# Newspaper Clips
## June 17, 2015

## Economic Times ND 17/06/2015
## P-14

# Why Irani Scores an F as HRD Minister

Minister for human resource development (HRD) Smriti Irani is turning into an embarrassment for the government. The latest instance of her arbitrary high-handedness is to transfer the director of the Central Institute of Technology (CIT), Kokrajhar, Assam, Uday Shankar Dikshit, over an apparently minor, if not irrelevant, tussle about the transfer of a lower division clerk. The story, reported by this newspaper on Monday, was corroborated by the head of IIT-Guwahati, to which the CIT reports. Since taking over the portfolio in May last year, reports of her wilful, arbitrary interference in academic institutions have multiplied.

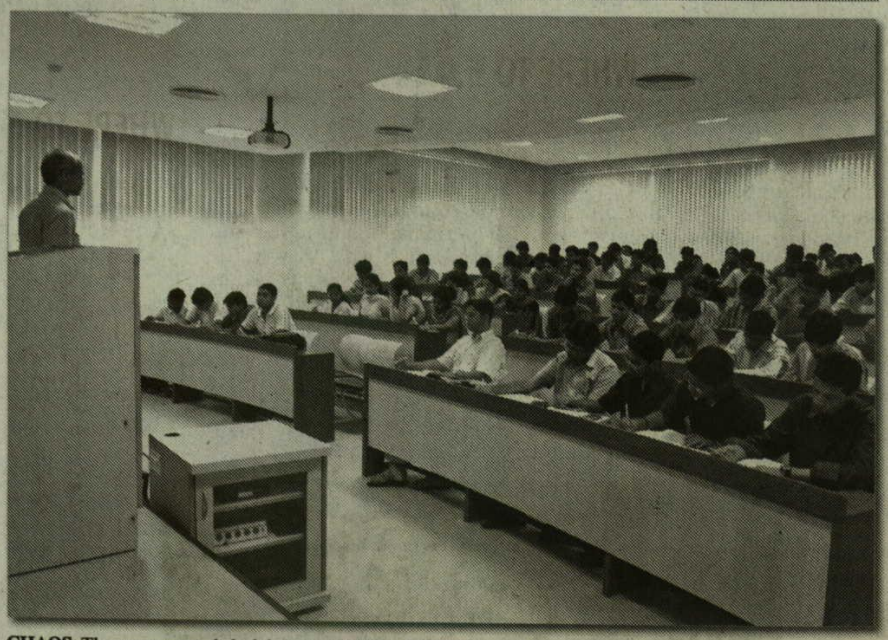
True, this might not be a personal failing, but a result of Sangh Parivar design. Meanwhile, students at the famous Film and Television Institute of India (FTII), Pune, under the ministry of information and broadcasting, continue to agitate over the appointment of Gajendra Chauhan, an RSS affiliate and minor actor, as the institution's head, overlooking auteurs such as Adoor Gopalakrishnan and Shyam Benegal. The fact remains, however, that the IIT-Delhi director resigned last December, as did nuclear scientist Anil Kakodkar, as chairman of the board of governors of IIT-Bombay, over difference with Irani. The ministry continues to press for an ill-conceived scheme to kill diversity and innovation in Indian academia in the name, perversely enough, of choice in the degree programme.


Another senseless decision of the ministry was to appoint one Y Sudershan Rao to head Indian Council of Historical Research. Rao does not have a single peer-reviewed paper and claims that the Vedas and the Mahabharata are all one needs to understand India's history. All this represents arbitrariness, not pursuit of academic excellence.

Financial Chronicle ND 17/06/2015 P-11

# Confusion rules higher education

Arun Nigavekar



**CHAOS:** The unwarranted clash between UGC and MHRD is making the youth of the country suffer the most

THE clash between UGC and the ministry of human resource development (MHRD) had to come sooner or later. For, the ministry has been making changes in the education domain for the the last nine months, both at the policy as well as the operational levels. A welcome move, certainly, because higher education is passing through a difficult and complex scenario.

There is growing interest among today's youth in the usefulness and quality of education. They are also concerned about the enormous disparities among the country's various universities in their academic structures, examination systems and the knowledge that a degree education delivers. This is critical for them mainly because across the country job opportunities are enhancing in industries. But then, the country still has the old combination of annual structure, semester system and an occasionally used credit-based open and flexible modular structure. The teachers, the college and the university authorities, the "not for and for profit education industrialists," the state governments and 13 national level authorities like UGC, AICTE, MCI, DCI, NBC and so on have always operated as independent entities adopting their own policies without communicating with each other. Each entity is in effect a king of their own realm and this has created all the "academic non cohesiveness."

The earlier NDA dispensation did make an effort to bring some uniformity across such a complex structure. In 2003, for the first time all professional councils came on a single platform in UGC and decided to bring uniformity in identification of new professional colleges so as to avoid the visits of half a dozen different independent committees to the same institution more than a dozen times. The UGC and MHRD at that time realised that this was an enormously time consuming process that took 10 to 12 months for approvals for new professional institutions. Every good educationist in the country felt that the change would finally get triggered and education per se would change in quality and utility. They expected that the public education system, which caters to 75 per cent of our students, would now become stronger and the government would invest larger finances in public universities.

However, these reforms never became a reality because NDA-1 lost the elections in 2004 and the next government appointed Arjun Singh as the HRD minister, who through his thoughts and actions thereon, clearly indicated a preference for enhancing deemed universities and private universities, instead of public ones. The present mess in the higher education domain is actually the result of such an unwarranted action.

The present government has taken a comprehensive approach this time by announcing the creation of Rashtriya Uchchtar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA) with a well-defined strategy to be created and operated by the MHRD. The UGC and other agencies obviously were uncomfortable as their role was getting redefined and reduced. In the recent meeting of the parliamentary standing committee on HRD, the UGC chairperson, Ved Prakash, asked for the role of RUSA to be reviewed. Appearing before the panel, Prakash said: "RUSA, whose primary function is to fund state universities and ensure that systemic reforms are carried out — a job that was being done by UGC — has become an "obstruction' to higher education." He said the bulk of funds were now going to RUSA which could impact UGC's endeavour to push for research and innovation.

Prakash's argument was disputed by HRD ministry officials but the parliamentary panel gave him a patient hearing. Panel chairperson Satyanarayan Jatiya asked UGC and MHRD to present their respective points of view in the next meeting, and said that this was an issue that needed proper discussion and a final view would be taken only after that.

If one studies the role of RUSA as defined by the MHRD, it turns out that some of UGC's functions have indeed shifted to RUSA. First, model degree colleges will be set up in 374 educationally backward districts, 60 of which have been set up though the present plan and will get funds through RUSA. The entity now also undertakes the funding of upgradation of colleges to universities and disburses infrastructure grant. Already, 35 states and union territories have committed to abide by conditions set by RUSA. More than 20 states have set up state higher education councils, the first condition by RUSA, and are making considerable progress towards implementing other conditions.

It is clear that the MHRD is trying to enter in the domain of many entities like, UGC, AICTE and eventually many other types of councils through RUSA. The MHRD has been rather clever, which is clear from a statement from the ministry source which said, "RUSA is the only specific plan for higher education. It was conceived as state governments were complaining about the earlier system of funding."

The need, therefore, is to avoid such unwarranted clash between various authorities. We are already facing huge difficulties in bringing uniformity in the education sector, let us not compound the confusion further by acting in contrarian ways.

*(The writer is a former chairman of UGC and a former VC of University of Pune)*

# IIM Bill 2015: MBA or MBM; draft not clear to satisfy international standards

http://www.mbauniverse.com/article/id/8668/IIM-ACT-2015

IIM Bill 2015 which has been put under discussion and is going to take the shape of IIM Act 2015 after nod from Parliament may have many issues to address and one of them could be that it may not satisfy the international standards. A petition to make the degree proposed to be awarded by IIMs at par with international standards has been submitted to the Prime Minister of India as well as to the Minister of Human Resource Development by the past and present students of highly ranked IIMs.

It is a known fact that majority of the top rated B schools in the world award MBA degree to their one year management programme as they offer admission to the candidates with not less than 2 years of work experience. However the IIM draft Bill 2015 of MHRD proposes to permit 13 IIMs in India to award MBA degree to their students of 2 years full time post graduate management programme. It may create anomaly in satisfying the global standard and despite completing 2 years flagship MBA at top rated IIMs, the candidate from these B schools will be treated at par with those who have done 1 year MBA from other B schools in the world.

**IIM Alumni and students suggest changes**

The petition suggests changes in the proposed IIM Bill 2015 to bring parity at global standard before it becomes an Act and then seek amendments in future. Petition to Prime Minister Suggests that IIMs should award Masters of Business Administration (MBA) for one-year programme and Masters in Business Management (MBM) for 2 year programme

The suggestion has been given by the alumni and present students of IIM Ahmedabad, Bangalore, Calcutta, Indore, Lucknow and other IIMs. The suggestion has been forwarded through 'oneyearMBA.co.in' that consists of above 400+ petitioners.

**Discrepency may raise Accreditation issue**

International Accreditation Agency Association of MBAs (AMBA) considers these 2 years courses as pre-experience MBM while the 1 year management programmes with the admission eligibility criterion of work experience get the international accreditation as full time MBA. Accordingly IIMs may lose their global competitiveness if this aspect is not taken into consideration by MHRD.

There is no doubt that IIMs while finalizing the admission process for their 2 years full time flagship PGP programmes award weightage to work experience but all the 13 IIMs in India have not made work experience as one of the eligibility criteria for admission. There are more than 70 percent fresher graduates in each of the 13 IIMs in their flagship programmes.

Since the prime concern of MHRD through IIM Act 2015 is to equip IIMs with the power to award MBA instead of PGDM so that they could be at par with global standard, the points raised in the petition and the suggestions made by the highly placed alumni and the present students of various IIMs need a re-look to the draft IIM Bill 2015. MHRD should review all the suggestions that further strengthen the global position of degrees proposed to be awarded by the IIMs from next year.

It has been a long cherished dream of IIM passing out students to get MBA from their IIM, making it globally acceptable without getting supported with a parallel certificate. If the dream comes half-true and still lag-behind on global platform in building their career, entire exercise of MHRD may go futile.

The IIM Bill 2015 which has already been placed before the Cabinet is proposed to be introduced in Parliament with the aim to empower all the IIMs to award MBA degree instead of Diploma in Management. So far IIMs are neither affiliated to any University nor have been declared a deemed to be university and hence cannot award MBA degree as of now. The bill, if introduced and passed in parliament will become IIM Act 2015 and will benefit 4500 students of 20 IIMs (13 present and 7 proposed) every year as their students will be bestowed with an IIM-MBA degree instead of Diploma.

None of the present 13 Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs) award a Masters degree in Business Administration (MBA). All the IIMs award Post Graduate Diploma in Management (PGDM) and alongwith this diploma they issue a certificate that their PGDM programme is equivalent to an MBA degree to enable the passing out student to seek admission abroad in doctoral programme or apply for a job.

To maintain the credibility of management programmes offered by IIMs, MHRD should re-consider the various points to be addressed and redrafted in IIM Bill 2015 before getting it passed in parliament.

Hindu ND 17.05.2015 P-11

# Where are the engineers?

## That only a third of IIT students go on to pursue technology is symptomatic of the deep crisis in engineering education today, and could be solved if practice is preferred to theory in the institutions

Sudhir Chella Rajan

A crisis, pundits on American television often say, is a terrible thing to waste. The recent unpleasantness following the de-recognition of the Ambedkar Periyar Study Circle by the Indian Institute of Technology administration is a case in point. That the administration found a graceful way to put an end to the impasse and come to some reconciliation with the small group of students involved is, of course, important. But it also gives us occasion to ponder over some bigger questions involving higher education in India.

The issues concerning greater inclusivity for long-marginalised groups and of freedom of speech on campus are important but most university administrators have found effective ways to resolve these problems through models such as affirmative action and diversity policies, gender and ethnic sensitivity training, modular learning programmes, remedial education and so on. Indian universities could adapt these to the local context. Periodic workshops and meetings of senior academic administrators could also help.

### A broken engineering education

The bigger and perhaps far more serious predicament is that engineering education is completely broken. Ironically, this is because of the very success of the IITs and engineering colleges. One problem is that economic and public policy interpretations of the problem are inadequate to characterise it fully. Well-worn neo-Benthamite frameworks of interpretation, a resource efficiency study, for instance, might reveal poor teachers or infrastructure, but would miss fundamental insights from fields like culture studies and sociology.

Calling something a societal problem means that more is at stake than just an aggregate of individual 'interests' or 'utilities'. Social scientists recognise that broad patterns of human interaction tend to coalesce into structured routines and maybe even have rules of their own, but that these are always situated in broader historically and spatially defined contexts. In engineering education, we see this in the mad rush for seats in the milieu of rising aspirations cutting across caste and class.

### The race for a career

In the past two decades, young men (and rarely women) have been drawn in large numbers towards elite engineering colleges but they cannot simply be understood as autonomous souls drawn towards engineering as an academic discipline. Rather, there is a large set of other social influences pushing them — parents, peers and teachers but also the image of IIT graduates as smart, young, well-dressed professionals in high-paying careers. Most important, this rush has taken place in the context of great churning and economic opportunity, even as more than 95 per cent of the population struggles to find true forms of mobility. In my own case, my father, who had a degree in English literature and became a journalist and later a civil servant, was convinced that I, his only son, had to be educated in an IIT, which he termed a 'passport' to the good life. I did actually benefit from my IIT degree in aeronautical engineering, by using it to get advanced degrees in science and environmental policy, which again helped me gain entry into the humanities and social sciences.


**PREDICAMENT:** *"Ironically, engineering education is completely broken because of the very success of the IITs and engineering colleges." File photo shows students of IIT Madras.* – PHOTO: S.S. KUMAR

For tens of thousands of IIT alumni, similar success stories are evident. But let us look at what happens to the entrants to the system. I categorise three broad sets of attitudes that students develop in IITs. First, there are those who are motivated by the prospect of the passport, largely having come from modest economic and social backgrounds. Earlier they used to have an eye on postgraduate education, primarily abroad, with the hope of securing corporate or academic positions. Today, with the global corporate market demanding IIT talent, students often skip further education. Indeed, the proportion of undergraduates from IITs doing their PhDs has diminished dramatically in recent decades.

The second group is characterised by a deep despondency of some sort, even with outstanding job prospects. Many turn towards non-engineering vocations, ranging from the arts to politics and entrepreneurship, as Chetan Bhagat, Arvind Kejriwal and Mansur Khan have famously done.

It is the third group that is the real motivation for the IITs. This group has a direct interest in solving challenges of technology. They could be experimenters or entrepreneurs but are mostly trying to engage with the material sense in which the transformation of human society is an undertaking in itself. Examples here range from Vinod Khosla and Subra Suresh to numerous other technology leaders across the world.

**By favouring academics over manual skills, the system subtly reproduces social prejudices and accentuates certain routines of privilege, both among students and in the faculty**

In all groups, however, students seem to experience many forms of alienation that could spiral into crises where one is forced to take a position unexpectedly. To the extent that IITs are also prone, like every other institution today in India, to asking socially relevant questions around gender, caste, and elite privilege and corruption, politics is always already within its midst. If it has been muted, it was only because of a self-fashioning by its members that the discourse could be 'apolitical', itself a doomed venture.

### What's the solution?

The fact that only a third of graduating IIT students fulfil the original vision of IITs to create 'temples' or true workshops of technology should give us pause. What does it mean that most of the engineering students today do not seek to work on real-world engineering problems?

Several of my colleagues in the Humanities and Social Sciences, increasingly seen as an oasis for engineering students but also as a threat by many, are routinely solicited for advice, to find options to exit their pre-organised trajectories. Most students are like unwilling recruits in the army, forced to do time, but seeking space to explore other interests. That the APSC issue was read by many as reinforcing the institute's disciplinary authority, as if it were an extension of cheating, for instance, raised tensions and voices. What, then, should be done about IITs?

First, phase out the undergraduate BTech programme and replace it with a five-year engineering curriculum, but with roughly 50 per cent of time devoted to technology development as an end in itself. The reasons for doing so are many. Primarily, IIT education reinforces elite engineering status by emphasising theory and equations over practice. I learnt a lot of high-level mathematics before I came face-to-face with a real aircraft, where the equations I had studied seemed distant. But what one really needs to build skills and understanding is a greater emphasis on real-world technologies and their operations in relation to economy and society. This is not happening, except in some excellent initiatives such as the Centre for Innovation in IIT Madras. By preferring mathematical puzzle-solving over manual skills, the present system subtly reproduces prejudices in many Indian communities and accentuates certain routines of privilege, both within the student community and occasionally in faculty hiring and promotions. Even the entry into IITs should be based on problem-solving ability as well as demonstrated aptitude for materially engaging with tools and technologies.

Second, turn IITs into nodes that actively foster 'living laboratories' across India. If this were a part of a new national mission, each IIT would be expected to build communities of practice within its neighbourhood by drawing on all existing segments of local entrepreneurship, and India has outstanding models. Such relationships should be open-ended and truly experimental if even a few are to succeed.

Third, the Ministry of Human Resource Development should continue to stay at arm's length from the IITs and indeed all higher education institutions in general. This does not imply privatising them, which would increase fees and further stratify education. Rather, such institutions should be encouraged to experiment with forms of curricula that are expansive rather than particular, and require them to take responsibility for building a collective, inclusive platform for higher education, while providing the resources, both economic and otherwise.

The bottled-up tensions that emerged in the recent IIT Madras crisis are symptoms of a larger, deeper crisis in which all of us are implicated. It is time to recognise these signs and find sustainable solutions.

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Financial Express ND 17/06/2015 P-8

Canvassing China

# The growing distance in education

## Chinese varsities outscore their Indian counterparts because they have institutionalised incentives for research

AMITENDU PALIT

IN ADDITION to trade, higher education is becoming a major sphere of divergence in capacities and capabilities between China and India. The latest Times Higher Education rankings for Asian universities has 21 universities from the Chinese mainland among top 100 universities in Asia. This is an increase from 18 last year. The tally looks more impressive by including universities from Hong Kong and Macau, both of which, as special administrative regions (SARs), are now parts of China. Hong Kong has six universities in the list, while Macau has one.

The University of Tokyo, National University of Singapore and the University of Hong Kong are the top three Asian universities. Peking University and Tsinghua University from China are right behind at four and five. China has overtaken Japan in terms of having the largest number of universities in the top 100. While mainland China now has 21 universities in the elite list, Japan has 19.

The Indian performance has been worse than the previous year. From ten in the top 100 last year, Indian universities are down to nine. The Indian Institute of Science (IISc) Bangalore is the highest-ranked, at 37. Others in the list include Panjab University (38), IIT Roorkee (55), IIT Bombay (57), IIT Delhi (65), IIT Kharagpur (69), IIT Madras (78), Aligarh Muslim University (90) and Jawaharlal Nehru University (96).

Other than the reducing number, the concern is over most of the Indian universities slipping in ranks. Apart from the IISc Bangalore and IIT Bombay—the two new entrants—and IIT Roorkee, whose rank has improved from 59 to 55, all other Indian universities in the top 100 list show lower ranks this year. The sharpest drops are for IIT Kharagpur (45 to 69) and Aligarh Muslim University (80 to 90). Some reputed universities like IIT Kanpur, IIT Guwahati and Jadavpur University are not in the list any more.

Why are Indian universities faring increasingly worse in global and regional rankings than the Chinese?

The Times University Rankings are based on performances across a group of parameters. These include teaching, international outlook, industry income, research and citations. Among these, Indian universities perform particularly poorly in international outlook and research.

International outlook measures the university's global collaborations and partnerships along with the proportions of foreign faculty and foreign students. IIT Delhi has an international outlook score of 14.8, while IIT Kharagpur has 14.2. The Nanjing University of China, one of the middle-level Chinese universities among those in the top 100, has an international outlook score of 50.2. The Wuhan University, another similarly placed university from China, has a score of 33.1.

Research is becoming a critical handicap for Indian universities in global and regional rankings. Phil Baty, Editor of the Times Higher Education Rankings, attributed the performance of Chinese universities to the commitment to higher education by a country prepared to invest heavily in research and development. With respect to India, the observation was on the critical importance of investing in research and strengthening links with other institutions.

The difference in research scores between the Indian and Chinese universities is worth noting. The IISc Bangalore is ahead of the rest of the Indian Universities with a score of 39.5. The remaining Indian universities are bunched within 24.0-10.0. The two top Chinese universities—Peking and Tsinghua—have scores of 61.9 and 68.3, while Fudan and Shanghai Jiaotong Universities are at 34.4 and 37.9. Most of the middle level Chinese Universities, like Nanjing and Wuhan Universities mentioned earlier, have research scores on par with the Indian IITs in the top 100.

The citation scores reflect interesting insights. Citation measures the frequency of reference to a particular research or academic work by other researchers revealing the traction gained by the former in ongoing research and among peers. Despite a low research score of 10.4, Panjab University has a remarkably high citation score of 84.4, which has helped it to rise to 38. Citation scores of Indian universities are better than research scores pointing to fairly wide circulation of the research by faculty in global academic circles.

The low research scores of top Indian universities compared with the Chinese is a result of the lower volume of research coming out from the former. The good quality of this limited research, as reflected by citations, is not good enough for higher rankings.

The Chinese experience points to greater collaboration with international universities and making domestic ones attractive for foreign students and faculty as necessary conditions for global academic recognition. Such collaborations and attractiveness not only increase revenues and the scope for greater cutting-edge research, but also better branding.

The enormous effort made by Chinese universities in augmenting research is equally critical. A lot of commercially applied scientific research in China is now being done in universities in active collaboration with industry. Research in Chinese universities has also been encouraged by incentives offered to faculty. By building capacities and institutionalising incentives for quality research, China has been able to significantly expand quality research output.

It is a pity that such capacities and incentives are much less in scale and scope even in the best Indian universities. Till these improve and till Indian universities revamp their international outlooks, they would stay well behind China in rankings.

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Times Of India ND 17/06/2015 P-25

# 8-month stay in Hawaii dome readies Nasa team for Mars trip

Adam Lusher

AP

AS REAL AS IT GETS: HI-SEAS mission commander Martha Lenio collects soil sample outside the dome (inset) on the Big Island of Hawaii. Six scientists lived in the 36ft-diametre vinyl dome to simulate life on Mars

Back in the autumn, six scientists received some good news: they were being treated to an eight-month, all expenses paid trip to Hawaii. There was just one little catch: they would be spending all eight months cooped up together in conditions designed to simulate a mission to Mars. Nasa-funded Hawaii Space Exploration Analog and Simulation mission (HI-SEAS) was meant to see whether they coped or developed cabin fever. Whenever the six human guinea pigs wanted to take a short walk outside their 36ft-diametre vinyl dome, they had to don 40lb space suits.

Perhaps it should not be overly surprising that with the six having now completed their mission at the weekend, one has declared re-entering the outside world as "pure joy", and another has confessed: "I feel like a ghost."

A possible clue as to why Martha Lenio and her five junior colleagues appear to have survived relatively unscathed may lie in her final blog before leaving the dome, about her pre-mission goals to "learn the ukulele, improve my French and finish off a knitting project". "Of those three," wrote the 34-year-old Canadian renewable energy consultant, "I think the knitting is the only one really close to being accomplished. I can play a few chords on the ukulele but not a whole song." Sophie Milam, a robotics researcher, posted excitedly about making a model boat out of sticks, and making an alternative spacesuit helmet out of tin foil. Crew member Jocelyn Dunn said it was awesome to feel wind on her skin again. "When we first walked out the door, it was scary not to have a suit on," said Dunn, a Purdue University PhD candidate.

But it wasn't all fun. The six inhabitants conducted their own research projects. The inmates had to freeze eight months' worth of saliva and urine samples for Nasa.

And the team did have its own crisis moment. About halfway through the mission, bad weather on the volcano left them unable to use their solar batteries. They had to huddle up for warmth and restrict energy use to just the essential systems, coming within hours of the fan on their composting toilet running out of power. THE INDEPENDENT

Times Of India ND 17/06/2015 P-25

# Quake shifts Mt Everest by 3cm

## Peak Moved To The Southwest After Nepal Temblor: Chinese Study

**Beijing:** A devastating earthquake that hit Nepal in April moved Mount Everest three centimetres (just over an inch) to the southwest, but did not change its height, according to Chinese research published on Tuesday.

The 7.8-magnitude quake reversed the gradual northeasterly course of the world's highest peak, which straddles Nepal and China, the National Administration of Surveying, Mapping and Geoinformation found. But its height — usually given as 8,848 metres (29,029 feet) — was unchanged by the disaster, according to the research, published in Chinese state media. The report said Everest had moved 40 centimetres to the northeast over the past decade at a speed of four centimetres a year, and risen three centimetres over the same period.

Nepal rests on a major fault line between two tectonic plates — one bearing India pushing northward into a plate carrying Europe and Asia at a rate of about two centimetres (three quarters of an inch) per year — the process that created the Himalayas.

Roger Bilham, professor of geological science at the University of Colorado, agreed with the Chinese findings. But he said the focus should not be on Everest, calling the peak "a lump of uneroded rock that just happens to have survived a little bit higher than all the other rocks in the Himalaya". "The Everest region was a mere bystander, and was pulled slightly by this movement by a few centimetres south and a little bit down," he wrote in an email.

More than 8,700 people were killed in the April 25 quake and a major aftershock on May 12, which also triggered landslides and destroyed half a million homes, leaving thousands without shelter. Scientists say the densely populated Kathmandu Valley, around 80 kilometres southeast of the epicentre, moved south by nearly two metres during the quake. Nepal's government said it had not yet studied the impact on Everest but that quake-affected areas had moved south.

"We have been studying the core areas affected by the quake and there has been a general southward movement," said Madhu Sudan Adhikari, head of the survey department in Nepal's land ministry. "Kathmandu has shifted south by over 1.5 metres and was uplifted by nearly a metre." AFP

AFP

**STILL STANDING TALL:** The height of Mt Everest remains unchanged at 8,848m

# IIT Palakkad to begin classes this academic year

**The state government had given its nod to acquire 500 acres for constructing a permanent campus**

http://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/iit-palakkad-to-begin-classes-this-academic-year-115061600726_1.html

Kerala chief minister Oommen Chandy today announced IIT Palakkad will start classes this academic year operating from a temporary facility.

The state government had given its nod to acquire 500 acres for constructing a permanent campus.

Inaugurating the chief minister mass contact programme at Palakkad, Chandy announced 16 projects for Palakkad district. The announced projects include setting up an IIT, a Medical College hospital, Cyber Park at Pattambi and drinking water projects. All of them would be completed within an year, he said.



The state gave its administrative nod for release of Rs 360 crore for the proposed medical college. Its construction would be completed within two years and a cancer treatment research centre would also be started. Out of the 100 seats in the MBBS batch, 70 seats would be reserved for students belonging to scheduled tribes.

It is proposed the Kuttipuram-Kumbidi-Tritala-Pattambi-Shornur road would be constructed by spending Rs

120 crore under the annuity scheme. Chandy said Rs 25.3 crore had been sanctioned to construct six new link by passes from Palakkad town.

A special agricultural development project would be implemented at Attappadi, for which, Rs 10.28 crore has been sanctioned for the same in which tribal people from 192 settlements will undertake farming. It has also been decided to set up Cyber Park at Pattambi.

Sanction has been given for the revised estimate of Rs 9.35 crore for Chitoor- Tathamangalam drinking water project. Kuzhalmantham- Kannadi- Tenkurissi drinking water project will be commissioned within a year. Steps have been taken to get the Central assistance of Rs 7.5 crore for the project. Rs 10 crore have been sanctioned for the second phase works of Anakkara- Pattithara drinking water project.

Solar electricity will be used to light up 13 SC/ST settlements for which Rs 4.85 crore has been sanctioned. The aim is to bring electricity before March of next year, CM said. Green triangle tourism circuit will be set up. 'Organic Palakkad' project will also be implemented. The aim is to make the district the first organic district in India.

# Indian Railways to offer research fellowships at IITs, IIMs and other state univs

## Indian Railways will award fellowships to carry out rail-related research at Central and state universities and prominent education institutions like IITs, IIMs and IIS.

http://www.financialexpress.com/article/industry/jobs/indian-railways-to-offer-research-fellowships-at-iits-iims-and-other-state-univs/86114

Indian Railways will award fellowships to carry out rail-related research at Central and state universities and prominent education institutions like IITs, IIMs and IIS.

Fellowship scheme will be introduced at Central and state universities and centres for excellence like IITs, IIMs and IIS, Railway Board Member (Staff) Pradeep Kumar said here today.

He said a scheme for encouraging railway employees to acquire higher qualifications at Masters level in IITs, IIMs and institutes of repute will also be introduced.

MoUs for setting up of centres for railway research at IIT Chennai, IIT-Kanpur, and IIT-Roorkee will be singed shortly, he said.

Railways had recently signed an MoU with University of Mumbai in April for setting up a Centre for Railway Research. Three more such centres will be established.

Kumar said an Academic Services Agreement was signed with Beijing Jiaotong University, China, for training of 100 officers of various departments in heavy haul technology.

In order to benefit railway officers, M.Tech programme in Railway Engineering is being introduced in consultation with IIT, Kharagpur, from academic session 2015-16.

He said services of professional agencies would be used for evaluation of railway training programmes.

# HRD Ministry plans to set up National Digital Library

http://www.iamin.in/en/new-delhi/news/hrd-ministry-plans-set-national-digital-library-62571

With an endeavour to provide free online educational material to students, the Human Resources Development (HRD) Ministry has decided to set up National Digital Library.

The Ministry has entrusted IIT Kharagpur with the responsibility of implementing the project.

The Digital library is being set up under the NMEICT Mission of the Ministry of Human Resources Development.

As per the official sources, e-content of every subject will be available to students in English, Hindi as well as other Indian languages. Students can easily access digital content through personal computer, laptop, smart-phone and tablet.

The library is likely to benefit students studying in schools, colleges and higher educational institutions, professionals and researchers. It will also benefit specially-abled students.

The work of setting up a National Digital Library is being done in three phases. IIT Kharagpur is already working on a pilot project in the first phase, which is likely to complete by 2017.

# Tech: IIT Bombay creates a laptop for Rs 6000

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IIT Bombay has created a Rs 6000 laptop that runs on a modified version of the Ubuntu Linux OS. The device also comes pre-loaded with several free open source apps (FOSS) for students and researchers, as well as for watching movies and music. But does it perform well in meeting our daily needs? Hassan M Kamal puts it to the test

Low-cost computers have been in the news for a while. First, it was the Android tablet, named Aakash, and now, the Indian Institute of Technology — Bombay (IIT-B), has developed a low-cost laptop, dubbed as the FOSSEE (Free Open Source Software for Education) laptop. Currently in the pilot phase, the laptop funded by NMEICT (National Mission on Education through ICT) aims to promote IT literacy and the usage of FOSS apps. It's priced Rs 4,990 (Rs 5,820 after taxes). There are only 1,000 pieces available, of which the guide received a sample unit recently. We gave it a workout to check if it lived up to expectations.


## The Foss Laptop

**Design:** There's nothing striking about the laptop visually; the entire body is made of plastic, and resembles a toy laptop. The top lid gets a glossy finish (prone to scratches and may get worse with time) but don't expect much at this price. There are too big logos printed on the top; reducing the appeal. The rest of the body has a solid finish (not matte), and offers a good grip. The above flaws were expected, however, we were disappointed to find few sharp unpolished edges in some parts of the laptop.
Rating: 7 / 10

**Display:** The device gets a 10-inch TFT display with 1024x600 screen resolution, which is sufficient. The viewing angles, as expected are limited, but suffices our needs. However, we found the brightness level of the screen very low. It also gets a bluish tinge to it, which some users may find difficult to work around.
Rating: 6 / 10


**OS and Apps:** The device runs FOSSEE (Free Open Source Software for Education) OS, a modified version of the open source Linux OS, Ubuntu. The team behind the OS has worked hard to build a stable release of the OS, and it shows well throughout the system. But most importantly, it comes pre-loaded with softwares such as Chromium and Firefox browser, Libre Office (an alternative to Windows Office), Gnome player (for media), AV tools such as Audacity and Kazam and several other education tools and tutorials (such as Wikipedia in 10 Indian languages, available locally) developed especially for students across fields. Though, the hardware of the laptop is not very impressive, the FOSSEE OS and the selection of apps could be worth it. The device has also been synchronised to offer access to spoken tutorials, and various other online tools and resources to improve learning among students. You may not find the same apps as in Windows OS environment, but there are plenty of alternatives that are worth a try.
Rating: 9 / 10

**Connectivity:** We are surprised to see the number of the ports in the laptop, despite the low price. It has two USB 2.0 ports, one mini HDMI port, one speaker out, one mic-in and an Ethernet LAN port. The device is also Bluetooth enabled and supports Wi-Fi. The ports make it a very useful device for students and researchers.
Rating: 8 / 10

**Storage:** The laptop comes with 8GB Nano flash drive as primary storage and 1GB RAM. Users won't be able to store large number of music or video files, and may soon find themselves running out of storage, but support is available for external drives (upto 2TB). The device also comes with a 4-in-1 card reader and can support memory cards up to 32GB. Considering that the OS requires low storage, and the device comes pre-installed with several apps, a user gets nearly 4GB free storage for personal use.
Rating: 7 / 10

**Performance:** The device runs on a 1GHz dual core ARM v7 Processor which, coupled with 1GB RAM, seems a fitting pairing at this price range. Though it manages to almost pull of multi-tab browsing, we found few issues during video playback (we suggest playing videos through different apps until you find the right one for your file type). We also faced issues in launching new apps — as there was a 5-10 seconds delay in launching apps. We feel, an upgrade in the RAM and processor should be paramount to make it run smoothly. The built-in speakers do not offer the most natural sound and are a bit high on treble, but they were loud. The device gets a standard VGA camera, which though not the best, is enough for video chats. Overall, the device is sufficient to meet most of your standard computing needs, and offers more than any other device at this price range.
Rating: 6 / 10

**Keyboard:** The keyboard is standard and offers a good typing experience. However, the key signage appears to have been pasted on later, and could rub off with time.
**Rating:** 7 / 10

**Battery:** The device is powered by a 5,000 mAh battery, which according to IIT-B, should give nearly two hours online playback of 720p videos. But we found it lasting longer than that at all times. It should easily give three hours of video playback. However it's a bit slow while recharging. It takes more than two hours to just reach the 50% level. The device was originally supposed to have a 3,500 mAh battery and recharge upto 80% in two hours, but the charge time had to be compromised for a larger battery.
Rating: 7 / 10

### *Overall rating*

**7.1 / 10**

**The guide verdict:** There's not much one shoud expect for Rs 6K, but the laptop manages to offer more than that. The hardware standards won't get you drooling, but IIT Bombay has managed to pull off quite a feat combining low-cost hardware with the best of free open source software. Overall, the FOSSEE laptop seems like a promising approach to make IT literacy in India a reality. Besides, from what we hear, an upgraded version is already in the pipleline. Watch this space.

### Specifications

**DISPLAY:** 10-inch 1024x680
**PROCESSOR:** 1 GHz dual Core ARM v7
**MEMORY:** 1GB RAM, 8GB NAND Flash storage, expandable up to 32GB, external hard disk drive up to 2GB
**CAMERA:** Standard VGA
**CONNECTIVITY:** Bluetooth, Wi-Fi, 2xUSB 2.0, mini HDMI, Ethernet LAN, mic-in, speaker-out
**PRICE:** Rs 5,820

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