

Newspaper Clips

June 1-2, 2014

June 1

Kids Should be Inspired to Come up with Ideas: IIT Chief

<http://www.newindianexpress.com/cities/hyderabad/Kids-Should-be-Inspired-to-Come-up-with-Ideas-IIT-Chief/2014/06/01/article2257109.ece>

HYDERABAD: “We have to believe that youngsters are smarter than us or else society will not move forward. Here, whenever a child comes up with an idea, mistakes are pointed out. And, before they move ahead, ideas are squashed,” said Uday B Desai, director, Indian Institute of Technology, Hyderabad at the 14th Memorial Oration of Dr KV Rao Scientific Society, organised by the society at BM Birla Science Centre at Adarsh Nagar here on Saturday.

He urged the audience to encourage observation skills among children. “It is important to inculcate spirit of scientific inquiry in youngsters. If the spirit is with you, then I believe we will create a more peaceful world. A lot of myths can be tackled with inculcation of scientific inquiry,” he said.

Dr K V Rao Scientific Society was formed in honour of Dr K V Rao who retired as superintendent chemist from Geological Survey of India.

Speaking about the purpose of the society, Anil Kumar Kutty, executive member of the society, said that popularising science among children and creating interest in them to pursue science as career is one of the main purpose. “Another objective is to ensure encouragement of talent to teach science,” said Anil Kumar. After the memorial oration, the society’s 14th Annual Science Awards function was held wherein awards were presented to students in Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry and Applied Science categories.

Hope floats for dying Yamuna

REVIVAL PLAN National Green Tribunal has clubbed two pleas and drawn a blueprint for a clean Yamuna

Darpan Singh
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NEW DELHI: February 2012: The National Green Tribunal (NGT) received a petition that sought removal of debris from along the Yamuna bank.

September 2013: The tribunal was requested to issue orders against covering of a storm drain in south Delhi.

The two innocuous pleas, which looked different in their objective, have, over the months, come a long way in raising hope for a common cause — Yamuna's revival.

Recognising that a hopelessly poor drainage network — only half the city is covered by the sewer network — and the health of the river were interlinked, the tribunal has clubbed both cases, expanded their mandates and drawn up a blueprint that is likely to address the larger problem substantially.

Two expert committees, formed by the NGT, have given their reports on both issues. The tribunal has now formed a multi-department committee for a technical report which would help deliver a holistic judgment.

The committee on the Yamuna has recommended scrapping of the Delhi Development Authority's multi-crore projects to build recreational spots — amphitheatres, exhibition areas, mythological parks and food plazas — on the floodplains, as "they would kill the river and cause floods in the city".

DDA vice-chairman Balvinder Kumar said the agency, through its project, wanted people to have access to the river for recreational purposes. "We never wanted want pucca construction. Grass cover is all we want. Plus, we want to repair the ghats. But if the NGT wants to scrap the entire project, we will do so," he said.

But the panel members dif-

fer. Noted environmentalist CR Babu said, "DDA is ignorant. Its plan should be scrapped and the river's restoration should start, which would naturally offer recreational opportunities to people."

AK Gosain, another panel member and professor, civil engineering, IIT Delhi, said, "Nobody is against people's access to the river but it is not necessary to have pucca footpaths as proposed by DDA. Sur Ghat, south of west bank, is actually a swimming pool, an encroachment of the floodplain".

The second committee has said only surface run-off should flow through storm drains. This will mean increased clean water flow and reduced pollution in the river. About half of Delhi's sewage flows untreated into the Yamuna. So where would this sewage go? Prof. Brij Gopal, another expert roped in by the NGT, said, "Decentralisation of sewage treatment is a way out. The efficiency of existing treatment plants must also be upscaled. Direct flow of sewage into the river through drains must be stopped".

Because of sewage flow, storm drains are covered which also leads to urban flooding and less recharge of water.

The panel has said natural drains should not be covered to build roads, parking lots or shopping complexes. Delhi had a network of storm water drains, big and small, originating mainly from various parts of the Ridge and recharging the ground water and feeding the Yamuna. Over time most of these have been turned into sewage drains, further killing the already dying Yamuna.



52km
Yamuna's stretch from Palla in north to Jaitpur in South

■ As many as 22 major drains empty untreated or partly treated sewage in the Yamuna. MOHD ZAKIR/HT FILE

NGT PUSH FOR YAMUNA REVIVAL

The green court has turned separate pleas before it into initiatives which may tackle the pollution of the river substantially

THREE-PRONGED PLAN



Take sewage out of storm drains for increased, clean water flow and reduced pollution in Yamuna



Bring more areas under sewerage network. Make sewage treatment mechanism more efficient



Restore, beautify riverbanks; no concrete structures like food plazas and theme parks in floodplains

NGT PANEL

Officers from MoEF, CPCB, DDA, DJB, MCD, besides experts AK Gosain, Brij Gopal

The panel will find out

- Number of natural, artificial drains in Delhi
- Drains joining main drains, meeting Yamuna
- Storm water drains carrying sewage jointly or separately
- Number of STPs, their current status, optimisation
- At how many points, new STPs needs to be established

WHAT NEXT

MoEF, DDA bosses will ensure panel executes NGT orders. Report on July 17 at NGT; directors of IIT Delhi, Roorkee will also give inputs



WAY FORWARD

- Half of Delhi is not sewered. This gap must be bridged.
- Meanwhile, sewage should be cleaned within drains
- INTACH, IIT are doing it for Palam drain on pilot basis
- Sewage treatment must be decentralised
- Marshes should be used for waste water treatment

WHY SAVE YAMUNA?

- 70% of Delhi's drinking water need is met from Yamuna
- Floodplains are major source of groundwater recharge
- Floodplain encroachment means floods on both sides
- Yamuna moderates heat, reduces impact of global warming
- National icon with irreplaceable cultural, spiritual, heritage values

NGT IMPACTS & CHALLENGES

- Govt removed 50,000 truckloads of debris from riverbanks last year
- NGT has prohibited dumping of debris & municipal waste along drains
- NGT has fixed a fine of ₹5 lakh for dumping solid waste in the river
- As per NGT's expert panel, a lot of debris is yet to be removed



WE ARE GLAD THAT TWO SEPARATE CASES AT THE NGT HAVE CONVERGED TO RAISE HOPE FOR THE RIVER. THIS HOPE IS REINFORCED IN A POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT THAT EXHIBITS SINCERE INTENT.

MANOJ MISRA, petitioner at National Green Tribunal

June 2

Hindustan Times, ND 02/06/2014 P-1

IITs FLOODED WITH QUERIES**Vanita Srivastava**

■ letters@hindustantimes.com

NEW DELHI: The IITs received over 200 queries and comments from students and stakeholders a day after uploading the answer keys of the Joint Entrance Examination (JEE advanced) on June 1. The figure is expected to rise till Thursday, the last day for submission.

IITs have been uploading the answer keys for the last few years, but this is for the first time it has officially allowed queries on answers from students and stakeholders regarding the answer keys before evaluating the optical response sheets (ORS). No fee is levied for putting up these queries.

This introduction came after a Delhi High Court ruling on a petition seeking more transparency in the system. »P8

IITs upload answer key, get 200 queries**Vanita Srivastava**

■ vanita.srivastava@hindustantimes.com

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RL TRIKHA, Director, FIITJEE

the Optical Response Sheets (ORS). There are no fees for the queries.

This introduction came after a recent ruling of the Delhi high court on a petition seeking more transparency in the system. The petition was filed by IIT professor Rajeev Kumar.

IIT Kharagpur, which is organising the JEE 2014, will

entertain queries till 5 pm, June 5. The expert committee of IITs will look into the comments and queries and make the necessary 'correction' if required. The corrections, if any, will be loaded on the website at midnight on June 5.

The ORS would be available till June 11 and if the candidates find any discrepancy they can

apply for a review till June 15 on a payment of ₹500 for each question.

"This is a definitely a welcome step. In the past many students have been affected. Many All India Exams already have such a system in place. This will definitely bring more transparency and accountability," said a student who has appeared for the IIT exam.

"IITs are looking for talent and this is a positive step in this direction. If the students can contest some answers and if even one is found to be correct then this will boost their confidence in the system," said RL Trikha, Director, FIITJEE.

HT.COM ND,02.06.2014, P-6

IITs to invite queries on JEE answer key



■ A still of IIT-Delhi. In the past the IITs had not entertained any queries regarding the answers posted

THINKSTOCK

Vanita Srivastava

In an attempt to bring more transparency and acting on a directive of the Delhi High Court, the IITs will this year for the first time invite clarifications and queries from candidates and stakeholders regarding the answer keys before evaluating the Optical Response Sheets(ORS).

The change comes two days after a ruling of the Delhi High Court on a petition seeking more transparency in the system. The petition was filed by IIT professor Rajeev Kumar. Nearly 1.2 lakh students had appeared for the JEE(advanced) exam on May 25 for admission to 16 IITs and Indian School of Mines, Dhanbad.

IIT Kharagpur, which is the organizing institute for JEE(Advanced) 2014, will upload the answer keys on June 1. It can, however be uploaded a day earlier on Saturday. The queries and clarifications will be allowed from June 1 to June 5 till 5 pm. The queries/clarifications can be made free of cost. In the past the IITs had not entertained any queries regarding the answers posted.

The aim is to make the corrections, if needed, before loading the Optical Response Sheets(ORS) on June 8. The ORS would be available till June 11 and the if the candi-

THE CHANGE COMES TWO DAYS AFTER A RULING OF THE DELHI HIGH COURT ON A PETITION SEEKING MORE TRANSPARENCY IN THE SYSTEM

MISSION IIT

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dates find any discrepancy they can apply for a review till June 15 on payment of ₹500 for each question. In the last few years IITs have admitted to errors in the questions and the answers loaded.

"This is a definitely a welcome step. In the past many students have been affected. Many All India Exams already have such a system in place. This will definitely bring more transparency and accountability," says one of the counsel for the petition.

"We have a rigid review system and each paper is thoroughly reviewed by over 20 IIT professors. This means that in total around 60 professors have a look at the questions and the answers before we upload them on the website. But this time we will make the system even more transparent," says an official associated with the JEE exam this year.

Irani Pushes for Funds to Set up 8 New IITs

URMI A GOSWAMI

NEW DELHI

Human Resource Development minister Smriti Irani is pushing hard for funds to quickly set up at least eight new IITs, and has already met the finance minister for funds, after bureaucrats said it would be a huge challenge to find money, land and faculty for this.

Irani, who wants speedy action to implement BJP's poll promises, is also seeking funds for other priority projects such as a Central university for Himalayan Technology and a national e-library, and has taken up the matter with Finance Minister Arun Jaitley, government sources said. Kerala, Karnataka, Jharkhand, Uttarakhand, Goa, Sikkim and Chhattisgarh — the states that do not have an IIT — would benefit from Irani's proposals. Seemandhra has already been promised an IIT as part of the Andhra Pradesh bifurcation package. Irani did not respond to ET's queries.

The number of IITs in the country was doubled to 16 in 2009 but the new ones are facing challenges such as a fund crunch. About ₹12,500 crore were allocated for the IITs in the 12th Five-year Plan (2012-17). Of this a little over ₹6,000 crore is set aside for the eight IITs set up in 2009. However, given rising costs, the fund requirement for new IITs, many of which are yet to

operate from their permanent campuses, has more than doubled to ₹14,000 crore.

HRD officials argued that in the current state of the economy, embarking on an expensive exercise of setting up as eight new IITs would not be feasible. They pointed out that the new IITs are facing several problems as some of them were operating out of make-shift campuses as land was not available. In some cases construction and infrastructure development has been delayed.

Karnataka, Jharkhand, Uttarakhand, Goa, Sikkim, Chhattisgarh, Kerala and Seemandhra likely to get IITs

An official said that Irani's attention was drawn to the fact that the Planning Commission had already turned down the proposal to set up an IIT in Palakkad, Kerala, even though Shashi Tharoor, then minister of state for HRD, represented the state in the Lok Sabha.

The plan panel had made it clear that given the huge liability from the proactive expansion in the Eleventh Plan period, the focus had to be on consolidation. The ministry has also been trying to address the problem of faculty crunch faced by IITs through a series of policy measures such as increasing the retirement age and encouraging retired professors to teach on a contract basis.

आठ नए IIT बनाने के लिए स्मृति ने वित्त मंत्री से फंड मांग

और भी... <http://aajtak.intoday.in/story/hrd-minister-smriti-irani-demands-fund-to-setup-8-new-iits-1-766382.html>

मानव संसाधन विकास मंत्री स्मृति ईरानी ने पद संभालने के साथ ही अपना काम शुरू कर दिया है और उन्होंने तुरंत आठ नए आईआईटी बनाने के लिए वित्त मंत्री अरुण जेटली से फंड की मांग की है। इसके लिए स्मृति उनसे मिल भी चुकी हैं। यह खबर एक अंग्रेजी अखबार ने दी है।

'अखबार ने लिखा है कि स्मृति ईरानी को अफसरों ने बताया कि नए आईआईटी बनाने की राह में कई बाधाएं हैं जैसे कि फंड, ज़मीन और शिक्षक. ध्यान रहे कि बीजेपी ने अपने चुनावी घोषणा पत्र में वादा किया था कि वह इस काम को पूरा करेगी. अब स्मृति ईरानी इस वादे को पूरा करना चाहती हैं. वह न केवल आईआईटी बल्कि हिमालयन टेक्नोलॉजी के लिए एक सेंट्रल यूनिवर्सिटी और एक ई-लाइब्रेरी जैसी परियोजनाओं के लिए धन के आवंटन की मांग लेकर वित्त मंत्री अरुण जेटली से मिलीं.

स्मृति के इस प्रयास से केरल, झारखंड, उत्तराखंड, गोवा, सिक्किम और छत्तीसगढ़ को बड़ा लाभ होगा. इन राज्यों में आईआईटी नहीं है. सीमान्द्र को एक आईआईटी देने की बात पहले ही कही गई है. 2009 में देश में आईआईटी की संख्या बढ़ाकर 16 कर दी गई थी लेकिन फंड की कमी के कारण काफी समस्याएं आ रही हैं. आईआईटी को चलाने की लागत बढ़कर 16,000 करोड़ रुपये हो गई है जबकि पहले 14,500 करोड़ रुपये थी. आईआईटी की एक समस्या है कि उसके पास पर्याप्त फैकल्टी नहीं हैं और इससे समस्या होती है. फैकल्टी की कमी से नए कॉलेज शुरू करने में बाधा आती है.

Times of India, ND 02/06/2014 P-7

Nat'l database of certificates okayed

Akshaya Mukul | TNN

New Delhi: HRD minister



Smriti Irani

Smriti Irani has given the go-ahead to the National Academic Depository (NAD)

scheme. Conceived during UPA-2's tenure, the scheme seeks to create an online national database of board and university certificates and is being implemented by the Central Board of Secondary Education on a pilot basis.

Last week, Irani was briefed in detail about the NAD project. She said it was a useful scheme and should take off quickly. In fact, she has asked the ministry to prepare a list of ministry files and documents that have been digitized or are in the process of getting digitized.

The NAD will act as the central database for records which students can use in case they need duplicate certificates or attested copies of them. Employers will find the database useful to carry out verification of certificates.

HRD min may stall 12 VC appointments

The HRD ministry is likely to put on hold the process of appointment of vice-chancellors to 12 central universities. Though shortlisted names have been submitted by most of the selection committees barring the one for Central University of Rajasthan, the ministry is not averse to having a serious relook. The ministry is likely to argue that search-cum-selection committees were not constituted properly and request President Pranab Mukherjee to form fresh search panels. TNN

Academic institutions — boards, schools, colleges, universities — will act as agents of the NAD office by registering students and linking their certificates.

The NAD will act as a deterrent to those forging certificates. The ministry has already sent an advisory to central universities/institutes and school boards to join NAD. The NAD Bill is in Parliament and is likely to be prioritized for early passage.

HRD ministry may junk appointment of VCs to 12 central universities

[Akshaya Mukul](#),TNN | Jun 2, 2014, 04.13 AM IST

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/India/HRD-ministry-may-junk-appointment-of-VCs-to-12-central-universities/articleshow/35919847.cms>

NEW DELHI: The HRD ministry is likely to put on hold the process of appointment of vice-chancellors to 12 central universities. Though shortlisted names have been submitted by most of the search-cum-selection committees barring the one for Central University of Rajasthan, the ministry is not averse to having a serious relook.

The ministry is likely to argue that search-cum-selection committees were not constituted properly and then request President Pranab Mukherjee to form fresh search panels. It has been pointed out that one search committee is headed by a college principal of which IIT director and former VC of Hyderabad University are members.

Another disturbing trend in the search committee is the way outgoing VCs of some of these CUs have been made members by executive council of other CUs. For instance, Surbhi Banerjee, VC, Central University of Odisha, is on the search committee of Guru Ghasidas Central University and M M Salunkhe, VC, Central University of Rajasthan, is on the search committee of Hari Singh Gour Central University.

Senior BJP leader and former HRD minister Murli Manohar Joshi has already asked Mukherjee to put on hold the process of appointment of vice-chancellors. In the midst of the election process, Joshi had written to former PM Manmohan Singh, chief election commissioner V S Sampath and Mukherjee and 15 central universities. Joshi had said constitution of search committees was quite disturbing and "clearly indicates the manipulation by the HRD ministry".

He had requested Mukherjee to get the academic credentials of the shortlisted candidates scrutinized who, he said, "are not suitable to be appointed as VCs of central universities". He alleged "extra academic reasons for the appointments". Joshi had said the appointment process should have been initiated six months in advance. He ascribed the rush in appointments to "pressure of HRD secretary and other officials, who are going to retire in two months time."

JOINT ONLINE COUNSELLING

Aaditi Isaac/TNN

In a first, three Delhi-based technical schools in Delhi are adopting joint e-counselling for undergraduate programmes this year. Indira Gandhi Delhi Technological University for Women (IGDTUW), Delhi Technological University (DTU) and Indraprastha Institute of Information Technology (IIIT) will conduct joint online counselling for BTech admission, starting mid-June.

"The combined counselling of DTU, IIIT Delhi and IGDTUW is one of the most progressive initiatives taken by the department of higher education. This process will enable engineering aspirants from Delhi and outside to apply for admission to these universities using a single portal rather than filling multiple forms along with the fee for each institute/ university separately," says Nupur Prakash, vice-chancellor, IGDTUW.

Explaining the process Ashwini Kumar Kansal, reg-

istrar, IIIT Delhi, says that students need to register on the portal (jacdelhi.nic.in) and pay Rs 1,000 as registration fee. They can enter their choices under discipline and college. In all, they can make a choice out of 21 programmes on offer. There are 15 disciplines from DTU, four from IGDTUW and two from IIIT.

"Once students register, an online database will be generated with their preferred course and college and a merit list will be created. DTU and IGDTUW will take stu-

dents according to the JEE main marks but at IIIT Delhi, students can get bonus marks, which will give them a better chance to get accepted in the college. Students with National Talent Search Examination scholarships, any Olympiad certificate or scholarships from the ministry of art and culture, among others, can apply. We are coming out with our own merit list and students can apply," he adds.

> FACT SHEET

- E-counselling portal to be live from **mid-June**
- Registration from **July 1 to July 12**
- Next year, **GGSIPU** and **NSIT** expected to join

Hindu, ND 02/06/2014 P-4

National Green Tribunal goes full throttle; hope again for a clean Yamuna

Sets up two panels to look into pollution and state of drains

Anumeha Yadav

NEW DELHI: Hearing two petitions relating to dumping of waste and debris into the Yamuna and the coverings and encroachments of storm water drains (SWDs), the National Green Tribunal (NGT) on Friday considered the technical advice submitted by the Civil Engineering Department of IIT-Delhi and set up two committees to look into the issues and submit a report by July 17.

"This issue has been divided into three parts. The first is related to drains (natural or artificial) coverage and the pollution from this, second is related to steps required to be taken for ensuring and rendering Yamuna free from pollution, and thirdly, restoration and beautification of the banks of river Yamuna," said the tribunal in its order setting up the two committees.

The first committee has been asked to inspect places they consider crucial for data on the number of drains - artificial and natural - in Delhi. The committee has been asked to study drains that join the river directly, those that join the river indirectly, as well as gather data on the number of storm water drains and how many carry sewage jointly or separately.

According to the tribunal's order, the committee which will be headed by an officer not below the rank of Joint Secretary from Minister of Environments and Forests will also collect and submit information on the status of Sewage Treatment Plants (STPs) - how many have been established in Delhi, working of STPs, at how many points new STPs need to be established and wheth-



A view of the polluted Yamuna river in Delhi. - PHOTO: MEETA AHLAWAT

- The committee has been asked to gather data on the number of storm water drains and how many carry sewage jointly or separately
- Information has been sought on the status of the Sewage Treatment Plants in Delhi and how many new ones need to be established

er it is possible to restore the existing STPs and make them functional to their optimum capacity.

At present no consolidated data exists on Storm Water Drains (SWDs), though there are multiple agencies, including Municipal Corporation of Delhi, Delhi Development Authority, Public Works Department, tasked with maintaining SWDs.

The NGT was hearing a 2012 application by Manoj Mishra of Yamuna Jiye Abhiyaan related to dumping of solid waste and construction debris into the Yamuna along with a 2013 application by the Yamuna Jiye Abhiyaan challenging the coverage of the city's storm water

drains by government bodies in particular, the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD)'s Shahdara Link Drain project. After the tribunal's order on May 27, Professor AK Gosain of Department of Civil Engineering IIT-Delhi had submitted a report on various factors that add to the pollution of the river Yamuna.

"We welcome that the tribunal has clubbed the two applications and passed an order which is holistic," said Manoj Mishra of Yamuna Jiye Abhiyaan.

According to the order, the first committee will include an officer not below the rank of Joint Secretary from the Minister of Environments and Forests, Member Secre-

tary of Central Pollution Control Board, Engineer in Chief Delhi Development Authority, Member Secretary Delhi Pollution Control Committee, Member (Drainage) Delhi Jal Board, two chief engineers from South Delhi Municipal Corporation, East Delhi Corporation, Professor Gosain and Professor Brij Gopal of IIT-Delhi.

The second committee will be headed by Additional Secretary MoEF and Vice-Chairman of DDA. It has been asked to oversee the first committee and to hold a meeting within two weeks to ensure compliance and to consider what changes may be made to the existing schemes. The next hearing is on July 17.

Radically reforming higher education

In spite of having immediate access to a large body of knowledge, Indians are largely consumers rather than producers of knowledge

Pulapre Balakrishnan

The higher education sector in India cries out for reform. The public have flagged issues ranging from the politicisation of public institutions, a perceived lack of regulation of faculty and the desirability of creating knowledge as opposed to disseminating it. Some of these issues fall within the domain of governance; others under the ambit of regulation. As the institutions concerned vary in terms of scope and intent, it would make little sense to specify one governance structure and mechanism for all. However, there is only one regulatory body for India's universities, the University Grants Commission (UGC). This makes it relevant to make proposals that can be implemented via this body.

Actually, a form of regulation of the faculty does exist: college lecturers are required to teach for around 16 hours a week. This must amount to at least three times the global average. It is anybody's guess what the quality of these lectures is, given that young teachers have no time to prepare for them. Note that the suggestion of a cap on lecture hours is not motivated out of sympathy for lecturers as much as out of the concern that this mode of content delivery encourages passive attendance by students. To address this concern, tutorials should be instituted to complement lectures. This is not just to ensure that students have a second chance to comprehend difficult ideas, but to encourage them to actually communicate what they have learnt. Spoon-feeding spells the death of imagination, leaving young Indians far behind in the global race to creativity.

Faculty accountability

Much has been said about the lack of faculty accountability, especially in relation to high salaries following adoption of the recommendations of the Sixth Pay Commission. The surest way of inculcating it would be to institute student evaluation of courses. Globally, this practice is not only routine but its results are available in the public domain. There is no case for postponing its immediate implementation in India. It is important, however, that these evaluations are treated in the right spirit. They are not meant



IMPROVING QUALITY: Tutorials should be instituted to complement lectures so that students can comprehend and communicate difficult concepts that they have learnt. Picture shows girls of a college in Bangalore studying before an exam. — PHOTO: G.P. SAMPATH KUMAR

to control the lecturer as much as instill confidence in students. They are also meant to act as an incentive to better performance. Student evaluation of courses publicly displayed is the surest way of instilling accountability among faculty. It should also be taken into account when a lecturer comes up for promotion. All this would substantially take care of the problem flagged not only of teacher absenteeism but also of the poor quality of instruction. At the same time, once teachers have taught what was expected of them, made themselves available to meet students at pre-specified times, and participated in departmental duties, they must be left to their own devices. It is not clear what public interest is served by expecting lecturers to be present all day in buildings that have no individual offices, up-to-date libraries and computers or even decent toilets.

The purpose of a university is the creation of knowledge. As Indians are generally Anglophone, they have immediate access to a very large body of knowledge, which is not the case with those located in some other parts of the global south. However, in the republic of knowledge, we are largely consumers rather than producers. This is related to our approach to

knowledge creation. A few years ago, the UGC instituted a form of research evaluation based on a points system. This approach to governing knowledge creation is subsumed under the metric Academic Performance Indicator (API), a quantitative summary of a lecturer's output. Research itself is scored on the basis of a ranking of journals in which it is published. In practice, one of two approaches appears to have been followed. In one, the faculty adopts a scheme on its own. This runs the risk of majoritarianism or of compromise, neither of which are in public interest.

A second approach is based on the ranking of journals according to their "impact factor." Impact is calculated as the number of citations of articles in a journal in relation to the number of articles published in it. It was originally created as a tool to help librarians identify journals to purchase, not as a measure of the scientific quality of research in an article. In July 2013, a group of scientists and publishers issued a statement called the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA). While iden-

tifying peer-reviewed papers as central to an evaluation of research output, they argued for eliminating the use of journal-based metrics, such as the Journal Impact Factor (JIF) in funding, appointment and promotion considerations. It was recommended that research ought to be assessed on its own merits rather than on the basis of the journal in which it was published. It is significant that among the original signatories of DORA was the American Association for the Advancement of Science. We need to heed this call. Quantitative scoring based on JIF may wear the garb of objectivity, and cardinality may even bring with it the comfort of transparency to some, but it cannot be a substitute for assessing knowledge creation. The long-standing practice in India had been to have research peer-reviewed and these reports considered by a committee of experts. There should be a return to this practice as it is superior to the points-based system which prejudices content and quality. Finally, in issuing a guideline for assessing research, the UGC must focus exclusively on the researcher's contribution to knowledge and cease privileging "foreign" publications over "Indian" ones and "international" conferences over "national" ones.

As the proof of the pudding is in the eating, a recent experience is worth recounting. An internationally decorated Indian academic was recently invited by Delhi University to participate in a selection interview for lecturers. His heart sank as he observed the abilities of the first set of interviewees. However, as the day wore on, his spirits lifted, for the quality of candidates steadily improved, and a suitable candidate finally emerged. Upon enquiry, our academic was told that the candidates had been presented to the selection committee in descending order of their API! The nation looks to the UGC to address the pathetic state of its higher education sector.

(Pulapre Balakrishnan is professor, Centre for Development Studies, Thiruvananthapuram. The views expressed are personal.)

Spoon-feeding spells the death of imagination, leaving young Indians far behind in the global race to creativity

Hindustan Times, ND 02/06/2014 P-1

Now, you get 6 attempts to crack **civil services**

UPSC EASES NORMS Giving in to long-standing demand, grants aspirants two additional attempts, relaxes age rules; will mostly benefit general, OBC candidates

HT Correspondent

■ letters@hindustantimes.com

NEW DELHI: From this year onwards, civil service aspirants will get two attempts more than the current four to crack the competitive exam.

The Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) — which conducts the exams that open the doors to appointments in the all-India services, such as the Indian Administrative Service (IAS), Indian Foreign Service (IFS) and Indian Police Service (IPS) — has also granted candidates consequential age relaxation so that they can take advantage of the additional attempts.

“Every candidate appearing for the examination, who is otherwise eligible, shall be permitted six attempts,” said a notification issued by UPSC for this year’s civil services examination.

The relaxation in norms will mainly benefit candidates from the ‘general’ and ‘other backward classes (OBC)’ categories as there is no restriction on the number of times scheduled caste (SC) and scheduled tribe (ST) candidates can sit for the exam. This also means OBC candidates, who are already allowed seven attempts, will now get nine.

GIVE IT ANOTHER TRY

- Two additional attempts will mostly benefit general and OBC candidates
- For general category, number of attempts goes up from 4 to 6
- OBC candidates earlier got 7 attempts, now get 9
- No restriction on number of times SC/ST candidates can take exam

AGE RELAXED

- Those aged 21 to 32 years as of August 1 this year eligible
- Age relaxed so aspirants can take advantage of additional attempts
- Further relaxation for SC/ST (by 5 years) and OBC (3 years) candidates

■ 2014 civil services exam starts August 24

■ Relaxation of norms first cleared in February, now notified by UPSC

There will also be a consequential age relaxation of two years. According to the notification, a “candidate must have been born not earlier than August 2, 1982 and not later than August 1, 1993” in order to take the exam. That means, those in the age group of 21 to 32 years as on August 1 this year will be eligible.

This year’s exam starts on August 24 with the preliminaries, followed by the mains and then the interview.

The notification adds that the upper age limit of 32 years can be relaxed further by five more years for SC/ST candi-

dates and for people living in Jammu and Kashmir between January 1, 1980 and December 31, 1989, and by three years for OBC candidates.

The UPSC will fill 1,291 vacancies through this year’s exams, including 26 seats reserved for the physically challenged.

Aspirants had long been demanding more attempts, saying they needed it to adapt to the new exam pattern adopted in 2013. The proposal was first cleared under the UPA regime in February. After the clearance from the government, the UPSC on Saturday issued a formal notification.

Swedish artist plans to send first house to moon

London: A Swedish artist is raising funds to send the first house to the moon in 2015, which will self-assemble within minutes of touchdown on the lunar surface.

The miniature house developed by artist and entrepreneur Mikael Genberg will look similar to a typical Swedish cottage, painted in red and white. The house is big enough to accommodate a grown human being and measures 3m by 2m with a roof

height of 2.5m. A specially developed cloth will be stretched over a carbon structure. The house will build itself after getting filled with gas. This will take minutes after being launched on the moon.

Genberg has worked on the project since 2003 with the aim of putting a red house with white corners on the surface of the moon, according to TheMoonHouse website. The art project lost momentum in 2010 when the



© Caspar Benson/istop/Corbis
HOUSE THAT!

financial crisis struck, but is now up to 75% complete after some of Sweden's leading

space engineers invested years of their time and effort to realize the venture.

The US space technology company Astrobotic, whose partners include Nasa, have committed to the challenge of taking the house to the moon. The launch and lunar landing is scheduled for October 2015.

"The Moonhouse will enable people to make history and a mark on the international scene since The Moonhouse will be the first payload fund-

ed by private individuals to land on the moon," said John Thornton, CEO of Astrobotic.

Over \$15m is required to realize The Moonhouse and \$3,901 have already been acquired through crowd-funding. The donor's name will be printed on the inside of the house. "The house presents a technical challenge since this is the first house to be 'built' on the moon," Emil Vinterhav, head of The Moonhouse technical team said. 77

Earth staring at mass extinction due to us

Thanks To Humans, Plants And Animals Disappearing 10 Times Faster, Says Study

Tomas Jivanda

Humanity is responsible for speeding up the natural rate of extinction for animal and plant species by up to 10,000 times, as the planet is on the brink of a dinosaur-scale sixth mass extinction, a new study has warned.

Species are disappearing around 10 times faster than is widely believed in the scientific community, while in pre-human times extinction rates were slower than previously thought, researchers from Duke University in the US said. "We are on the verge of the sixth extinction," lead author, biologist Stuart Pimm, said. "Whether we avoid it or not will depend on our actions."

Praised by independent experts as a landmark report, it fo-

cuses around calculating a "death rate" of how many species become extinct each year out of 1 million species.

Analysing the latest research, the team concluded that the pre-human extinction rate was 0.1 per year per 1 million, rather than 1 per 1 million, as a previous study led by Dr Pimm in 1995 suggested. Today, the rate is at least 1,000 times greater than the 0.1 figure at 100 extinctions per year per million species, but could be up to 1,000 per 1 million, Pimm added.

Although a combination of numerous factors is responsible for the acceleration in disappearance of species, the biggest is habitat loss caused by humans, Dr Pimm and co-author Clinton Jenkins from the Institute of Ecological Research in Brazil said.



© Richard Milnes/Demotix/Corbis
Experts say that although many factors are responsible for the acceleration in disappearance of species, the biggest is habitat loss caused by humans

Other major issues are invasive species introduced by humans crowding out native species, climate change affecting where species can survive and overfishing. A good example is

the buffy-tufted-ear marmoset. Dr Jenkins said development in Brazil has decimated its habitat while a competing marmoset has taken over where it lives.

The oceanic white-tip shark

used to be one of the most abundant predators on Earth, but they have been hunted so much they are now rarely seen, added Dalhousie University marine biologist Boris Worm, who praised the study. "If we don't do anything, this will go the way of the dinosaurs." Other species at great risk include the Sumatran rhinoceros, Amur leopard and mountain gorilla.

Dr Pimm and Jenkins did however say there is some hope. Both said the use of smartphones and applications such as iNaturalist will help ordinary people and biologists find species in trouble, they said. Once biologists know where endangered species are, they can try to save habitats and use captive breeding and other techniques to save the species, they said. THE INDEPENDENT & AGENCIES

STUDENTSPEAK

HIMANI GALAGALI

> Fourth year, Bachelor of Science, Indian Institute of Science (IISc), Bangalore, and currently a Khorana fellow at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, US



Himani Galagali

'ALL SCIENCE IS RELATED'

I have been interested in science since high school and research seemed to be the best career option for me. I had not applied for any other BSc degree. I did have the basic science programmes at the IITs and BITS-Pilani, in mind. But I had been informed that, in engineering colleges, students reading basic sciences are not well supported by peers. I was interested in the five-year integrated MS programmes at

the Indian Institutes of Science Education and Research, National Institute of Science Education and Research and Centre for Excellence in Basic Sciences, too.

As IISc is the best place for research in the country, a four-year undergraduate programme in basic science here appealed to me the most. I read about the degree in a newspaper. Also, being a Kishore Vaigyanik Protsahan Yojana fellow, I was in-

formed about it during a camp conducted by KVPY.

The purpose of the programme is to equip students with enough concepts, knowledge and tools that can make them good scientists. We are trained in experimental techniques which will help us approach a research question with the right attitude. The programme emphasises interdisciplinary research and makes us realise that all sciences are finally inter-related.

All students study basic physics, chemistry, mathematics, biology and a few courses in engineering in the first three semesters. We pick up our major (a subject in which one takes most of the courses) after our third semester. We are allowed to choose from among physics, chemistry, maths, biology, environmental sci-

ence and materials. Similarly, we can opt for a minor subject among the same subjects. Any combination of major and minor is allowed. A student could even choose not to do a minor or take a blend of all subjects.

In humanities, we have courses in the history of science and technology, economics, policymaking in science, philosophy in science, journalism and introduction to governance (the curriculum has now slightly changed though). I believe it is important for us, as science students, to understand the impact of science on society. We cannot get lost in discoveries and inventions. We function as a part of society and we have to give and take. Apart from this, these courses lighten our mood and allow us to develop free, abstract thinking.

After the fourth semester, we take

most of our courses along with graduate students, which makes the programme challenging. We need to study and discuss current research papers as well.

So far, my experience at IISc has been excellent. The professors are enthusiastic about teaching. The graduate students, who double up as teaching assistant, are helpful. I have done summer projects, too, in research labs and the time spent there has taught me a lot of science.

I hope to gain exposure and experience through the Khorana fellowship at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, US, though this internship is not mandatory. (The Khorana fellowship is provided jointly by India's Department of Biotechnology, the Indo-US Science and Technology Forum and the University of Wisconsin-Madison.) In addition, I am partially supported here by the University of Illinois through the Charles Wert scholarship.

I will recommend this degree to students interested in research.

— As told to Rahat Bano



The purpose of the programme is to equip students with enough concepts, knowledge and tools that can make them good scientists. We are trained in experimental techniques which will help us approach a research question with the right attitude

Fed up with sluggish internet, German village builds own broadband network

Loewenstedt (Germany): Too isolated and with few inhabitants, the tiny village of Loewenstedt in northern Germany is simply too small to show up on the radars of national internet operators.

So the villagers took their digital fate into their own hands and built a broadband internet network of their own. Peter Kock, who runs an agricultural technology supply firm in the village, couldn't be happier.

Data files that used to take two hours to load onto his computer screen now appear in just 30 seconds. "It's brilliant. There's no comparison," he enthused. And that benefits his customers, too, be-

cause thanks to the new high-speed connection he can check the availability of parts much more rapidly.

Surrounded by wind power generators and fields, 30km from the Danish border, the picturesque brick houses and gardens of Lo-

DIGITAL REVOLUTION

wenstedt, with its population of just 640, are spread over about 500 acres.

With around 22km of network needed to link up all of the houses to the high-speed data highway, "we would never have found a company willing to supply the necessary fibre-optics," said mayor Holger Jensen. Some 58 other communi-

ties in Northern Friesland face similar difficulties and so the idea was born of clubbing together — businesses, individuals and villages — to secure access to a modern technology that is taken for granted in most German towns and cities.

Mounted on the walls of Kock's store room are two white boxes bearing the initials BBNG or Citizens' Broadband Network Company, set up in 2012 to collect the funds and build the fibre-optic network.

The firm with five staff has collected more than \$3.4m in funds, thanks to its 925 shareholders who each contributed a minimum of \$1,363, said BBNG chief Ute Gabriel-Boucein. AFP