

Newspaper Clips

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P-7

IIT-D faculty writes to Prez in support of ex-director

NEW DELHI: IIT-Delhi teachers have written a letter to President Pranab Mukherjee, protesting against malicious allegations against the institution's director RK Shivgaonkar, who resigned from the post on December 26.

It was said Shivgaonkar resigned after an inquiry was initiated about a research academy in Mauritius. Later, the institution clarified that director's resignation was for personal reasons and not relat-

ed to the academy in Mauritius.

"We, the faculty forum of IIT Delhi, unanimously and unitedly extend our full support to our director. We vehemently protest the malicious allegations and the politicisation of issues in the press and media," Ram Lal, president faculty forum, said in a statement.

The resolution was passed at the general body meeting of the faculty forum held on January 5 after which the letter was sent to the President.

HTC

IIT-D faculty backs Shevgaonkar

Sources in the HRD Ministry attributed the director's resignation to an ongoing inquiry

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, JANUARY 6

WHILE the HRD Ministry is yet to accept the resignation of IIT-Delhi Director Raghunath K Shevgaonkar, the institution's faculty is firmly backing the Director.

In a resolution following a general body meeting on Monday, IIT-Delhi's Faculty Forum said it "unanimously and unitedly" extends its "full support" to Shevgaonkar. "We vehemently protest the malicious allegations and the politicisation of issues in the press

and media," the resolution, which was sent to President Pranab Mukherjee, stated. The President is the Visitor of all IITs.

Shevgaonkar's resignation has triggered a controversy, with some reports suggesting that he quit after the Ministry allegedly pressured

him to release salary dues of nearly Rs 70 lakh to former IIT-Delhi faculty and now BJP functionary Subramanian Swamy for the period between 1972 and 1991. The HRD ministry,

while denying such reports, has set up an inquiry into IIT-Delhi's MoU with Mauritius Research Council, claiming that it violates the IIT Act. Sources in the ministry have attributed Shevgaonkar's resignation to an inquiry being set up in the matter.

IIT-Delhi had earlier sought to clarify its stand on the issue, explaining that there was no violation in setting up the centre in Mauritius. The IIT-Delhi faculty forum had come out in strong support of Shevgaonkar last week as well, urging him to withdraw his resignation.

Resignation row: IIT-Delhi faculty forum backs director

<http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/resignation-row-iit-delhi-faculty-forum-backs-director/articleshow/45781611.cms>



In a mail last week to the faculty members and students of IIT-Delhi, he had said it was his last new year message as the Director of IIT Delhi.

NEW DELHI: The faculty forum of IIT Delhi has passed a resolution strongly backing its director Raghunath Shevgaonkar in the wake of his resignation from the post a few days back citing some "unforeseen situations".

"We, the faculty forum of IIT Delhi, unanimously and unitedly extend our full support to our director. We vehemently protest the malicious allegations and the politicisation of issues in the press and media," the forum said in its resolution, a copy of which was sent to President Pranab Mukherjee, the Visitor to the IITs.

The HRD Ministry is yet to accept Shevgaonkar's resignation even as the latter has gone on leave. In a mail last week to the faculty members and students of IIT-Delhi, he had said it was his last new year message as the Director of IIT Delhi and that he was awaiting his relieving order.

Shevgaonkar, whose resignation had triggered a controversy, has attributed his decision to some "unforeseen situations".

"Towards the end of the year... some unforeseen situations developed and I had to decide to step down from my position," he had said. Shevgaonkar, however, did not elaborate on the factors that had led to his decision to quit.

A statement issued by IIT-Delhi right after the resignation had attributed the move to "personal reasons".

In his mail, Shevgaonkar had said there is a need to convey a positive image about the internal functioning of the institute to the outside world.

"Disagreement is an essential part of a healthy academic environment. However, care needs to be taken that the internal differences are not exploited by the outsiders to affect our functioning," he had said.

After his resignation kicked up a row, the Centre said it has appointed a committee to look into the legality of an MoU signed with Mauritius during Shevgaonkar's tenure for setting up of a campus there even as IIT said the pact had approvals from the government.

HRD Ministry officials have maintained that there was no pressure on Shevgaonkar to resign while IIT Delhi had said the resignation was "not connected to any other matter being reported in the press".

Certain media reports had claimed that Shevgaonkar was under pressure to approve a proposal for a cricket academy on the IIT campus and to clear dues of Rs 70 lakh to former IIT professor and BJP leader Subramanian Swamy.

Dr S S Mantha relinquishes AICTE Chairman Office

<http://www.mbauniverse.com/article/id/8268/AICTE-Chairman>

Known for implementing significant changes to bring transparency and accountability in the AICTE administration, Dr S S Mantha has relinquished the office of Chairman AICTE on January 2, 2014. Confirming the development, Dr S S Mantha said "Yes, I have demitted office on January 2 after a very fruitful tenure in AICTE as its Chairman."

Dr Mantha joined All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) in March 2009 as its Vice Chairman and took over as Chairman, AICTE on January 5, 2012. During his tenure he brought in more transparency and accountability in AICTE Administration. He implemented the e-Governance driven approval processes, which reduced the discretionary powers of local administration, and brought in more transparency and ease.

Dr Mantha also successfully initiated CMAT exam, which has become the largest MBA exams in the country after CAT.

Dr Mantha's term was also marked with a skirmish with 300 odd PGDM B-schools after he released a notification on December 2010, which had far reaching implications on the autonomy of PGDM B-schools. B-schools went to Court and got relief from the Court, which stayed the notification.

An alumnus of VJTI, Mumbai Dr. SS Mantha was a professor and HOD Department of Mechanical Engineering at VJTI where he taught for 2 decades. Subsequently he was appointed the pro vice chancellor, SNDT Women's University by the Government of Maharashtra. He implemented the e-Governance project, automating the workflow for the department of Higher and Technical Education, Government of Maharashtra, in 1995. The concept of e-governance was also implemented at AICTE after he joined it in 2009.

During the tenure of Dr SS Mantha, the implementation of e-governance made almost all the information available under public domain. For example, on the AICTE website under Bureaux section, one can get an idea about the alumni, faculty members along with qualification and even get to see their registration documents, affidavits and land documents.

Dr Mantha was also instrumental in shaping the 'Vision 2025 for Indian Management Education' whitepaper released by MBAUniverse.com & EPSI at the 5th Indian Management Conclave in August 2014.

Ministry of HRD has initiated the process of selecting the new ACITE Chairman.

Times Of India ND 07/01/2015 P-17

Ex-IIT prof: Mumbai at risk of Latur-like quake

Mumbai: A “silent march of tremors” has crossed the ‘Lakshman rekha’, threatening Mumbai with the possibility of an earthquake strong enough to knock down its skyscrapers, a retired IIT Bombay professor of geology has warned.

Speaking to **TOI** on the sidelines of a session on disaster management at the 102nd Indian Science Congress, V Subramanyan said Mumbai’s neigh-

“ Whatever be the engineering, a base-height proportion has to be maintained. When quakes happen, disproportionately tall buildings can tilt or collapse

V SUBRAMANYAN

Retd IIT-Bombay professor of geology

HT.COM ND 07.01.15 P-8

New education policy soon: Irani

Press Trust of India

Human Resource Development Minister Smriti Irani on Tuesday said the government planned to discuss the new education policy with various stakeholders within time-frame, and also visit villages to listen to people.

“In a new year, we plan to start discussion on the new education policy. How will this new

education policy be, we will discuss and decide the themes within both the departments,” Irani said at the conference of education ministers/secretaries of states and union territories on ‘Choice Based Credit System in Higher Education and Credit Framework for Skills.

Irani said the policy would be thought-out keeping in mind the requirements 10 years from now. She also stressed that instructions would not be ‘dictated’ by the Delhi ministry.

For the full report, log on to www.timesofindia.com

To regulate how journalism is taught, Govt plans apex body to 'serve nation'

This time, however, the suggestion has come from the Prime Minister himself. During a recent presentation made by senior I&B officials, when he was being informed about the ministry's plans to declare the Indian Institute of Mass Communication, Film and Television Institute of India and Satyajit Ray Film and Television Institute as institutes of national importance, Modi is learnt to have suggested that the ministry should think of a larger umbrella body to oversee and regulate the way all institutes dealing with media studies operate.

Taking the cue, the I&B Ministry has now begun work "to conceptualise and bring all diverse institutions dealing with print media, radio, animation, TV and other sub-sectors of the industry under a single establishment serving the nation".

"Currently, there is no determination of the criteria for what all is being taught in journalism and mass communication courses. In streams like medical and engineering, bodies like AICTE and MCI regulate curriculum yardsticks for all that is taught. The Communication University is being thought of

as a body that would standardise and regulate the curriculum for journalism and related subjects," said a top government source.

Government sources said senior I&B Ministry officials held a meeting with several IIT professors to discuss the issue. "In February, we are planning to have a thorough brainstorming session in the Capital, in which we are planning to invite prominent educationists and practitioners to discuss and debate this proposal. The IIMC has already been tasked with inviting experts from these fields," said a ministry source.

FRAMING OF NEW NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY

HRD to start consulting states, stakeholders from next month

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, JANUARY 6

THE Human Resource Development (HRD) Ministry will initiate steps to frame a new national education policy next month by holding consultations with states and also taking into account the views of different stakeholders.

HRD Minister Smriti Irani on Tuesday said a workshop to discuss the new education policy with states will be held in February. "In the coming months, we will go to the states to listen to them. States should help us to hold deliberations right from the village educational council to the block and state level," she said. She was addressing a conference of state education ministers to discuss adoption of 'choice-



PREM NATH PANDEY

Smriti Irani at Vigyan Bhawan on Tuesday.

based credit transfer system' and 'credit framework for skills'.

Irani urged the states to adopt both the systems from the forthcoming academic session. "I also appeal to the states to hold discussions with vice-chancellors and principals, and appeal to the University

Grants Commission (UGC) to provide guidance to the V-Cs," she said. The 'choice-based credit transfer system' aims to enable students to opt for courses of their choice and pursue skills to enhance employability, and the grading system aims to facilitate seamless mobility of students across

institutions. The 'credit framework for skills' allows multiple pathways between vocational education, skills, education and job markets.

A joint working group comprising central and state government nominees will be set up to sort out "critical issues" in the implementation of the two systems. The HRD ministry will also set up a grievance cell in the UGC to address the challenges for its implementation.

Irani, meanwhile, emphasised on the importance of skill and said providing choices to citizens should be the government's goal. "As a minister, I feel proud of the fact that 15 years ago, I washed utensils in a hotel in Mumbai. I have no inhibitions about this because this country is all about possibilities," she said.

Number of JEE aspirants falls by 50,000

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Mumbai: For the first time in recent years, the number of aspirants for JEE (Main), the all-India engineering entrance exam which is also the first screening for IIT admissions, has dropped. Around 13.03 lakh students registered this year against last year's

number of 13.56 lakh. Experts believe this could be an indicator of saturation and waning interest in engineering.

The last day for registration was December 27, but the deadline was extended to January 10 for aspirants from Manipur, which had recently joined the exam. An official from the Central Board of Sec-

ondary Education, which conducts the exam, said that the number might go up by a few hundred but will not make a major difference to the total.

About 1.86 lakh aspirants have opted for the online test, up from last year's 1.71 lakh.

While IIT-Bombay's professor D B Phatak said the number of aspirants has remained

constant for some years now, G D Yadav, vice-chancellor of the Institute of Chemical Technology, Matunga, said interest in engineering education was waning because of the poor quality of institutes. "Many graduates don't get good placements and eventually have to do management programmes to get jobs," he said.

6 IIMs yet to take off as HRD drags feet on land, mentors

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Bengaluru: When around two lakh students appeared for the Common Admission Test last year, their goal was one of the Indian Institutes of Management.

Their chances of getting an IIM seat went up after the ministry for human resource development promised six new IIMs, bringing their tally to 19. However, even after the CAT scores are out, little is known about how admissions will take place at the new IIMs.

The plan was that each new IIM would be mentored by an older one, on everything from admission to designing curriculum and appointing faculty.

There were reports that the choice of mentors would



The CAT scores are out but little is known about how admissions will take place at the new IIMs

be based on geographical proximity, which led to speculation that IIM-Bangalore would handhold IIM-Visakhapatnam; IIM-Ahmedabad would mentor IIM-Nagpur and IIM-Calcutta would take care of the one slotted for Odisha. Officials from IIM-Bangalore had also visited Visakhapatnam for the land deal.

However, a spokesperson for IIM-Bangalore said, "We're waiting for directions

from the MHRD on which IIM to mentor. As soon as we get the communication, we'll start the procedure for admissions." IIM-B has earlier mentored IIM-Trichy.

The newer IIMs, some of whose locations are not finalized, have a long way to go. "At the moment, everything is up in the air for the new IIMs. It's a herculean task," said an IIM director.

The number of seats at each new institute is also not clear. It's expected to be around 50 each. "The issues are being discussed at the ministry level," said CAT 2015 convener Rohit Kapoor.

For the second batch of IIMs — at Rohtak, Raipur, Ranchi, Udaipur, Kashipur and Trichy — a common admission process will take place like earlier.

Research scholars threaten nationwide protest if their demand for stipend hike not met

http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2015-01-06/news/57748174_1_research-scholars-fellowships-iisc-students

BENGALURU: [Research scholars](#) from the premier Indian Institute of Science, who led a nationwide movement for an increase in research stipends, have written an open letter to prime minister Narendra Modi, demanding that a system be put in place for annual [increment](#) in fellowships.

They have even threatened to stage a nationwide protest. Taking a cue from Modi's speech at the 102nd Indian Science Congress last Saturday, where he underlined the need to pay "attention to the ease of doing research

and development in India," the [IISc](#) Students' Council chose to express disappointment over their demand being met only partially.

"For more than a year, we successfully initiated a peaceful nationwide movement to raise our voice. However, I am not sure if we should be proud or disappointed with the way our system works," stated Pankaj Jain, academic affairs secretary of the Students' Council, who wrote the letter on behalf of all research scholars.

There was a 55% rise in fellowships for JRF, SRF and research associates, thanks to students from IISc and other national institutes forming a pressure to be dissatisfied as the jump effected from October 2014 -- more than four years after the previous one -- was not implemented retrospectively.

"What was even more shocking is that successive notifications delayed the implementation further, with University Grants Commission implementing it from December 2014 and MHRD from January 2015! We are still struggling for a notification from many other departments and there is complete uncertainty about all those fellowships.

This has unfortunately forced us to explore the mysteries of government procedures leaving behind our science," Jain wrote. Major funding agencies such as the CSIR are yet to issue a notification on revised fellowships, he pointed out.

While asking the PM to put in place a formula-based annual fellowship increment system, Jain said research scholars would be forced to stage a nationwide [protest](#) in the coming days.

"Such a sad state-of-affairs is one of the major causes for the large outflow of talented minds." Former IISc director Padmanabhan Balaram agreed. Noting that a two-year interval for hikes may not be difficult for the government, he told ET: "There should be a way to index fellowships with inflation, based on a formula. I don't think it is very difficult to do so, but there seems to be a psychological impediment in the government. Students are there for a relatively short period of time, and if you take so long for hikes, they may not get the benefits at all."

NITI Aayog to make India a formidable economic power: Ex IIM chief

http://www.business-standard.com/article/pti-stories/niti-aayog-to-transform-india-into-a-formidable-economic-power-115010500398_1.html

Unlike the Plan Panel, NITI Aayog will have all Chief Ministers and Lt. Governors on its Governing Council in the spirit of cooperative federalism

Niti Ayog has a unique innovative framework to facilitate states to participate in policy making which would help India to become a formidable economic power, said former [IIM](#) Director Bakul Dholakia.

The Government replaced the erstwhile [Planning Commission](#) with the NITI (National Institution for Transforming India) Aayog on January 1.

The Aayog has been mandated to serve as a policy think-tank for the central as well as state governments and has the Prime Minister as its Chairperson.

"Niti Aayog represents an innovative and appropriate institutional framework to replace Planning Commission,

which had lost its relevance & effectiveness in the post-reform era," said Dholakia who is Director of International Management Institute.

He further said, "With a new focus on sound strategic & technical advice covering the entire spectrum of socio-economic policy issues within a unique framework of Cooperative Federalism, Niti Ayog is expected to transform Indian Economy into a formidable economic super power in the years to come."

Unlike its predecessor, NITI Aayog will have all Chief Ministers and Lt. Governors on its Governing Council in the spirit of cooperative federalism.

Besides, it will also have Regional Councils, which would be formed to address specific issues and contingencies impacting more than one state or a region.

Dholakia further said: "The key to the success of this innovative structure will be the nature of multi-disciplinary team that would comprise Niti Ayog and the degree of independence and confidence that it enjoys with regard to the the central and the state governments."

The Aayog will also have experts, specialists and practitioners with relevant domain knowledge nominated by the Prime Minister as special invitees.

The two part-time members of the new body would be from leading universities and research organisations.

According to a Prime Minister's Office (PMO) statement, Aayog will put an end to "slow and tardy implementation of policy. Centre-to-state one-way flow of policy, that was the hallmark of the Planning Commission era, is now sought to be replaced by a genuine and continuing partnership of states".

IIT-Hyderabad to have new campus in March

TNN | Jan 7, 2015, 02.10 AM IST

HYDERABAD: IIT-Hyderabad will shift to a new campus by March this year. The new campus will be based out of Kandi Village of Medak district. The institute will be the first of the newly-formed IITs to have a permanent campus. Currently the campus is functioning out of the Ordnance factory, Yeddumailaram.

Three of its nine courses - mechanical, civil and chemical - will now be offered from the new campus. Hostels for boys and girls are already in place on the new campus, a senior official said. While the institute was planning to shift to the new campus by August this year, the institute seems to have advanced the plan as the construction finished earlier, sources said.

So far, a total of Rs 640 crore has been spent on developing the campus. Funds from the IIT-H-Japan collaboration project too would be used to set up facilities there. About Rs 200 crore would be spent on procuring state of the art equipment for research. The IIT officials had confirmed earlier that funding from Japan which amounts to Rs 640 crore would also be used to construct five buildings on the premises including a library, research centre, sports and cultural complexes, convention village and technology and incubation centre. It would take over eight months to shift all of the facilities on Yedumailaram campus to the new campus.

IIT-H, which currently has 1,650 students, also has plans to expand its students' strength to nearly 6,000 by 2018 and 9,000 by 2021, the campus authorities had announced earlier. With the new campus coming in, the IIT is expected to have better facilities for housing students and faculty members.

Good times to stay for B-school grads in 2015: Survey

BS REPORTER

Mumbai, 6 January

What turned out to be a strong job market for management graduates in 2014 is projected to continue in 2015, according to the Graduate Management Admission Council (GMAC)'s year-end poll of employers released on Tuesday.

This year's hiring outlook holds steady for 2015 graduates, as nine of 10 employers planning to hire business school graduates expect to maintain or increase the number of job openings for these hires, compared

with 2014. According to the survey, 96 per cent of employers worldwide concurred that hiring from business schools created value for their companies.

"The solid job prospects for business school talents seen over the past several years and again reflected in this poll gives prospective students good reason to consider pursuing these degrees as part of a strategy to drive their career goals," said Rebecca Estrada Worthington, GMAC's survey research manager.

Also, more than half of employers (ranging from 54 per cent to 74 per cent) plan to increase starting annual base salaries in 2015 at or above the rate of inflation for new MBA and business master's recruits.

In 2015, the majority (55 per cent) of employers will offer internship opportunities for graduate business students. "Our data show that even in the depths of the recession, business and management degrees can provide a measure of job protection and opportunity.

Today, in a recovering global economy, management degrees can be a powerful driver of confidence and provide fuel for an individual's career growth,"

Estrada Worthington added.

The poll of 169 employers in 33 countries, conducted in late 2014, serves as an early view into the 2015 job market for MBA, master of management, accounting, finance, and other specialised business master degree-holders.

While the greatest hiring demand for B-school talent remains recent MBA graduates, the largest increase in hiring demand is projected to be for candidates having master's in management, as reflected in the 11 percentage point increase in firms which hired this category of graduates in 2014.

RISING DEMAND

72% of employers expect to hire MBAs in 2015, compared with 69% that hired them in 2014

41% expect to hire masters in management graduates compared with 30% that hired them in 2014

34% expect to hire master of accounting graduates, compared with 31% that hired them in 2014

35% expect to hire master of finance graduates, compared with 31% that hired them in 2014



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Spin speed of star reveals its age, says astronomers

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London: Finding the actual age of stars is one of the biggest mysteries of our solar system. But now, scientists have finally found a way to crack it. Just like humans, scientists say that stars slow down as they age.

For the first time, astronomers proved they can accurately tell the age of a star from how fast it is spinning. The team measured the spin speed of stars that are more than a billion years old, and it matches their predictions.

The finding resolves a long-standing challenge, allowing astronomers to estimate a star's age to within 10%. "Our goal is to construct a clock that can measure accurate and precise ages of stars from their spins. We've taken another

Recipe found for Earth-like planets

The basic ingredients and mixing process that went to make Earth could go in to building exoplanets around distant stars, astronomers have found. The "test kitchen" of Earth gives us a detailed recipe, but it was not clear if other planetary systems would follow the formula, researchers said. "Our solar system is not as unique as we might have thought," said lead author Courtney Dressing. PTI

significant step forward in building that clock," says Soren Meibom of the Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics (CfA). This study examines stars in the 2.5bn year old cluster known as NGC 6819.

At Barefoot College, where skill is valued more than degrees

AMRUTA LAKHE

TILONIA, RAJASTHAN,
JANUARY 6

IN the small activity centre in Tilonia, students are hard at work. In one room, six women are busy making cotton sanitary napkins. In another, some women are carefully soldering integrated circuit boards for solar panels. Outside, older women are learning how to stitch handicrafts that are to go on sale.

We are at Barefoot College, an institution that teaches rural men and women, semi-literate to illiterate, how to become solar engineers, paramedics and doctors. Conceptualised by Sanjit Bunker Roy in 1972, the school



International students undergoing training in solar engineering in Barefoot College's six month programme.

AMRUTA LAKHE

that started out with the goal of eliminating water scarcity in rural India has been empowering village by making them sustainable. "I went to the wrong school, wrong college and came back with a lot of arrogance," said social activist

and founder of the school, Roy at the event where 450 entrepreneurs from across the country have been on the Jagriti Yatra, a train that has carried them across 10 Indian cities to meet local entrepreneurs.

"After my education, I had

a lot of fancy degrees and was told that I could overcome any problem. Then I went to a village in Bihar to help with the famine in 1966, and that experience of not being able to adapt to even a small village changed my life," said Roy.

Angry at the state of villages, he started an experimental school in Tilonia that would teach basic applications of engineering, medicine and arts to villagers. The school has produced more than 6,500 handpump mechanics, solar engineers, FM radio operators and dentists, astonishingly mostly women. "For people in rural India, a degree is irrelevant. Knowledge is more important. So I wanted to eliminate that question," Roy said.

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Solar plane to begin round-the-world trip

Payerne: A sun-powered plane was loaded onto a cargo carrier in Switzerland late on Monday heading for the Middle East from where it will attempt a revolutionary round-the-world trip.

The air carrier transporting Solar Impulse 2 is due to leave on Tuesday for Abu Dhabi, from where the long-winged plane will begin its record-making bid in March with the aim of completing the trip by July.

It is the successor of Solar Impulse, a pioneering craft which notched up a 26-hour flight in 2010, proving its ability to store enough power in lithium batteries during the day to keep flying at night. The forerunner was put through its paces in Europe, crossed the Mediterranean to reach Morocco and traversed the United States in 2013 without using a drop of fossil fuel.

The masterminds of the project are Bertrand Piccard, the scion of a dynasty of Swiss scientists-cum-adventurers, and Andre Borschberg, a former Swiss air force pilot. "I am moved, because this is really a magical moment, an important moment," said Borschberg. "We've been working on this for 12 years." Piccard, who made history in 1999 by becoming the first person to fly around the world in a hot-air balloon, said the objective was



SUN POWER: The Solar Impulse crew loads the experimental aircraft onto a cargo plane at an airbase in Payerne, Switzerland, on Monday, before takeoff to Abu Dhabi

to prove that clean energy could "achieve incredible things".

"What we need to do now is convince the political and the industrial world that this is the direction we need to go in," Piccard said. The goal with Solar Impulse 2 is to fly non-stop over 120 hours—five days and five nights—enabling it to cross the Pacific and Atlantic legs of its global mission. The operation will circle the globe eastwards, heading over the Arabian Sea to India, Myanmar and China, to cross the Pacific Ocean, the US, the Atlantic, southern Europe and North Africa before returning to its starting point. AFP

Times Of India ND 07/01/2015 P-29

A pill to trick body into losing weight

It Sends Out Signals That Calories Have Been Consumed Without Change In Appetite

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London: In a breakthrough that could help in the global fight against obesity, scientists have developed a pill that tricks the body into thinking it has consumed calories, causing it to burn fat.

Developed by researchers from the California-based Salk Institute for Biological Studies, the compound effectively stopped weight gain, lowered cholesterol, controlled blood sugar and minimized inflammation in mice, making it an excellent candidate for a rapid transition into human clinical trials.

In addition, when given a daily dose of the new pill, the mice had a rise in body temperature — which signals an increase in metabolism — and some deposits of white fat in their bodies converted into a



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AN IMAGINARY MEAL

healthier, energy-burning beige form of the tissue.

Unlike most diet pills on the market, this new pill, called fexamine, doesn't dissolve into the blood like appetite suppressants or caffeine-based diet drugs, but re-

mains in the intestines, causing fewer side effects.

"This pill is like an imaginary meal," says Ronald Evans, director of Salk's Gene Expression Laboratory. "It sends out the same signals that normally happen when

you eat a lot of food, so the body starts clearing out space to store it. But there are no calories and no change in appetite." Evans' laboratory has spent nearly two decades studying the farnesoid X receptor (FXR), a protein that plays a role in how the body releases bile acids from the liver; digests food and stores fats and sugars.

The human body turns on FXR at the beginning of a meal, Evans and others have shown, to prepare for an influx of food. FXR not only triggers the release of bile acids for digestion, but also changes blood sugar levels and causes the body to burn some fats. Pharmaceutical companies aiming to treat obesity, diabetes, liver disease and other metabolic conditions have developed systemic drugs that activate FXR, turning on

many pathways that control FXR. But these drugs affect several organs and come with side effects.

Evans wondered whether switching on FXR only in the intestines — rather than the intestines, liver, kidneys and adrenal glands all at once — might have a different outcome. "When you eat, you have to quickly activate a series of responses all throughout the body," says Evans. "And the reality is that the very first responder for all this is the intestine." Michael Downes from Salk said: "It turns out that when we administer this orally, it only acts in the gut." Indians are losing the battle against the bulge with nearly 8 million women being obese as against 4.4 million men. Globally, 9.8% of men and 13.8% of women are obese.