

Meta-varsity 'unlikely' this year

While Jamia Has Managed To Get Approvals, DU, JNU & IIT Are Still Planning

Manash Pratim Gohain | TNN

New Delhi: There is uncertainty about the launch of the meta university from the 2012-13 academic session.

Jamia Millia Islamia has managed to get approval from its statutory bodies, but the other partners — Delhi University (DU), Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) and Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi (IIT-D) — are still at the planning stage. While Jamia and DU authorities are hoping that a delayed launch will be possible, JNU has said it is not in a position to start the project this year.

Earlier this year, HRD minister Kapil Sibal had an-

Kapil Sibal had announced plans for a meta university whose pilot run will include partnership of DU, Jamia, JNU and IIT-D

nounced plans for a meta university, whose pilot run will include a collaboration of DU, Jamia, JNU and IIT-D. The project will allow students to choose from study modules offered by the different participating universities, and take up courses offered jointly by these institutions.

It was decided that the courses will be launched from this academic session. Even as the new session is due to start in a couple of weeks, the universities, except for Jamia, are still working out the

WINDS OF CHANGE, BUT STORMY RIDE?

FOUR-YEAR GRADUATION PROGRAMME (FROM 2013)

FEATURES

- It will be trans-disciplinary
- It will have three exit points—after 11nd year (associate degree), after 111rd year



(bachelor's degree) & 1Vth year (honours degree)

- Training in the first two years shall enable students to become elementary teachers
- Fourth year will be more research oriented
- Regular students can complete a semester through open learning and credits can be counted
- Students who leave system before completing the full programme will have the option of coming back within 10 years to complete all four years
- Credits for extracurricular activities and sports (one or two papers can be replaced by these activities)
- Credits for travelling in Gyan Uday Express

CONCERNS

- The shift to a four-year graduation programme leading to changes in the postgraduate programme has to be a country-wide change. Delhi University cannot and should not implement this shift in isolation. Also, school and college education must be in tandem. After moving towards definite streams (arts, science and commerce) at school level, moving to common two-year course work at the college level will be a negation of the 10+2 scheme which is working in the schools across the country at present. This major shift has to be agreed upon by educators across the institutes — schools — colleges



BTECH IN HUMANITIES: A 'meta college' course (from 2012)

FEATURES

- Course will be offered by Cluster Innovation Center (CIC)
- It will be a four-year programme
- Apart from courses offered by CIC, students will have the freedom to 'pick' and attend courses from different DU colleges
- Students will thus create their own degrees
- It will be highly flexible — students will choose the subject, college and semester in which

they would like to attend classes for a particular paper

- BTech humanities will also allow credits for ECA and sports activities



CONCERNS

- The colleges of choice may find it difficult
- Cost of living may go up for students
- Adapting to different modes of pedagogy in a short period will be difficult
- They may have to deal with increased bureaucracy

modalities. DU sources said the administration will convene a meeting of the academic council and executive council by this week, where the issue of meta university and credit transfer among universities will be flagged up.

DU vice-chancellor Dinesh Singh told TOI: "We will discuss the issue with the AC and EC and observe the procedure for getting the approval. After that, I will be able to give out the details." It is learnt that Singh has met around 1,000 teachers in groups to build a consensus on the issue. Has also sought written feedback.

Jamia is now waiting for the other partners to come on board. "As we are going to offer joint degrees, we need the participation of all the four universities for launching the project. Jamia has all the approvals; we are hoping for a delayed launch. We are ready with the PG diploma in public health, the field where Jamia will take the lead. We have also thrashed out an elaborate research agenda. We are now waiting the approval and funds from the University Grants Commission," said Jamia registrar SM Sajid.

JNU, however, say it is unlikely to come on board this year. Vice-chancellor SK Sopory said, "We are not prepared this year. We will be ready for the 2013-14 academic session. Consultations are on and we will seek approval from JNU's academic and executive councils. Before that, we need to look into the project details. No final proposal has been made so far."

FELabs

FUTURE-SPARK

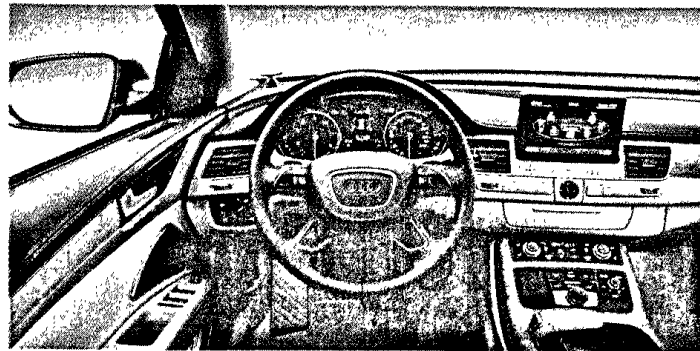
Something eco-friendly to replace plastic used in cars

Is there a low-cost, eco-friendly alternative to the plastic used in car interiors? A composite of jute and soy resin could possibly do the job, say researchers at the Indian Institute of Technology, Kharagpur, who recently demonstrated a simple technique without the use of chemical solvents to prepare jute fibres that were strong enough and bio-degradable.

While jute has long been pitched as an alternative for plastics, its water-loving nature has typically posed a challenge in preparing composites with thermoplastic resins that are 'hydrophobic' apart from the fact that these composites are not fully bio-degradable. That same property, however, also proves to be an advantage in making eco-friendly composites with a hydrophilic resin such as soy, says the paper. The protein-rich bean has previously been used - in the form of soy protein concentrate or soy protein isolate - as the matrix for developing natural fibre reinforced composites.

By using soy milk extracted from soaked soy seeds, however, the process of developing the jute composites is cheaper than either bio-resin and also takes less time, the researchers say. "Though significant amount of work has been reported on natural fibre and bio-resin-based composite, no literature report is available on the use of soy milk as resin with jute woven or non-woven fabric to prepare eco-friendly jute composite," says the paper published in the Journal Carbohydrate Polymers, in January. "We have developed 5-6 products for which we are now talking to companies," says Ramakrishna Sen, associate professor at the IIT Kharagpur's Department of Biotechnology who co-authored the paper. Some of the products have been patented, he said. "Our final goal is to use it in car interiors or panels. We are targeting the railways sector also, but it may take some time."

Sen and his co-workers soaked jute felts and fabric in the soy resin which were then dried and compressed to obtain the composites. "The novelties of this work are use of water as solvent for soy resin preparation instead of any organic solvent and jute without any chemical treatment," says the paper, which notes that a



Researchers at IIT-Kharagpur say they have developed five to six products for which they are talking to companies. They say their final goal is to use them in car interiors or panels

composite prepared with jute weight of 60% showed highest tensile strength. "Water absorption of these composites is moderately high, which can be reduced by using a different resin modifier," it says.

In a test for bio-degradation, the researchers found that the soy resin degraded the most with 52% loss in weight after seven days buried under soil while the woven-jute soy composite and non-woven jute soy composite degraded by 23% and 26%, respectively. After 60 days, the soy resin lost 92% of its weight while the woven jute composite and non-woven composite showed 60% and 64% weight loss, respectively.

Jute, known for its high tensile strength, is grown mostly in India's eastern states. Raw jute production in the country is estimated to be 10.9 million bales in 2011-12. The output of the jute goods industry was estimated at 1.5 million tonne in 2010-11, most of it for sacking.

Several other uses for jute composites, however, have been devised over the years including apparel, handicraft and furniture, besides its application in roofing, plumbing or building interiors. "There is a lot of scope for jute geotextiles in the control of soil erosion. The only challenge is that they have to be manufactured on a large scale," says D Paul, former principal scientist at the Kolkata-based National Institute of Research on Jute and Allied Fibre Technology, an arm of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research. Jute geotextiles are being used in applications such as building embankments or road construction.

Sen reckons that developing suitable equipment for the treatment of the jute to produce the composite would be the main challenge his group would face in taking their techniques from laboratory stage to a pilot project.

— Ajay Sukumaran

EXPERTSPEAK

RAMAKRISHNA SEN,
Associate professor,
department of
biotechnology, IIT Kharagpur



We have developed 5-6 products for which we are now talking to companies. Our final goal is to use it in car interiors or panels. We are targeting the railways sector also, but it may take some time.

D PAUL,
Former principal scientist at
National Institute of Research
on Jute and Allied Fibre
Technology

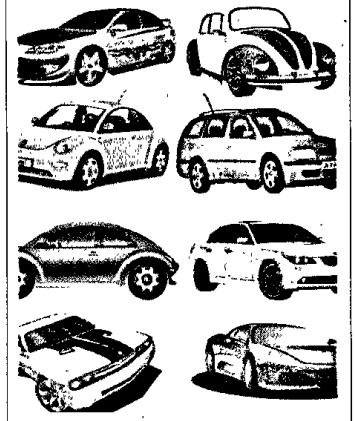


Jute composites are being used for replacing wooden furniture, roofing or as a plumbing material. There is a lot of scope for jute geotextiles in the control of soil erosion. The only challenge is that they have to be manufactured on a large scale.

STATFACTS

ALTERNATIVE TO PLASTIC

- IIT-K researchers develop bio-degradable jute composite using soy resin
- Their technique of extracting soy milk cheaper than is the case with bio-resin
- India's raw jute production estimated at 10.9 million bales in 2011-12
- The jute goods industry output was 1.5 mt in 2010-11, most of it for sacking
- Jute composites are being promoted as an alternative to plastic



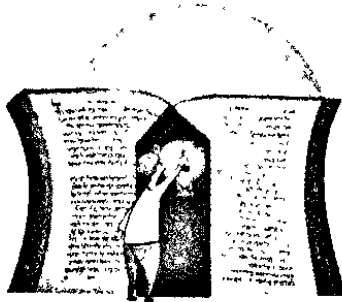
Lecturers' retirement age to go up

States May Get To Fix Retirement Age At 65 In Non-Aided Institutes

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: In yet another move to keep states happy about their autonomous status, the Centre on Thursday is likely to clear the proposal of allowing them to decide on fixing the retirement age (maximum 65 years) of lecturers in colleges and universities run by state governments.

Earlier, the UPA was insistent that states should enhance the lecturers' retirement to 65 years to enable them to get 80% of the arrears burden of state governments. The arrears — at least Rs 9,000 crore — went up since the Centre had asked the states in 2008



The move is likely to benefit around four lakh teachers across the country

to follow the Sixth Pay Commission scales that centrally-funded institutes introduced in the same

year, with retrospective effect from January 1, 2006.

The Centre had said it would bear 80% of the increased arrears for the first four-year period — between April 1, 2006, and March 31, 2010 — if states followed its order. Now, the government plans to foot this sum only in the form of reimbursements in “two-three” installments.

This is likely to benefit around four lakh teachers across the country. The ministry cleared this proposal after a committee of secretaries, headed by cabinet secretary, supported the state governments' demand.

Sources said that there could be

political reasons for states to push the need for greater autonomy as far as fixing the retirement age is concerned. “Some states might want to fix 60 or 62 years for retirement so that the fresh batch of qualified people can apply for jobs and this will also increase the scope of promotion for many lecturers,” said a senior government official.

The sixth pay package for teachers, based on which the scales of centrally-funded institutes were revised, has a provision that requires increasing the retirement age to 65 years. At present, the retirement age of teachers varies across states from 58 to 60 years.