

Newspaper Clips

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Tulsi mitigates radiation effects

SYED AKBAR
HYDERABAD, JAN. 8

The ancient Indian tradition of growing tulsi (*Ocimum sanctum*) in the backyard is not without scientific backing.

Research shows that the tulsi, or Indian basil, mitigates the ill-effects of radiation, whether background or nuclear, and could protect cells in patients undergoing radiation therapy for cancer.

Scientists at the DRDO's Institute of Nuclear Medicines and Allied Sciences, and the Department of



Radiobiology, Kasturba Medical College, Manipal, have successfully tested tulsi extracts on mice for its anti-radiation and anti-cancer properties. The DRDO is now preparing a herbal concoction from tulsi that will serve to both

prevent and cure the ill-effects of radiation.

In the mouse model, there was no impact on bone marrow after the mice exposed to radiation ingested the tulsi preparation. It is the bone marrow that is affected in case of radiation exposure, and this brings down the immunity level.

The DRDO now proposes to take up human trials, says Dr W. Selvamurthy, chief controller (research and development), DRDO, who presented a research paper on the anti-radiation impact of tulsi extract at the 99th Indian Science

Congress, which concluded in Bhubaneswar on Saturday.

"We need to conduct a few more tests and take up phase II trials before it is released for general use," said Dr Selvamurthy. The DRDO is spending ₹7 crore on the tulsi project.

Research on the anti-radiation effect of tulsi in animals has been going on in India for the last four decades. Doctors at Kasturba Medical College discovered that tulsi contains a chemical called glutathione, which gives it the anti-radiation properties.

Asian Age, ND 09/01/2012 P-13

HC asks Centre to review MBBS quota

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JAN. 8

The Delhi high court has asked the Centre to re-examine its policy of reserving seats in medical colleges for candidates sponsored by it, saying the basis of admission should be merit and performance in entrance tests.

"We can only say that the Central government should re-examine the mat-

ter," observed a bench of Acting Chief Justice A.K. Sikri and Justice Siddharth Mridul, while hearing a plea by three Delhi girl students, denied admission in Delhi medical colleges despite having cleared the Delhi University Medical-Dental Entrance Test 2011.

"Examples are galore that even when general category candidates perform so well, they miss out

and are not able to get admission because of the reservations. It is expected that these aspects would be looked into by the respondents (government) and a decision taken thereon within three months," the court said.

While adjudicating the girls' pleas, the bench said the September 30, 2011 deadline for taking admission in medical colleges has already expired, but

the problem is bound to crop up again in 2012 and the government needs to tackle the issue.

The girls had questioned the reservation of seats for government nominees in various medical colleges and the manner in which they were admitted in various Delhi medical colleges.

In their plea through counsel Aman Hingorani, they said, "There are 234 general category MBBS

seats in DU. However, out of these, 30 are earmarked for quota meant for Central government nominees in the Lady Hardinge Medical College."

They added the selection of the candidates for admission to the MBBS course must be based only on merit and it cannot be left to the "whims and fancies" the government in choosing their nominees for MBBS courses.

CATCHING THEM YOUNG

■ Indian IT industry spends \$1 billion every year on internal training of engineers

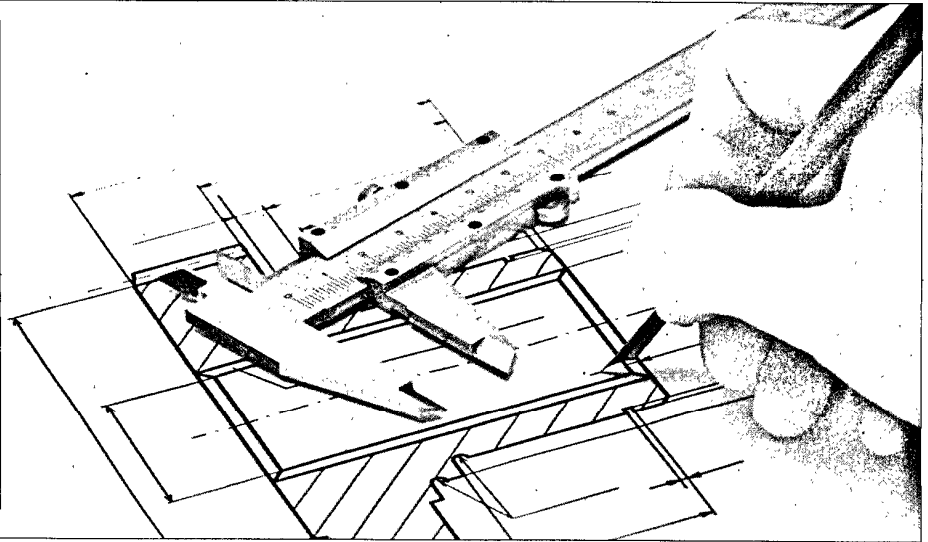
■ NIIT, QAI have started training engineers right from their days at college. Tech majors have tied up with these firms

■ The early training programme is restricted to tier II-III tech colleges. ■ IBM and Microsoft encourage their certification to students which can help them get a job early

■ The average salary of an engineer from a tier III-IV college is ₹2.5-3.5 lakh; a fresh IITian fetches approx ₹7.5 lakh

	2007-2008	2010-2011
Engineering seats	6,50,000	13,20,000
No of engineering colleges	1,668	3,241
% of tier 1 colleges	12.00% (200 out of 1668)	7.50% (250 out of 3241)
Employability in the IT industry	25.00%	Approx more than 30%

Source: Nasscom, PurpleLeap



Diksha Dutta

IT IS a dilemma in the \$70 billion Indian IT industry. Should the company hiring an engineering graduate spend a significant amount on IT training or should the technology institutes be more conscious about making their students employable. But today both the sides seems to be looking at collaborative measures to solve this problem. Whether it be training students right from their 4th semester in college or the big tech majors hiring third party training institutes to go and catch trained students for them—the endeavour is to make them competent and readily employable in the marketplace.

There are also big league tech companies like IBM and Microsoft, which train students from tier II and tier III colleges. It is not necessary that the student will be hired by IBM; the company certification will definitely help the student in the long run. Himanshu Goyal, country manager, IBM Career Education, says, "We are concentrating on training students specifically in the tier III and tier IV colleges. Though we train students on the IBM technology, this helps them get jobs in other mid-sized IT companies. Recently, a student from an engineering college in Dewangiri got a job in Mindtree. Also, two students from Jaipur got a job in Symphony Services after training through IBM."

Sangeeta Gupta, senior vice-president at IT industry forum Nasscom gives a broad industry perspective: "Though the employability rate in the IT industry was 25% as per our study in 2005, we believe that the sit-

TRAIN EARLY TO GET A JOB

The success story of India's IT industry might be well documented, but a stark reality has been staring us in the face for quite sometime. There continues to be a shortage of talent. While tech majors are doing their bit to build the skill-sets of youth growing up in smaller locations and make them readily employable, the time has come for all stakeholders to accelerate this process

uation is better now because of initiatives by tech companies like IBM and Microsoft who have started their own certification programmes. Even the Indian tech companies are now tying up with colleges to train the students during the course tenure. We also see a plethora of third party training firms like Talentsprint, QAI, NIIT, among others, that are helping in making these engineering students employable."

At present, the average salary of an engineer from a tier III-IV college would range anywhere between ₹2.5-3.5 lakh. However, the average salary of an engineering graduate from Indian Institutes of Technology (IIT)

would be northwards of ₹7.5 lakh. Most of the training is needed only in the smaller towns as newer engineering colleges are opened in these low-cost locations. As per PurpleLeap, an Educomp and Pearson joint venture, though the number of engineering colleges in our country have doubled in the last four years, the percentage of tier I colleges has halved. This means more engineers, but not the best trained.

Amitabh Lahiri, head-JLS-IT, Career Building Solutions, NIIT, says, "We have tied up with more than 3,000 colleges and most of them are tier II downwards. We train students on skills like Java and other soft

skills as well. Our placement rate ranges between 60-70%. Both tech companies as well as colleges are keen to collaborate with us for training the students. We also get in touch with colleges ourselves and educate them on training the students." Though Lahiri did not mention the names of companies that approach NIIT to get hold of trained engineering graduates, he ensured that the list includes significant industry leaders.

In an earlier interaction, Himanshu Goyal had remarked, "The IT industry faces a challenge in training employees on righteous skills like software testing. We are helping

students getting trained on such skills in collaboration with QAI, a consulting and workforce development organisation. And if we have a requirement for such talent, IBM would definitely consider these trained students for a job with IBM."

QAI trains students from different colleges like Punjab Technical University, Apeejay College of Engineering and Noida Institute of Engineering on skills like testing and helps them get a job as and when demanded by tech majors. QAI has trained 4,000 engineers overall on software testing till now. At present, the country produces only 3,000 testers, but the nation will soon need

25,000-30,000 testers each year. Even IBM's Academic Initiative worldwide is to partner with colleges and universities in India to better educate millions of students for a more skilled and competitive IT workforce. Professional certifications have become even more important as companies prefer to hire people who need little or no on-job training. A professional IBM certification in open standards technologies can make the difference between getting hired and being left out, which is what this programme offers.

An IT industry expert explains the dynamics behind this: "It is always an additional advantage for a company like IBM to train students on their technologies as it will help them in the long run. Such students would be trained to work on IBM hardware and this would be their specialisation."

IBM has established centres of excellence of various technologies to enable the colleges have hands on environment with latest IBM technology trends with updated resources. A centre of excellence (CoE) is a physical space in a college which acts as the central ground for trainings and certifications from IBM. The CoE is an exclusive offer to colleges with the potential to create numerous certified professionals. So far, the 154 IBM CoEs established in over 20 states have helped train 90,000 students and certifying another 45,000 in various IBM technologies.

As companies and colleges continue to work hand in hand, it remains to be seen who will take the lead in writing the next chapter for IT industry success in India!

Asian Age, ND 09/01/2012 P-14

For France's People's University, knowledge is power

Chloe Coupeau
meanwhile

■ What the students have in common is a thirst for knowledge for its own sake since there is no recognised degree or qualification on offer at Université Populaire.

The University in the northern French town of Caen is no ivory tower for the elite. Radical philosopher Michel Onfray set it up for those who were "programmed" to let education pass them by.

The lectures regularly attract about 1,000 students, among them the jobless and employed, youngsters just getting started in life and those already retired.

What they have in common is a thirst for knowledge for its own sake since

there is no recognised degree or qualification on offer at Onfray's Université Populaire (UP).

The university offers everything from architecture to economics — there is even a specially tailored philosophy course for children.

From modest beginnings 10 years ago, it has made its mark.

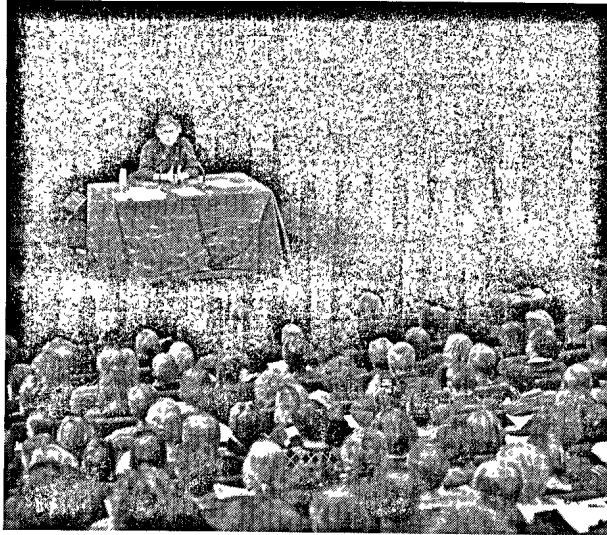
"It's extraordinary," says retired teacher Jean-Pierre, a regular student at the weekly two-hour lectures and discussions, who was in at the beginning.

He recalls the early days when the university attracted around 200 people in a modest auditorium: now they are packed into a hall that struggles to hold five times that number. Screens relay lectures to students seated outside. For Jean-Pierre, the courses are a lifeline: they keep him young and sharp, he says.

The car pool system set up on the UP website suggests there are plenty of equally committed followers: it shows people coming from as far as Paris, 220 kilometres (135 miles) to the south; and Lorient, 270 kilometres to the west.

Onfray, 53, launched the Université Populaire in 2002, the year Jean-Marie Le Pen of the far-right National Front party reached the second round of the presidential election in France.

Le Pen had eliminated the socialist candidate in a result that sent shockwaves through France and beyond. He may have been roundly beaten in the runoff by Jacques Chirac, but



French philosopher Michel Onfray teaches at the theatre of the French north-western city of Hérouville-Saint-Clair. Onfray founded 10 years ago a tuition-free Université Populaire (People's University) at Caen where he and several colleagues teach philosophy and other subjects to working-class people.

Le Pen's popularity rang alarm bells for Onfray.

The university, said Onfray, "starts from the principle that if people are racists it's because of a lack of culture".

When he launched the UP he also quit his job teaching in the mainstream education system. Now the prolific author lives off the sales of his books, dozens of them, which have been published in more than 25 countries.

His works include an alternative history of philosophy, and attacks on psychoanalysis in general — and Freudianism in particular — that landed him at the centre of a particularly vitriolic debate in France.

"Atheist Manifesto: The Case Against Christianity, Judaism, and Islam," is one of his works that has been translated into English.

But the UP is not a one-

man show: about 20 other academics also offer their services, lecturing on everything from ancient music to mathematics.

And the idea has caught on, with similar universities springing up in other French cities including Lyon and Grenoble.

'YOU'VE CHANGED MY LIFE'

"The measure of success is for me most of all in the

But Onfray's controversial ideas have also earned him some enemies among the intellectual establishment — and even some former allies.

emails that I receive from people who like me were sociologically programmed to pass by philosophy and who say to me 'You've changed my life'," says Onfray.

The people he has in mind are those from a working class background like himself: he said he was "programmed to be a worker at the dairy" in his village.

Social pressures conspire to discourage certain people from tapping into their intellectual potential, Onfray argues.

"At the moment everything is done to say to people 'You are not intelligent. Let the experts handle it'," he says.

"Here, we say 'The experts, most of the time, are talking out of the back of their head. Tackle these questions and you will be saying things that are a lot more interesting'."

Pascale, a 48-year-old from a science background currently seeking work, says she values the lectures because they help her feel less excluded.

"That has helped me live

my life from day to day. When you are on the margins, you run up against a lack of understanding," she said, referring to her jobless status.

She said felt very close to Onfray's thinking. "He finds the words where I don't have them."

Maurice, a retired rail worker, also finds the courses liberating, in part because a regular feature of the lectures is that they make frequent references to current affairs.

"It allows us to reflect, to have an opinion on a number of problems that currently confront us," he says.

As well as Freud-bashing and atheism, Onfray's philosophy also takes in hedonism and libertarian, even anarchist, thinking. In the run-up to France's presidential election this year he backed left-winger Arnaud Montebourg's failed bid for the socialist candidacy.

But Onfray's controversial ideas have earned him enemies among the intellectual establishment — and even some former allies.

Philosopher Raphael Enthoven gave lectures at the UP for two years before falling out with its founder. He says Onfray has a hard time accepting anyone who does not share his world view.

Nevertheless, he adds, at least students at the popular university are being taught to think for themselves — and equipped with the means to disagree with their teachers.

"And that," he says "That's terrific." — AFP

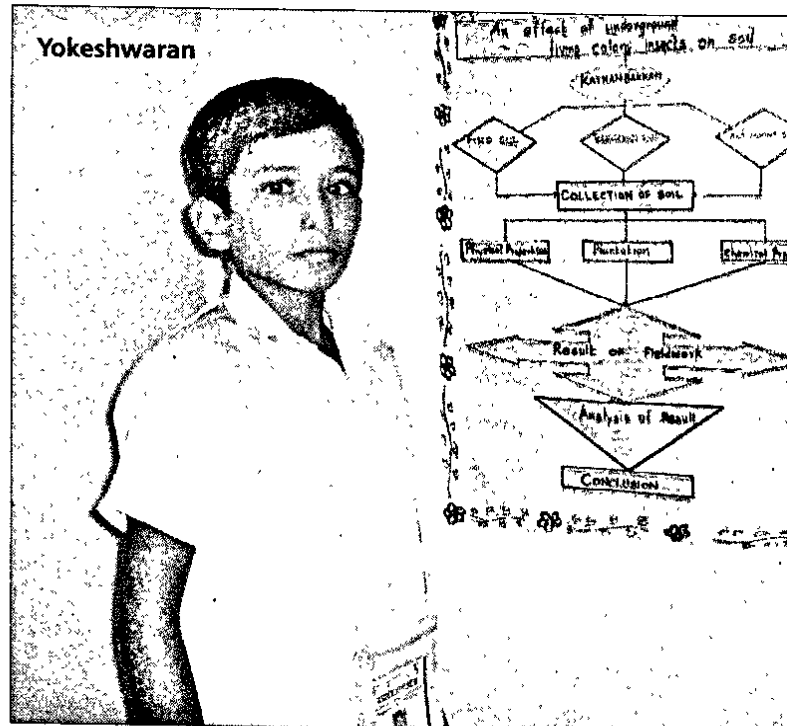
Ants, termites best friends of soil, finds 13-yr-old scientist

DEBABRATA MOHANTY

BHUBANESWAR, JANUARY 8

AT about three-and-a-half feet, K Yokeshwaran, a class VII student of Panchayat Union Middle School in Tamil Nadu's Kancheepuram district, hardly stands tall among the 70-odd child scientists in the 99th Indian Science Congress (ISC) that started on January 3 here. Neither has the boy, who can speak and understand only Tamil, got any fanciful science exhibit in the Children's Science Congress, part of the ISC. But 13-year-old Yokeshwaran, the youngest child scientist in the Congress, has won over everyone with his simple and original experiment on the effect of black garden ants and termites on the nutritional level of soil.

The boy, who comes from a farmers' family, has successfully experimented the benefits of black garden



BULK DENSITY, porosity and water holding capacity of the soil in which ant and termite crawled was higher than ordinary soil

ants and termites in his native Kattrambakkam village.

The theme of the Children's Science Congress at ISC this year is soil degradation and its control.

When the paddy season started in August last year, Yokeshwaran with his teacher S Sakthivel discussed with farmers the ways to raise the quality of soil organically.

"In Kancheepuram district, the land use pattern has changed drastically with Hyundai India acquiring agricultural lands to start car manufacturing units. With the district becoming an industrial zone, the pressure on agricultural land was immense. The crop production was also coming down," said Sakthivel.

COUNTING LOSSES

In the Congress, other child scientists also displayed commendable experiments on land use. Manvender Sharma and Shashwat Sharma of SVN Public School in Yamunanagar district of Haryana calculated the loss suffered by farmers whose land was acquired for a thermal project but not used for about 25 years. Though 1,500 acres of land were acquired from farmers of Yamunanagar district in 1980 for the Deenbandhu Chhotu Ram Thermal Power Plant, it did not take off till 2007.

"We calculated the loss on the basis of poplar tree plantation. Had poplar tree been planted on that land, the farmers would have gained Rs 5 lakh crore in those years," claimed Manvender Sharma.

ENS

With the help of his teacher, Yokeshwaran selected some crop land and put sugarcane extracts which attracted black garden ants. "We knew termites don't fest on living organism. So we were sure that termites won't harm the plants," said Sakthivel. For getting termites he got wood dust, sprayed water on it and the next day termites were all over the wood. With the help of local farmers they planted green pea on the land. To know the efficacy of the termites and ants, they tried the experiment on three separate fields — one using termite, one using ant, and another using none of these insects.

"When we sent the soil samples to the agricultural testing laboratory, we were surprised as bulk density, porosity and water holding capacity of the soil in which black garden ant and termite crawled was higher than just ordinary soil," said Yokeshwaran. The length of the plants were also higher in black ant and termite-infested fields than that of non-infested lands.

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No re-evaluation in DU from 2013

Delhi University is all set to put an end to the re-evaluation system from 2013. **Vishakha Sharma** reports

Delhi University (DU) is planning to 'scrap' the re-evaluation system from 2013. An official of the examination department of DU says, "As per the Supreme Court judgement of August 2011, it is the prerogative of the examining body whether to extend the facility of re-evaluation or not. Despite the judgement, we have been carrying out the process of re-evaluation for the benefit of students."

However, after scrapping the re-evaluation system, the university will still continue with 're-checking' of the answer scripts. According to inside sources, while in re-evaluation the answer script of a student is evaluated all over again by the examiner, 're-checking' would imply that the examiner only re-totals the marks in the answer sheet.

If the university 'scraps' the

re-evaluation system, it is likely to create other alternatives for the benefit of students. "To start with, we will get every answer script corrected by at least two examiners for an error-free result," explains a DU official on condition of anonymity.

However, SK Kaushik, faculty of maths at Kirori Mal College, says, "The re-evaluation system is unique and should be continued. Being a part of the examination checking team, I know that teachers who check papers can make a mistake. If the re-evaluation system is scrapped, students will suffer and there can be no equal alternative."

Jitender Chaudhary, a second-year student of Buddhist study, DU says, "The re-evaluation system is important for students. Without it, how do we redress our issues?"

Pankaj Garg, faculty of maths



GANESH CHANDRA

in Rajdhani College says, "The re-evaluation system should be continued because it is important for students. DU can cut its expenses in other ways by streamlining the whole re-evaluation system. Instead of sending the copies to examiners at various centres, for example, DU should request teachers to convene at the examination branch and get the copies re-evaluated

there. In addition to saving time, the additional cost for sending copies to so many examiners will also be saved in this way."

Considering the fact that around 45 lakh re-evaluation applications are received every year, Ajay Chikara, president, Delhi University Students Union (DUSU), feels that scrapping of the system will be disadvantageous for students.



The re-evaluation system should be continued because it is important for students. DU can cut its expenses in other ways by streamlining the entire re-evaluation system

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A day with VC

A new internship programme in Delhi University will enable undergraduate students to spend a day at the vice-chancellor's office

Vishakha Sharma/TNN

Delhi University (DU) is offering a one-day internship to its undergraduate students at the vice-chancellor's office. A brainchild of Dinesh Singh, VC, DU, the internship is expected to be formally announced soon.

"When students enter college, they are generally focussed on academics. They do not experience life outside it, nor see the university as the organic entity that it is. We are offering this internship to enable students to understand how the university is really shaped and how it functions," says Singh.

The internship will run for the whole year and will be open to all undergraduate students of DU. "There will be no selection process and no student will be denied an opportunity. However, students in the third-year will be given preference since it will be their last year in the university," Singh explains.

In course of the internship,

students will be responsible for handling administrative activities like assisting the VC in handling university files and e-mails; holding meetings with the VC's team, giving ideas, suggestions, etc. "The day will start by taking ownership of the office. As a first step, both the student and me will begin by cleaning my office and the toilet, and progress with other tasks and finish by 6 pm. I am also looking for interns who will help me write a history of the VC's office," informs Singh.

The number of students undergoing the internship per day will not exceed three. They will receive their official attendance for the day, will be paid a stipend of Rs 250 and be awarded a certificate mentioning that they worked as an intern and the roles they played during the internship.

Gaurav Chaudhary, a first-year BA student from Hansraj College, says, "It is an opportunity that none of us would want to miss."