial tests for CMAT have already been conducted in 10 cities, under the supervision of external observers. We are prepared to handle approximately 2.5 lakh students, expected to appear for CMAT. We are using UPS along with gensets to meet the necessary power needs in cities that may face problems of power-cuts.

### There were reports of technical glitches in the trial tests of CMAT. Comment.

I have not seen any technical glitches. Contrary to media reports, the trial test was open on December 12. Moreover, there were articles saying that the questions in the CMAT trial test were irrelevant. Our idea was to initially give the students a look and feel of the test engine. Therefore, the test purposely had irrelevant questions. Later, when there was negative reportage against this decision, we immediately rectified it. For registration too, we have enabled both online and offline mechanism, though it has been observed that online payment has been more preferred.

### What were the challenges you faced while preparing for CMAT? Do you think the

### experience would be better than CAT?

We have made sure that we up the bar every time. The issue that we are facing is more of a logistical nature. For instance, some colleges are only ready to provide us with UPS and not gensets. In that case, we have to procure it from other sources. We are hoping that this experience will be better than CAT. We have come a long way and the market has also understood the on-line pattern very well. It has also been ensured that physically handicapped students do not have to face any difficulty. We will try our best to offer the city a student has opted for, and have more centres wherever possible. Our team has simulated all possible things that would go wrong, so I can say that we are well prepared.

For the full interview, please visit [www.business-standard.com](http://www.business-standard.com)

# Cost of foreign education rises as ₹ falls

To tide over fund crunch, students are either looking at alternative sources of funding like scholarships or picking up part-time jobs

KALPANA PATHAK & ABHJIT LELE  
Mumbai, 4 January

Nayan Upadhyay of Mumbai is hoping the new year will bring some cheer for the depreciating rupee. Upadhyay, who wishes to pursue a Masters course in International Business, is suddenly feeling the heat. "The way rupee is behaving, I am wondering if I will have to shelve my study plans and take up a job. The depreciation has already pushed my course fee up by 18 per cent. This is in addition to the living expenses," he says.

Upadhyay's course for 21 months begins in April 2012. He will have to shell out a total of ₹34.2 lakh for the course — ₹23 lakh for tuition fee and Rs 11.14 lakh towards living expenses. Had Upadhyay sought admission in 2011, he would have saved over ₹5.38 lakh.

In the past one year, rupee has depreciated over 18 per cent. In January 2011, rupee was at 44.72. It ended the year at a low of 53.07.

The increase in study cost is directly proportional to the percentage of rupee depreciation. Also, rising cost of buying US dollars (plus a 2 per cent bank rate on the rise), increases the cost Indian students have to shell out for studying abroad. This means that even if the bank sanctions, say about Rs 15 lakh loan now, it would yield only about \$28,000, which otherwise would have yielded over \$33,000. Thus, the students have to look



**KNOWLEDGE HURDLE** Rupee depreciation, coupled with the uncertainty in the global economy, may have also led to slower growth of education loans

for additional sources of finance to gather almost 20 per cent more money.

"There are many deserving and worthy candidates from humble background who apply for higher studies abroad. For them, arranging the funds is not an easy task despite their strong academic records and the availability of over 50 scholarships. The weak rupee has resulted in higher cost of financing, and some families have indeed seen their savings fall short and their dreams of a better future shattered," said Mohit Gundecha, CEO, YourNextLeap.com, a Pune-based online career and academic counsellor.

Indian Banks generally put a cap on providing education loans for higher studies abroad, and this ranges between

Rs 15 and 20 lakh. Owing to the current rupee downfall, this disbursed amount would be insufficient for MS aspirants.

To tide over this fund crunch, say overseas education consultants, students are either looking at alternative sources of funding like scholarships or picking on campus part-time jobs, etc. For many who are not able to arrange for either, waiting for the rupee to cool off is the only option.

Vinayak Kamat of Gee Bee World, a Mumbai-based overseas education consultancy, says students who are solely relying on bank loan and then working back in India on starting level salaried jobs will be worst affected.

A Krishna Kumar, managing director (national banking group), State Bank of

India, says the impact of depreciation in rupee value will not be seen in the current year but it will do so in the next academic year. Banks will work out cost economics in March-April this year.

### Education loan growth slows

Rupee's depreciation coupled with the uncertainty in the global economy may have also led to a slower growth of education loans. "Global uncertainty, which has probably played on the minds of risk managers at banks, could have led to slow growth in education loans. They may now perceive higher risks for students, as far as job potential is concerned," said Prashant Bhonsle, country head, Credila Financial Services, an HDFC Ltd venture.

Data from the Reserve Bank of India shows that year-on-year rate of disbursements of education loans grew only 17 per cent in October, against 24 per cent in October 2010.

Credila, however, says Bhonsle has experienced more than two-and-a-half-times surge in applications in the last two months over the corresponding period last year. Credila offers education loans for over Rs 20 lakh. The value of loans for overseas studies is higher (above 7.5 lakh), and hence banks take collateral for security. Currently, loans up to Rs 4 lakh do not require any collateral, and loans up to Rs 7 lakh require a third-party guarantee.

The education loan business is in direct co-relation with the education sector. How the sector evolves — the potential employability and the courses being launched — has an impact on repayments and risk perception of people who lend to students. As the sector is evolving fast, it makes the domain challenging for lenders like banks, where research done on the sector is minimal.

Also, thanks to higher interest rates, many people are using their own savings, rather than taking education loans. "With the rupee depreciating, foreign education would become more expensive, and this might reduce the offtake of education loans further, as people may go for higher education in India," said M Narendra, chairman and managing director, Indian Overseas Bank.

# Reference material at Delhi University to go online soon

**Shaswati Das**

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**NEW DELHI:** While librarians in most Delhi University (DU) colleges unanimously agree that the system of issuing books is "smooth," students have a different story to tell — claiming that popular reference material is always in short supply.

The situation, however, is likely to change soon, with plans to make the reference material for all courses available online.

"We have received several complaints from students regarding the poor condition of books in libraries. We are trying our level best to make reference material available to students online or through other sources," said Dinesh Singh, vice chancellor, DU.

"We, however, don't know how long it will take for the change to come about as this is a big problem, which colleges too have neglected," he added.

Having faced regular roadblocks in finding reference material, students have welcomed this piece of information.

"Our library has 10 copies of a particular book which is shared between us and students of physics (hons). Of this, teachers issue a few copies and around 90 of us have to share the remaining copies," said Rahul Ranjan, a final year student of BSc (physical sciences) from Kirori Mal College.

"Teachers have told us to make groups and study, but that is impossible. It becomes very difficult for us to keep chasing that one book for days together," he added.

Till the time the plan is accomplished, students have

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**RAGHU CHITTARI**  
student, FMS

offered immediate alternatives to the problem.

"If these books are made available online, it'll be great. But for starters, the colleges must at least try to give us the essential readings in a booklet form at the beginning of every semester. This is also done at the the Indian Institutes of Management," said, Raghu Chittari, an MBA student from DU's Faculty of Management Studies (FMS).

The situation is diametrically opposite abroad.

In most universities abroad, students put in a requisition for a book even if it is out of stock and the librarians inform the students once the book has been sourced from elsewhere.

In DU, however, not only is the wait for a book endless, but the lackadaisical attitude of librarians has left students in a quandary.

"Librarians are extremely unhelpful when it comes to issuing books. They don't care about the condition of the books or their placement in the library. It is really not our responsibility to hunt for them. It is their job to give it to us when we need material," said Ira Jain (name changed), a first year Economics (hons) student of Hansraj College.

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## On CIC order, CBSE reveals engg exam's answer keys

**Akshaya Mukul | TNN**

**New Delhi:** After initially refusing to part with the answer keys of All India Engineering Entrance Examination (AIEEE) of 2010 and 2011, Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) — under order from central information commission (CIC) — has finally given them, but without the question papers.

In its September 30, 2011, order, CIC had asked CBSE to give answer keys in line with decisions of the Commission and the courts in this regard. RTI applicant Rajeew Kumar had asked for answer keys along with question papers and model answers.

But the demand for model answers was dropped after CBSE said court cases are underway. In 2007, CIC's order had resulted in IITs disclosing answer keys, question papers etc of JEE, 2006, to Kumar.

In August, 2011, even the Supreme Court said that all examining bodies should permit examinees to have inspection of their answer books. Apart from IIT-JEE, examination bodies of state governments have started disclosing answer keys along with question papers.

Kumar has written to CBSE stating that without question booklet, the supplied answer keys are of no value. At times even wrong questions have been asked — as happened in case of JEE in the last two years.

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# Universities of Southampton, Liverpool offer new ventures

The University of Southampton has invited applications for its pre-Master's programmes.

On successful completion of the programme, candidates have been promised a place in the university's Master's programmes on Accounting & Finance, Accounting & Management, Corporate Risk & Security Management, Human Resource Management, Knowledge & Information Systems Management, Management & Marketing Management.

There is no application deadline, but the University has advised applicants to allow at least two months between applying and commencement of the programme.

The University of Liverpool has invited

research scholars to be part of its international laser research network. The consortium, which has 17 openings, seeks to develop laser applications for particle accelerators.

The scholars will have to be in the early stage of their research, inside four years, and should not have been awarded a doctoral degree. Among the participants, only two will be based at the University.

The rest will work throughout Europe in countries like Czech Republic, Spain, France and Romania.

Indira Gandhi National Open University in collaboration with IIT-Kanpur is organising a two-day workshop on "Educational resource planning" beginning this Friday.



It is aimed at providing a common platform to university administrators and faculty members to share their ideas on development and implementation of education resource planning modules in universities and other educational institutions.

The workshop has the support of Jamia Millia Islamia, Aligarh Muslim University and IIT-Roorkee, among others.

Accurate Institute of Management & Technology, Noida, has invited applications for its post-graduate diploma

management courses.

Post-Graduate Diploma in Management, Management (Marketing Management) and Management (International Business) are the two-year, full-time courses on offer.

A Bachelor's degree with minimum scores of 50 per cent is the eligibility criterion for application. CAT/MAT scores, past academic records and performances in group discussion and personal interview will be the benchmark for selections.

The criterion for final selection is based on scores in CAT/MAT, group discussion and personal interview.

Credit is also given to past academic achievements and work experience.

The courses also offer dual specialisations.

Aligarh Muslim University's J.N. Medical College is going to conduct health surveys on the population around the Narora Atomic Power Station mainly to screen people for cancers and congenital anomalies and trends in chronic illnesses.

The college's community medicine department will be carrying out the survey under the project, "Epidemiological survey of population in and around Narora Atomic Power Station", which has been granted to them by the Nuclear Power Corporation of India.

The objective is to assess the health effects of low-dose ionising radiation on the population around the power station.

— Vijetha S.N.