Newspaper Clips

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Amar Ujala ND 5/07/2011   P-3

आईआईटी का छात्र दूसरे की जगह परीक्षा देता धरा

◉ राजीव कुमार

नई दिल्ली। आईआईटी दिल्ली के एक छात्र को 'मुन्नाभाई' बनना भारी पड़ गया और उसे जेल जाना पड़ा। विशाखापट्टनम का यह विद्यार्थी परिवहन विभाग के सिपाही पद की परीक्षा दे रहा था। लेकिन फोटो और दस्तखत न मिलने से उसकी पोल खुल गई। जिस कमजोर अभ्यर्थी की जगह वह एग्जाम दे रहा था, उसे भी सलाखों के पीछे जाना पड़ा। रूपनगर पुलिस ने बीकटेक छात्र के खिलाफ धोखाधड़ी का मामला दर्ज किया है।

यह छात्र कोई 'पेशेवर मुन्नाभाई' नहीं है। बस एक अभ्यर्थी के मदद मांगने के कारण उसे यह दिन देखना पड़ा। पूछताछ में छात्र गौतम ने बताया कि एक दिन चाय की दुकान पर उसकी मुलाकात सोनीपत निवासी अमित से हुई। उसने कहा कि वह पढ़ाई में कमजोर है। उसे फुट कांस्टेबल की परीक्षा देनी है और वह उसकी मदद चाहता है। इस पर उसने उसकी जगह इम्तिहान देने का फैसला किया।

पुलिस के मुताबिक रविवार को सिपाही के पद के लिए रूपनगर स्थित राजकीय उच्च माध्यमिक विद्यालय में परीक्षा के दौरान कक्षा में तैनात शिक्षक नारायण सिंह ने एक छात्र के

● पुलिस ने छात्र के खिलाफ धोखाधड़ी का मामला दर्ज किया

● मूल अभ्यर्थी को भी पुलिस ने दबोचा सलाखों के पीछे पहुंचाया

पहचान पत्र की जांच की। उससे हस्ताक्षर करने को कहा। पहले तो पहचान पत्र में लगे फोटो से उसका मिलान नहीं हो रहा था, फिर दस्तखत भी मेल नहीं खा रहे थे। बस फिर क्या था, शिक्षक ने शिकायत प्रिंसिपल से की। प्राचार्य ने तुरंत उसे परीक्षा देने से रोक दिया और पुलिस को बुला लिया।

Telegraph Kolkata 02.07.11 P-5

IIT Kharagpur gains in rejig

BASANT KUMAR MOHANTY

New Delhi, July 1: The Indian Institutes of Technology will receive central funds based on their student strength under a new plan that will benefit IIT Kharagpur the most.

The Bengal institute has 8,000 students, the highest among the IITs, and so will receive more money than any of the others. However, every IIT will benefit under the new arrangement, planned from this academic year, even though they will have to raise 20 per cent of the money themselves while the government provides 80 per cent.

The new system is based on an expenditure-per-student formula, which has been estimated at Rs 2.5 lakh for this year. It will be raised every year taking into account inflation, staff and teacher salary increases, and other expenses.

"This funding system is much more logical. We can better manage the expenditures on faculties and maintenance of facilities like buildings, labs and hostels," IIT Guwahati director Gautam Barua said.

Barua said IIT Guwahati received around Rs 27 crore a year from the Centre under the old "block grant" system but would now be entitled to Rs 90 crore because it has 3,600 students. It will receive Rs 72 crore from the Centre and have to generate the remaining Rs 18 crore on its own.

IIT Delhi director Surendra Prasad said raising 20 per cent of the money would not be a problem for the premier tech schools.

The IITs already generate a little less than 20 per cent of their recurring expenses through students' fees, research-based industrial consultancy and sponsored projects. "The institutes are increasing sponsored research and consultancy work. We can generate 20 per cent of the recurring expenses," Prasad said.

The human resource development (HRD) ministry worked out the expenditure-per-student formula on the basis of IIT data on expenditures, such as faculty and staff salaries, retirement benefits, maintenance and other costs.

The 20 per cent formula was agreed at a meeting between the directors and higher education secretary Vibha Puri Das on May 5.

No more online chat with partner, woman tells HC

NEW DELHI, JULY 4

A Mumbai-based woman who allegedly emotionally blackmailed her online chat partner -- an MNC employee working in Gurgaon -- after he refused to marry her, today appeared before the Delhi High Court and stated that she would not communicate with him any longer.

Following her commitment, the man withdrew his complaint against her.

The women only appeared before the court after it slammed her non-appearance on the previous hearing on June 27, and issued a bailable warrant of Rs.10,000 to ensure her presence on the next date of hearing.

As the woman, a research associate at the Indian Institute of Technology, Mumbai, appeared in court, Justice Mukta Gupta heard the matter in her chamber, where the woman alleged that the man, Sandeep Kushwaha, had physical relations with her but was backing out of marriage. Kushwaha denied the charges.

However, after the court's intervention, the woman stated that she would not write any letter, email or make any communication with Kushwaha except for legal remedies.

Kushwaha, an IIT-Kanpur graduate, withdrew his petition alleging blackmail by the woman, after hearing her commitment.

"The present petition is dismissed as withdrawn with liberty to both parties to take legal remedies as available to them in law," said Justice Gupta.

Meanwhile, the woman refused to accept the travel and lodging expenses from the petitioner, which was earlier directed by Justice Suresh Kait to pay for her Mumbai-Delhi trip.

Kushwaha told the court that he befriended the girl, a Ph.D. in physics from Allahabad University, on internet last August and began chatting with her.

The duration of the chat gradually grew longer and often ended late into the night.

He said as their friendship grew, she insisted upon meeting him and came over to Delhi last November.

"After meeting me, she began pressing for marriage with me despite being at least five to six years older to me," Kushwaha, 25, told the court.

He said that as he refused to marry her, she began sending him threatening mails and SMSes, saying she would commit suicide if he did not marry her. -- IANS

A study by PAN-IIT conducted by India Brand Equity Fund suggested that IITians have been involved in the creation of over two crore (20 million) new jobs. While further digging into details, it says that every one in 10 IITians start their own companies and 40 per cent of them are serial entrepreneurs. Of the IIT alumni who graduated prior to 2001, 40 per cent are in top leadership roles in corporations, educational institutions, research labs, NGOs, governmental agencies, politics and entrepreneurial heads of their own companies.

HIGH FLIER
FOR CAREERS IN THE FAST LANE

>> MANU AGARWAL, founder & CEO, Naaptol.com is an engineering graduate from IIT-Kanpur. He earned his Masters degree in computers and electrical engineering from University of Minnesota. Speaking of his entrepreneurial journey, he says, "When I was in the US, I saw that everybody in India would come there for a job. It was then I thought that if I have to rise above all, I have to be in India and start my own business. I worked with WSI in the USA for some years before moving back to India in 1998. Naaptol was started in 2008 with a vision to enter into the space of virtual commerce."

So is IIT synonymous to

IN FOCUS

>> SAURABH BHATIA, co founder and chief business officer, Vdopia - a digital advertising company is an alumnus of IIT-Delhi who started his entrepreneurial journey along with his two IITian friends. "We started it together because we saw an opportunity in the market, and possessed by the entrepreneurial spirit, we went for it. In June 2007, while my friends Chhavi Upadhyay and Srikanth Kakani were pursuing their Masters at Stanford University in California, we hit upon the idea of executing a video-sharing portal whose revenues came from advertising on video. The Business Association of Stanford

nology to India where media companies agreed to integrate with us if we got them ads. After dogged efforts we won our first client."

>> ROHIT BANSAL, co founder and COO, Snapdeal.com is yet another alumnus of IIT-Delhi.

"My co-founder Kunal Bahl and I always harboured the thought of starting a business together. The moment we passed out of college, we were exposed to the option of either working for five-six years to gain experience or starting off right away. I would say that the security, which our respective qualifications provided was of great help for us to start the venture sooner than later. Our entrepreneurial journey has

organisation or launch a product when you have no brand going for you, etc. Knowing that there is no option other than solving these problems is what makes it a challenge and at the same time, a fun and professionally enriching experience," shares Bansal.

So has the tag of passing out from a leading institute helped him? "To an extent, it does. But it is important to keep in mind that the moment you're an entrepreneur, you are all by yourself. The tag will help you for sure, but guarantees no success. To me, I would say there were three broad areas in which the tag helped - 1) it gives you the security that you can afford to make mistakes for a few years and still you would not be professionally dead because you have a degree in hand, which no one can take away from you; 2) it helps a lot to build credibility for your organisation in the initial days and get important people to meet you when you have nothing else going for you - no product, no brand, no people, etc and 3) it helps a lot in recruiting smart people," notes Bansal.

As fresh graduates, most people are oblivious to the functioning of the corporate world. If this gap can be bridged, students will have a much better headstart to become successful entrepreneurs.

ENGINEERING SUCCESS

It's a known fact that Indian engineering students today enjoy a reputed position in the corporate world - some as working professionals while the rest choose entrepreneurship. A recent survey also emphasises this very trend, discovers Sheetal Srivastava

entrepreneurship and Agarwal states, "IIT helps you in more than several ways in making decisions in a high pressure environment and so is entrepreneurship, which is about finding a right balance between your priorities and taking business decisions to make your goals a reality." "However, being from IIT doesn't ensure success. One has to have reasonable goals and a practical business plan to set up their dream venture. You are taught to be persistent and tough. Just believe in yourself and have confidence in your business idea," advises Agarwal.

Entrepreneurial Students (BASES) is a student entrepreneurship group. We created a business plan for the 2007 E-Challenge Program, a business plan competition organised by BASES. We won US$20,000 in the competition, and used that investment to write the code and launch the first servers in April 2008. We took our tech-

"IIT helps you in more than several ways in making decisions in a high pressure environment and so is entrepreneurship, which is about finding a right balance between your priorities and taking business decisions to make your goals a reality.

been a tremendous learning experience for both of us. In the past three years, we have exposed ourselves to all kinds of situations and were able to seek answers to some really difficult questions - how do you hire your first employee, what do you do when there is almost no money left in the account, how do you build a credible

MANU AGARWAL   ROHIT BANSAL   SAURABH BHATIA
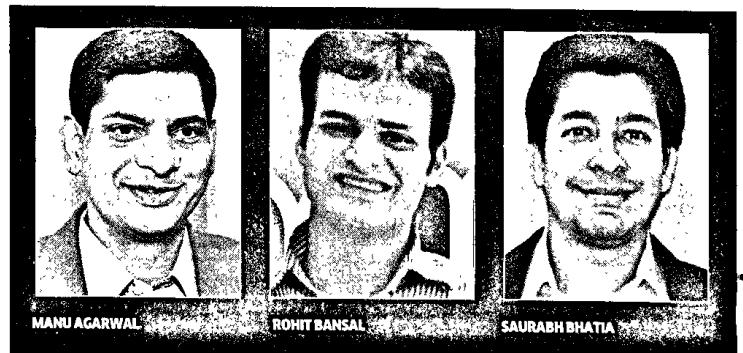
Engineering, MBA seats go abegging

GOURI AGTEY ATHALE
PUNE

A quarter of the 15 lakh seats in the country's engineering colleges and 40% of the 3.5 lakh seats in MBA institutes are estimated to go abegging this year, as the lure of the two courses wanes. The academic year usually begins in July-August across the country.

"Despite the huge education industry capacity created, industry is not finding the talent it needs while the existing capacity cannot produce the required talent. This year, we expect that 25% of all engineering seats across the country will lie vacant," says Amit Bansal, CEO, Purple Leaf, a Pearson Educomp joint venture which provides external coaching for engineering and MBA courses.

Students and parents, he points out, no longer see any return on investment after investing Rs 5-7 lakh for an MBA degree or nearly Rs 4 lakh for a four-year engineering degree.

The estimate of vacant seats was based on figures published by the AICTE and universities where the company has a presence and then extrapolated to the rest of the country.

The unemployability issue of fresh engineering graduates was first highlighted in a Nasscom report of 2009. It was something everyone knew but had not articulated: only a quarter of the country's graduating engineers were employable. Engineering and management degrees are regarded as the fastest way to recover investments made by parents in their child's education. However, like all best laid plans, this return on investment has gone awry.

A fresh engineering graduate lands a job that is ideally filled by a diploma holder, so wages are low

The slowdown in the global economy has hit sectors that have tended to employ the most engineers — IT and ITeS. "The return on investment will now take six to seven years instead of the two to three years that was anticipated. The same applies to an MBA degree holder," says Bansal.

A fresh engineering graduate lands a job that should ideally be filled by a diploma holder, so the wages are low.

"We found that more than training, they needed professional education. The industry wants finance and accounts professionals to understand strategy, so they should be able to assimilate, analyse and communicate," says Vandana Saxena Poria, managing director, Get Through Guides or GTG, an angel investor-funded provider of training to accounting and finance.

Given the anticipated shortfall in admissions to engineering colleges, Bansal says there could be a shakeout, with colleges shutting down. "In Orissa, four colleges have already shut down since they did not get students. In Bangalore, an MBA college has closed down, and been replaced by a mall. In Andhra Pradesh, colleges are up for sale about 70 km from Hyderabad. Colleges are either shutting down, selling the land and buildings, or are being taken over by better managed institutes. This is happening mainly where the focus of the management is non-academic," says Bansal.

For long-term sustainability, say Saxena Poria and Bansal, there is an urgent need for good faculty. Only then will the two courses see some of their sheen restored.

Gang charged ₹1 cr to have answer sheets filled in by outsiders

'MUNNABHAIS' SHORT-CIRCUIT AIIMS MD EXAM

EXCLUSIVE

By **Kumar Rakesh** In New Delhi

STUDENTS paid up to ₹ 1 crore to a network of scamsters led by an AIIMS alumnus to crack the coveted AIIMS PG examination held earlier this year.

A probe by the Central Bureau of Investigations (CBI) into the manipulation of the examination by a gang led by Mahipal Singh alias Rakesh Yadav — he studied radiology at AIIMS and graduated last year, and has been arrested — has unraveled a well-oiled racket comprising a dedicated back-up team of doctors and agents which had managed to infiltrate the examination system.

Entrance examinations at the institute have been subverted earlier by the so-called Munnabhais and AIIMS used OMR or optical mark recognition answer sheets in an effort to make them foolproof. But the scamsters, flush with funds from applicants desperate to get into AIIMS at any cost, **Turn to Page 2**

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were able to duck the OMR processing system with the help of an insider.

All those who were part of the racket were well compensated. Doctors, or 'scholars' as Singh called them, were paid ₹10 lakh or more per answer sheet they wrote on behalf of the candidates. Agents hired to spot and entice prospective candidates from the 'catchment areas' of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Haryana, Rajasthan and Delhi, were paid between ₹5 lakh and 10 lakh. Meanwhile, the candidates were asked to keep their passports, original certificates and blank cheques with Singh to ensure that they kept to their end of the bargain after their selection.

Investigations have revealed that at least 14 candidates had paid huge amounts to Singh and his cronies to qualify for entry to the institute's PG courses held on May 8. More than half of them were girls and had opted for radiology or gynaecology. These candidates, who reportedly did exceedingly well in the examination, have been questioned by the CBI along with their parents. AIIMS has scrapped their admission.

The scam came to light after the CBI was tipped off that several "toppers" at this year's PG examination had left their answer sheets nearly half blank. This was impossible if they all ended up doing very well in the test. A discreet probe exposed the crime.

The CBI suspects that Singh and his gang were involved in similar scams and more

Many of the 'toppers' had kept their answer sheets half blank

cases could be registered against them. The All India Pre-Veterinary Test held by the Veterinary Council of India has already been scrapped as the agency's probe revealed that as many as 90 out of 260 selected candidates had been helped by the gang.

However, the AIIMS tests were Singh's cash cow. Sources said that a deal with prospective candidates would be stuck anywhere between ₹50 lakh to ₹1 crore, depending on their category (general or reserved) and choice of course.

Singh had immense confidence in his ability to deliver for his clients and would reportedly ask candidates, who could not get admission to their desired course in one year, to try again the following year without paying any extra money.

Behind this confidence was a team of 10 dedicated doctors, who would write the answer sheets in place of the candidates. Besides, he had the guile to change tack quickly. Initially, he would have doctors who would sit in examinations in place of the genuine candidates. Due precaution would be taken to ensure that they were never caught.
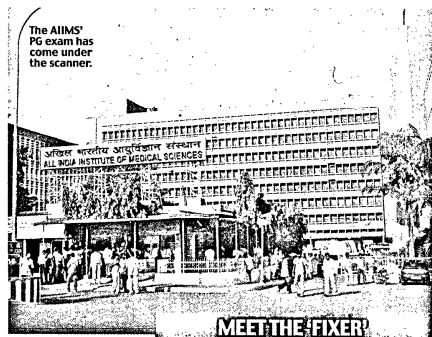
"Replacements for candidates would be selected on the basis of physical similarity. Then, they would work on the photograph in photoshop software to enhance the facial similarities.

"The candidate would be asked to use initials while signing so that this could be copied easily," an officer associated with the probe said.

When Singh found it difficult to continue with this at the AIIMS PG entrance examination this year due to increased surveillance, he did the next best thing. He bought off Rajiv Ghatak, a data entry operator at the Delhi-based Hi-Tech Graphics, whose services were hired by AIIMS to process the answer sheets. Owned by Rajesh Jain, the company on its website claims to be a leading data processing company "having the latest infrastructure for the scanning, processing of OMR/ICR sheets and a printing press to print the confidential examination material under one roof".

Singh was not daunted by any of this. Ghatak, now under arrest, would sneak out the OMR answer

sheets of Singh's candidates. It was easy for him to do this because he had the answer sheet codes of the candidates. These would be sent to Singh's 'scholars' who would then complete the answer sheet.

Singh always told his candidates that they should answer only those questions they were sure about and leave the rest blank to be filled by

Agents were paid ₹8 to 10 lakh for their role

his 'scholars', who would then complete the OMR sheet.

CBI investigations are probing how Ghatak managed to steal the answer sheets from the AIIMS examination cell, where the result-processing mechanism was put in place. There is no footage recorded by the surveillance cameras installed by AIIMS and even security guards posted at the examination cell were unaware of the goings-on, raising the possibility of more insider involvement in the racket.

Hire a dummy for ₹1 crore to clear tough MD exam at AIIMS

The AIIMS' PG exam has come under the scanner.

MEET THE 'FIXER'

MAHIPAL Singh, alias Rakesh Yadav, thought he could "fix" any exam. And the 35-year-old did not have to look beyond his family for inspiration. His brother Rajkumar, also a doctor, was chargesheeted by the CBI in 2002 in a case of similar nature. Mahipal learnt the tricks of the trade from him. An AIIMS alumnus and a resident of Bijnaur in UP, Mahipal was doing a PG course from Sarojni Naidu Medical College in Agra and running his racket from a house in Vaishali. He carried 10 to 15 cell phones to run his country-wide operation.

NO LESSONS LEARNT

THE manipulation of medical examination at AIIMS is nothing new. The CBI had busted a similar racket in 2006 when it emerged that a surprisingly high number of successful candidates — 424 out of 1,006 — to its PG course were from the Chennai and	Pondicherry region. The agency had chargesheeted 52 persons, including several doctors, who connived to leak the question paper. As many as 27 candidates figuring among the toppers were also chargesheeted.

Come Dec, Defence scientists will unveil an affordable laptop

DRDO ties up with IIT Jodhpur for design, development

M. Somasekhar
Hyderabad, July 4

With low-cost PCs, tablet PCs and laptops being the in thing to not just attract more users, but reach the benefits of the Internet revolution to larger numbers in the country, Indian Defence scientists have also joined the race to develop an affordable laptop.

After the Simputer and several low-cost PCs and laptop versions getting into the market, the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) plans to get its own version ready by December.

The Hyderabad-based Defence laboratory – Anurag – has joined hands with the IIT Jodhpur to design and develop a low-cost laptop, said Dr V.K. Saraswat, Chief of the DRDO.

IN-HOUSE EXPERTISE

The ANURAG had earlier developed the 32-bit microprocessor and ANUPAMA the parallel processor-based super computer as well as ANAMICA a medical imaging software and has in-house expertise in design and development of computer systems.

Dr Saraswat told *Business Line* that the social need for

Dr V.K. Saraswat

PC and laptops, especially the affordable version for the large number of poor people

was high. Therefore, the DRDO felt that with design and development expertise available it was time to come up with a marketable product.

The intention is also to help the Ministry of Human Resources Development which is pushing for providing a computer for a large number of people across the country at affordable prices. Several companies have already developed low-cost PCs.

OWN OPERATING SYSTEM

The 'One Laptop Per Child India' initiative is also looking at a sub-$100 laptop to provide computer literacy and information access to the poor.

The DRDO was also developing its own operating system in view of the security threat. It proposes to start two new software engineering centres in Bangalore and New Delhi. A consortium of Institutes, which will include the Indian Institute of Science Bangalore, Indian Institute of Technology, Chennai, Centre for Development of Telematics will work with DRDO to develop the new secure operating system.

Developing knowledge society

R. S. Grewal

A distinguishing feature of the American education system is the involvement of the local communities in nurturing their respective universities. The academic fraternity there has understood that technological advancements to be relevant have to be of benefit to the community in particular and mankind at large. This realisation gives a boost to application-oriented research. Consequently, the industry and the community have emerged as major stakeholders in the research activities being undertaken by universities. Philanthropy and endowments are the hallmarks of fund-raising efforts of the universities in the US. Somehow, in India the concept of private funding of research activities has yet to take roots.

A major drawback of the university system in India is that most of research is in the form of publications that does not contribute much to innovation and, invariably, finds no takers in the industry. Thus, the local communities and the industry do not find any benefit in getting associated with the academia. There has been considerable debate in the country to bring the industry and the academia closer to each other. The need was felt because the industry could not find enough skilled manpower coming out of the portals of the universities. However, major effort has been directed towards training process maintenance engineers or those who could engage in repetitive work. There has hardly been any effort in the direction of producing knowledge creators and problem solvers. Our country would soon need manpower to fulfill the demands of the industry in this domain also. That would require emphasis to be laid on application-oriented research and it would demand funding at a large scale.

A common refrain of the academia has been that Indians are keener to contribute to their parent institutions abroad than helping develop Indian universities or research institutions. The involvement of the local communities and individual philanthropists in the development of Indian university system is conspicuous by its absence. But, they are not totally to be blamed because they find no tangible benefits in supporting the universities and research institutions at home.

Therefore, Indian universities and research institutions need to carry out some introspection. They need to realise, as has been stated by Prof Yashpal, that a university is a place where new ideas germinate, strike roots and grow tall and sturdy. The ideas and knowledge so generated have to be of benefit to society and mankind to gain recognition from various stakeholders. It could be said that they are social institutions like places of worship on which society leans so heavily. Therefore, their activities have to be of
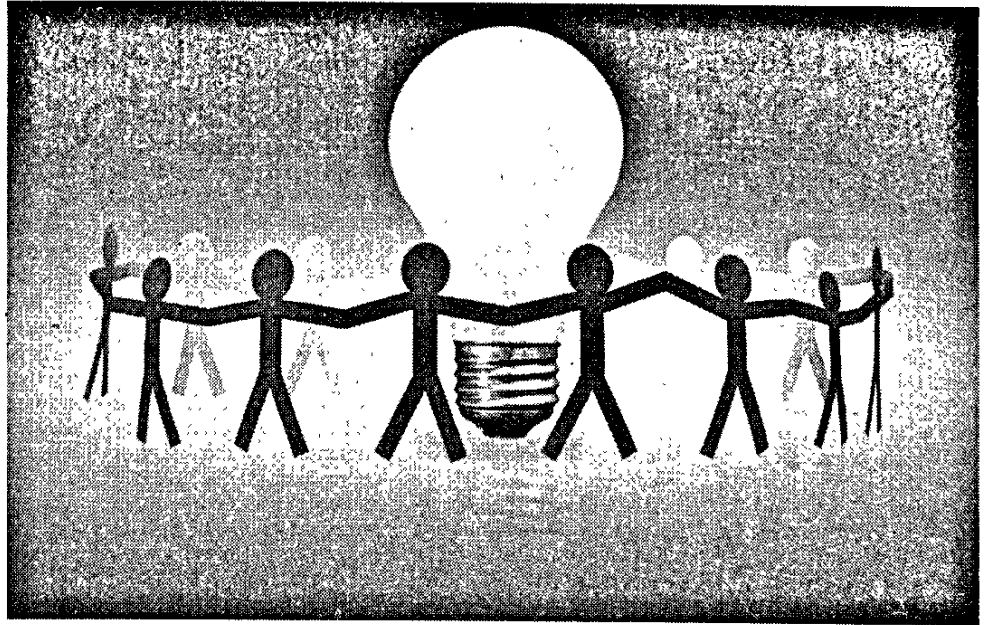
The community and the academia need to jointly discuss their problems and take up time-bound research projects that could help achieve better quality of life

direct relevance to society.

For example, the underground aquifers in the Malwa region of northern India have been badly polluted due to indiscriminate use of pesticides and chemical fertilisers. Excessive pumping out of water has resulted in lowering of water table. It is true, that these have been unintended consequences of the development process labeled as the Green Revolution. But despite the problem having been in the public domain for the last more than a decade, the academic fraternity has done precious little to come up with solutions to remedy the situation. Similarly, hosiery and bicycle manufacturing are the major industries in Ludhiana but none of the technical institutions in the region has taken up any worthwhile research projects to develop these sectors. Sports industry in Jalandhar, mini steel plants in Mandi Gobindgarh and foundries of Gurdaspur and Batala regions have received no support from the academia in the form of innovations resulting in product development or cost reductions. One notable exception has been the involvement of Punjab Agricultural University to usher in the Green and White Revolutions. In such an environment, it is unfair to expect the community and the industry to provide funding support to academic institutions.

The government has neither the resources to fund nor the perception and patience to nurture the university system at the scales envisaged. Therefore, our communities and the industry need to change their mindset. They need to be patient to get the intended results from the research activities undertaken by universities. There could be no instant results, and moreover, not every research project undertaken may result in positive outcomes. Our industry seems to have realised it and considerable headway has been made in this direction. The need is for the communities to get involved in the affairs of universities and sponsor research projects that are relevant to local conditions.

The community and the academia need to jointly discuss their problems and take up time-bound research projects that could result in better quality of life, result in product development, reduce input costs and focus on the day-to-day problems of communities. Further, our national psyche would need to undergo a major change and instead of major charities being directed towards building religious institutions, the focus has to shift towards education and research. There have been monetary contributions by society in the field of education, but the research institutions have been generally deprived of this benefit. One reason could be the long gestation period for tangible results to be visible. Another reason could be the lack of commitment by the academia towards research activities. We need to take concrete steps to bring all the stakeholders together.

Our industry, communities and the academia need to work together and in symphony to make India a strong knowledge society.

The writer is Vice-Chancellor, Chitkara University, Himachal Pradesh

HINDU ND 05.07.2011 P-9

With shuttle programme ending, fears of decline at NASA

William J. Broad

As the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) prepares to launch its last space shuttle — ending 30 years in which large teams of creative scientists and engineers sent winged spaceships into orbit — it is facing what may be a bigger challenge: a brain drain that threatens to undermine safety as well as the agency's plans.

Space experts say the best and brightest often head for the doors when rocket lines get marked for extinction, dampening morale and creating hidden threats. They call it the "Team B" effect.

"The good guys see the end coming and leave," said Albert D. Wheelon, a former aerospace executive and Central Intelligence Agency official. "You're left with the B students."

NASA acknowledges the effect and its attendant dangers. It has taken hundreds of steps, including retention bonuses for skilled employees, new perks like travel benefits and more safety drills. Through cuts and attrition in recent years, the shuttle work force has declined to 7,000 workers from about 17,000.

"The downsizing has been well managed and has achieved an acceptable level of risk," said Joseph W. Dyer, a retired Navy Vice-Admiral and the chairman of NASA's Aerospace Safety Advisory Panel. After a slow start, "NASA and its industry partners did a genuinely excellent job" in planning for the shuttle's retirement, he said. But he conceded, "There's added risk anytime you downsize."

Atlantis' flight; the future

Nobody is predicting problems for the coming flight of the Atlantis, the 135th and last launching in the shuttle programme. The event is scheduled for Friday, July 8, at the Kennedy Space Center in Florida, before an estimated one million spectators.

After that, there is little glory to look forward to. NASA has been forced to cancel the big missions that capture public attention and attract top talent, and frustrations have bubbled to the surface within the agency.

Not only has the shuttle programme been scrapped, but so has Constellation, which would have sent Americans back to the moon. Astronauts have been steadily leaving the agency.

At the direction of the Obama administration and Congress, NASA is instead developing a large new rocket to send deep into space. But no destination has been selected, and money is tight. NASA is also trying to nurture a commercial industry that will loft astronauts toward
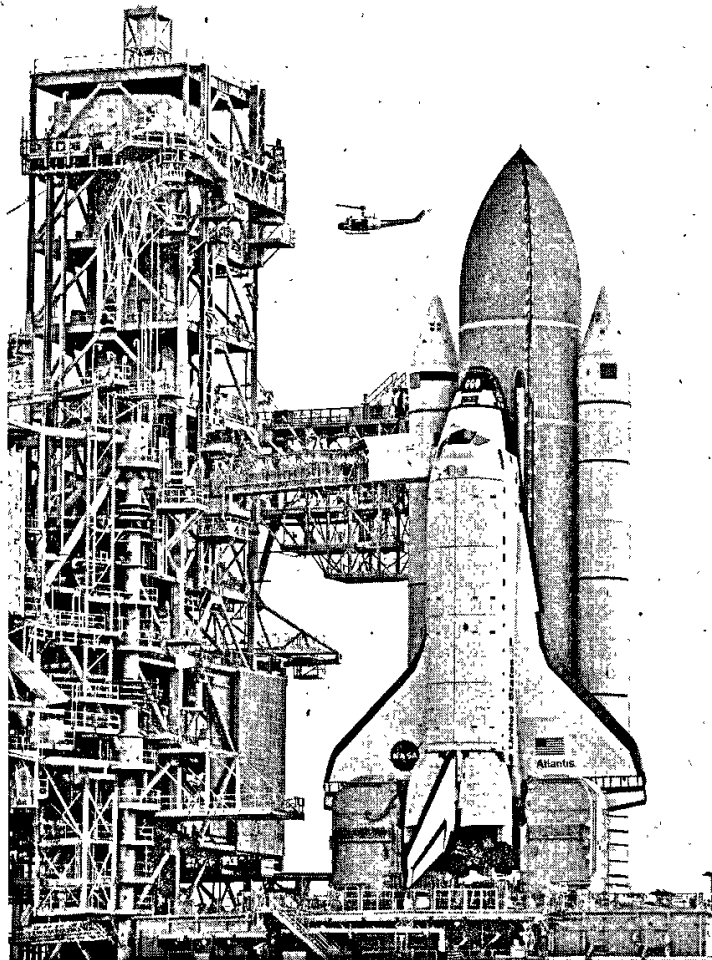
LOSING ITS WAY? *As NASA prepares for the last space shuttle launch, of Atlantis, seen here at Cape Canaveral, there are fears of a brain drain that threatens to undermine safety as well as the agency's plans.* — PHOTO: AP

the stars. But the ventures, which involve partnerships with private-sector companies like SpaceX and Boeing, focus on hardware development and so far have no declared goals beyond low orbits around the planet. The shuttles did that for decades, starting in 1981.

In an interview last week, Charles F. Bolden Jr., NASA's Administrator and a former astronaut, said he had no misgivings about the last shuttle flight, and he heaped praise on the agency's work force.

"Do we have concerns about morale?" he asked. "Yes, we always do. Do we have concerns about the welfare of our workers? Yes, we always do."

But Mr. Bolden, a retired Marine Corps general, said his workers were excited not only about the Atlantis mission but also about a range of new endeavours at both the space agency and its commercial partners.

"We're trying to help our people stay in the aerospace industry, if not in NASA," he said while denying any paralysing loss of talent. "We're capturing the brainpower."

And he flatly rejected the idea that the agency had lost its way.

The setbacks

"We're not adrift," he said. "And the vision is not gone. And we have a plan.

We have a very sound plan."

History has offered some bleak lessons, with tons of wreckage testifying to the danger. Experts say the Team B effect contributed to disasters in the mid-1980s and late 1990s that destroyed more than a dozen rockets, wiped out billions of dollars in satellites and threw the nation's unpiloted space programme into turmoil. The two catastrophes of the space shuttle programme — in 1986 and 2003, which killed 14 astronauts — had more to do with design flaws and management failures than with depleted ranks of experts.

NASA officials say close examinations of failures and problematic retirements have made the agency smarter. "We went out and looked at who has done this well — and who has not," said Bryan D. O'Connor, NASA's Chief of Safety and Mission Assurance.

"There could be something we missed," he added. "But I feel pretty confident about the last flight — it's going to be just as safe as any we've ever had, if not more so, with just as good people."

In January, the Aerospace Safety Advisory Panel reached a somewhat different conclusion in its annual report. It warned that "the lack of a defined mission can negatively affect work force morale" at NASA, and said the agency's own field centres portrayed the loss of big missions as having already "increased the potential for risk."

Future ambitions might also suffer, the panel warned, because a lack of visionary goals can undermine "the ability to attract and maintain the necessary skill sets needed for this high-technology venture."

In May, the dissatisfaction erupted at the Kennedy Space Center. Michael D. Leinbach, the launching director for the Atlantis, went off-message with colleagues after conducting a safety drill for the coming flight.

"The end of the shuttle programme is a tough thing to swallow, and we're all victims of poor policy out of Washington," he told his launching team, according to nasaspaceflight.com, a news site. "I'm embarrassed that we don't have better guidance."

Mr. Dyer, the chairman of Aerospace Safety Advisory Panel, said the inquiries of his own team suggested that the shuttle work force remained dedicated to doing the best job possible.

But after years of investigating the darker moments of the shuttle programme, he admitted to personal unease about its end.

"I'll breathe more easily," Mr. Dyer said, "after the last flight." — © **New York Times News Service**

एनसीईआरटी ऑडियो वीडियो स्क्रिप्ट राइटिंग शुरु करने जा रहा है

ऑनलाइन पढ़ेंगे शिक्षक

● पॉयलट प्रोजेक्ट के रुप में किया जा रहा है शुरु

● मास मीडिया कोर्स के चलते की गई है कवायद

● तकनीकी रुप से सक्षम बनाने के लिए की पहल

अमर उजाला ब्यूरो

नई दिल्ली। देश भर स्कूली शिक्षकों की ऑन लाइन क्लास लगेगी। राष्ट्रीय शैक्षिक अनुसंधान एवं प्रशिक्षण परिषद इंटरनेट के माध्यम से दूरस्थ शिक्षा के जरिए ऑडियो वीडियो स्क्रिप्ट राइटिंग शुरु करने जा रहा है। प्रथम चरण में पॉयलट प्रोजेक्ट के रुप में शुरु हो रहे इस कोर्स का मकसद स्कूलों में शुरु किए गए मास मीडिया कोर्स के लिए शिक्षकों को तैयार करना है। एनसीईआरटी का यह ऑनलाइन दूसरा को कोर्स है जो शिक्षकों के लिए है। इससे पहले परिषद कैरियर एवं गाइडेंस काउंसलिंग कोर्स को ऑनलाइन शुरु कर चुका है।

केन्द्रीय माध्यमिक शिक्षा बोर्ड की ओर से इस सत्र से 11वीं व 12वीं में मास मीडिया कोर्स की शुरुआत की गई है। ऐसे में शिक्षकों को कोर्स के लिए तकनीकी रुप से सक्षम बनाने के लिए एनसीईआरटी ने इस कोर्स को शुरु करने का निर्णय लिया है। साथ ही दिन-प्रतिदिन के शिक्षण में वह विभिन्न तकनीकी टूल्स का इस्तेमाल कर सकें। कोर्स के डिजाइन व मॉड्यूल निर्माण से जुड़े अधिकारियों के अनुसार कोर्स के लिए मॉड्यूल तैयार किए जा रहे हैं। अधिकारियों के मुताबिक कोर्स में इंटरनशिप कराई जाएगी। ऑनलाइन असाइमेंट भी समयावधि के साथ दिए जाएंगे जिससे कि वह उन्हें समय के मुताबिक जमा करा सकें। शिक्षकों के पास समय नहीं होता कि वह प्रतिदिन आकर प्रशिक्षण ले सकें। ऐसे में इस कोर्स की शुरुआत होने से वह 24 घंटे में से किसी दिन भी कंप्यूटर से जुड़ कर एनसीईआरटी विशेषज्ञों से चैट कर सकेंगे। 8-9 माह के इस कोर्स में दो वीडियो क्राफेसिंग भी कराई जाएगी। जिससे कि सीधे शिक्षक एक्सपर्ट के साथ जुड़ सकें। एनसीईआरटी ने इसे पहले ऑनलाइन कोर्स के मुकाबले में तकनीकी रुप से ज्यादा सक्षम बनाया गया है। फिलहाल इसे पॉयलट प्रोजेक्ट रुप में शुरु किया जाएगा। यदि इसमें कुछ खमियां पाई गई तो उनमें सुधार कर अगले वर्ष से पूर्णत शुरु कर दिया जाएगा।