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LEARNING CURVE EDUCATION GETS HIGHER ALLOCATION

Allocation hiked moderately for elementary, secondary and higher education. One million students to be provided ₹10,000 each on completing skill training courses.

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NEW DELHI

With a focus on capacity building and job-led education, finance minister P. Chidambaram Thursday proposed an allocation of ₹65,869 crore for the sector in the Union budget for 2013-14, an increase of a little over 7% from that for the current fiscal year.

Of the total education outlay, the flagship scheme Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) was allocated ₹27,258 crore for implementing the Right to Education Act that promises education to all children in the 6-14 age group. The previous Union budget for 2012-13 had pegged an outlay of ₹61,427 crore for education, including ₹25,555 crore for SSA.

Terming education a "high priority" for the government, Chidambaram increased allocation for the elementary, secondary and higher education segments moderately. But he also announced that at least one million students could be provided ₹10,000 each on completing skill training courses, a decision commended by both academic and industry experts.

"Skill trained youth will give an enormous boost to employability and productivity. On the assumption that 10,00,000 youth can be motivated, I propose to set apart ₹1,000 crore for this ambitious scheme," the finance minister said in his budget speech, following up from the Economic Survey, released on Wednesday, on employment-linked education.

Narayanan Ramaswamy, partner, management consulting and national leader, education advisory, at audit and consulting company KPMG, said that of all the education-related announcements, "attaching incentive to skill education is forward looking. They have given a policy direction."

The National Skill Development Corp. (NSDC) said the decision will boost its efforts. "Providing an incentive of ₹10,000 to every individual who undergoes training, coupled with the recognition given to industry-led assessment and certification, would create an aspiration value for skills and contribute significantly to ongoing efforts to ensure that India is in a position to leverage its demographic dividend," NSDC said in an emailed statement.

Chidambaram also proposed to term corporate contributions to incubators in educational institutions as corporate social responsibility activity, which will help boost the start-up culture and indirectly create jobs.

"With incubators set up by companies in academic institutions qualifying as corporate social responsibility (CSR) activity, entrepreneurship in higher education institutions will get a major boost," said E. Abraham, director of the Xavier Labour Relations Institute (XLRI) in Jamshedpur. "We look forward to welcoming forward-thinking organizations to set up incubators in our campus. With the economy getting more mature it is im-

perative that entrepreneurs are encouraged to help shape a vibrant economy and sustainable future."

The budget also allocated ₹49,659 crore to the school education sector that caters to over 230 million students. The sector got a moderate ₹3,690-crore hike from the previous budget estimate. This comprises the SSA allocation, ₹13,215 crore for the mid-day meal scheme and ₹3,983 crore for the Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA), a scheme to universalize secondary education and curb the high drop-out rate. "Investment in the RMSA cannot be postponed any longer," Chidambaram said in his budget speech.

"Increased allocations for SSA and for RMSA reiterate the government's commitment towards strengthening school education," said Dhiraj Mathur, leader (education), PricewaterhouseCoopers India.

For higher education, the finance minister pegged an allocation of ₹16,210 crore for 2013-14 against an allocation of ₹15,458 crore in the budget estimate for 2012-13.

But experts were critical that the budget failed to provide any major policy direction on private-public participation in schools or promotion of private money in higher education.

"The budget talked about a 17% increase in education," said Narayanan of KPMG. "They first cut the budget, and then compare revised figure with the budget estimate. In fact, it's a little over 7% hike if you compare the budget estimate to budget estimate. We were expecting that in a pre-election year, education will get a huge boost but..." He was referring to the Planning Commission cutting the education expenditure by over ₹5,200 crore from the planned allocation two months ago.

Narayanan said the focus now should be on expenditure as often the government fails to spend the entire corpus.

According to a recent report by Accountability Initiative, a wing of the Centre for Policy Research, SSA spending was only 61% in 2011-12, leading to a poor learning outcome in schools. "Now the budget is over, the (human resource development) ministry must take the right policy decisions to promote quality in schools and private funding in higher education," Narayanan said.

Riad Joseph, tax partner, education practice, at Ernst & Young, was also sceptical. "There appear to be no specific announcements on regulatory reform, the PPP (public-private partnership) framework and incentives for the private sector," he said.

On a positive note, the elite Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) will get ₹2,220 crore for 2013-14, almost double the allocation they received in 2012-13, but experts say most of the funds may go to the eight new IITs to augment their capacity.

The Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs) will get ₹331 crore, triple the allocation of the current fiscal year. The University Grants Commission will get ₹5,147 crore, a negligible increase of ₹69 crore.

HELP AT HAND FOR INCUBATORS

BY DEEPTI CHAUDHARY,
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MUMBAI/BANGALORE/NEW DELHI

The national budget for 2013-14 could boost the funding of existing incubators on college campuses that nurture and grow start-ups, and also encourage more colleges to start incubators of their own.

Budget 2013 allows funding to such incubators to be included in the corporate social responsibility (CSR) expenditure of companies.

The new Companies Bill requires companies to report a spending of at least 2% of their net profit on CSR. Experts say that including funding provided to incubators under this head would boost the cause of student enterprises.

With this initiative, incubators now have the potential to raise capital from the private sector, according to K. Srikrishna, executive director at Nation-

al Entrepreneurship Network.

"This will lead DST (department of science and technology) founded incubators to think about long-term funding because government funding is for limited period of time and they still need to establish models which allow them to grow beyond that," he said.

For incubators, it is a new source of capital, which also has the virtue of bringing the industry closer, Srikrishna said.

Money apart, the move will also help increase the interaction and engagement between companies looking for new ideas and products and colleges looking to work with them.

Directly involving companies in supporting incubators is a big, positive step, said Poyini Bhatt, chief operations officer, Society for Innovation and Entrepreneurship (SINE), IIT Bombay. While the start-up ecosystem is beginning to develop in the country with the number of

incubators, accelerators, angel networks and early stage funds rising, one of the biggest grievances of incubators is the lack of involvement by companies who are best equipped to indicate what innovations are needed based on customers' preference.

"It will give incubators a direct access to funding resources. Companies, on the other hand, can get involved with innovation and business ideas at a very early stage," Bhatt said.

In his budget presentation on Thursday, finance minister P. Chidambaram said incubators play an important role in nurturing new businesses which start as a small or medium business. "I am glad to announce that the ministry of corporate affairs will notify that funds provided to technology incubators located within academic institutions and approved by the ministry of science and technology or ministry of medium and small enterprises will qualify as CSR ex-

penditure."

The move will help companies in two ways—fulfil their CSR obligation while making smart investments, said Anil Joshi, vice-president at Mumbai Angels. Some of these incubated ideas will become big businesses in the long term, he said. "The finance minister has created room for grants and donations to incubators. This will fuel more initiatives in educational institutes," Joshi said.

Companies too, seem open to the idea of backing tech incubators. **Zensar Technologies Ltd**, for instance, has created a Zensar Innovation Scheme.

"If tomorrow, funding is required to set up a tech incubator, we will not just help people within our organization; we will also explore options outside the company. If certain academic institutions have an interesting concept that needs to be developed, we will be happy to help them set it up," said the company's chief Ganesh Natarajan. "It's a tragedy that in a \$100 billion IT industry, hardly \$2-3 billion goes into product development."

Experts say it is likely that with or without the CSR requirements, compa-

nies will continue to grow their investments in this space to remain future-ready. Technology in many ways and forms is becoming a critical enabler to companies across industries—be it core tech or non-tech, said Shouvik Mukherjee, vice-president and head, Yahoo India, research and development.

"Even non-tech companies might look at investing in incubators or fund programmes which are related to technologies that are relevant to their operations," Mukherjee said.

Indeed, there may be a case to expand the scope of the provision, said an angel investor.

While educational institutions provide engineering and technology knowledge, business orientation and mentoring is often stronger at incubators outside educational institutions, said Padmaja Ruparel, president, Indian Angel Network. "We would, therefore, prefer that this provision should apply to all incubators approved by the department of science and technology or ministry of micro, small and medium enterprises."

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HT Lucknow

AMU, BHU get ₹100 cr each to foster excellence



BALANCING ACT

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LUCKNOW: Uttar Pradesh may not have figured exclusively in finance minister P Chidambaram's scheme of things but it has not drawn a blank either in the union budget presented on Thursday.

Besides funds for its Bundelkhand and naxal-hit areas, two universities in the state, the Aligarh Muslim University and the Banaras Hindu University, have received a grant of Rs 100 crore each.

"The AMU had recently sent a proposal to ministry of human resource and development asking for funds for construction of new hostels," said pro-vice chancellor of AMU S Ahmad Ali.

"It is a big achievement for the university," Rajesh Singh, chairman of the press publicity and publication cell of the BHU, said.

"It was in 2006 that the Prime Minister's Office had conducted a survey of universities. In that

survey, the BHU had stood first. It was then decided to support universities performing well in scientific research on the lines of the American universities," Singh said adding, "The allocation of Rs 100 crore is a part of that exercise to promote excellent universities across the country," he added.

TM Mohapatra, former director of the Institute of Medical Sciences, BHU, however, felt Rs 100 crore was nothing keeping in view the size of the university. "It should have been much more," he said.

Chidambaram has also announced his government's decision to award 3000 km stretch of new road projects in five states in the first six months of 2013-14. UP is one of them besides Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Rajasthan.



■ **BHU teachers still feel its not enough.**

Asian Age, New Delhi

College students on a confession spree

Be it cheating in exams, being rejected by a girl or being harassed by faculty, students choose social media to make anonymous confessions

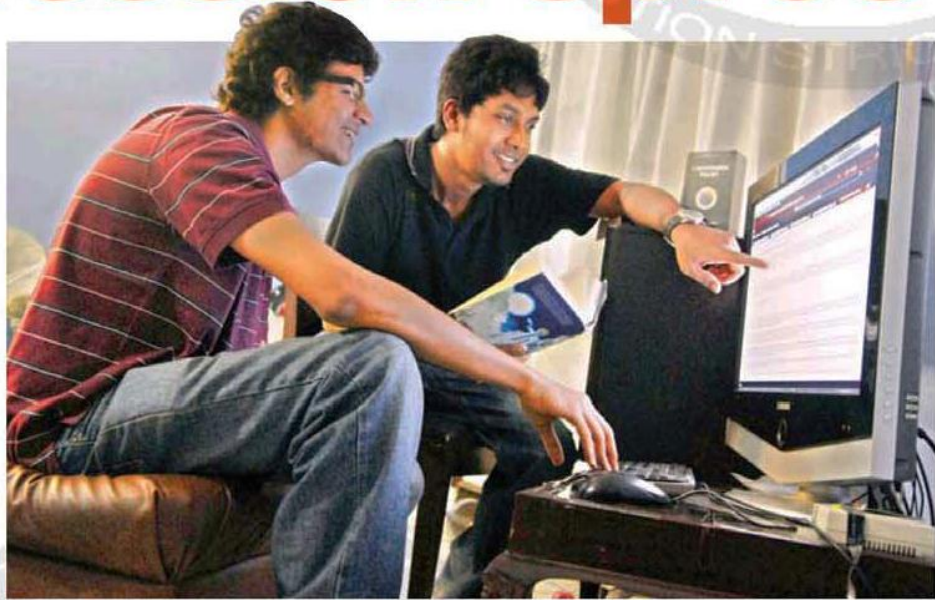
SANA YASEEN

THE ASIAN AGE

City students are in a confession mood. Students from IIT, DU colleges, Amity University, JUIT and many other academic institutions are coming up with Facebook confession pages, where they are revealing bizarre things that happened to them on or off campus. For many it's a stress-busting technique, which is gaining popularity with tons of 'likes' and leading to a chain of confessions.

"We have a body in our institute called the 'Guidance and Counselling Unit' which recently changed its name to *Mitr*. It had initiated and encouraged the concept of 'confessions' but when things are official and linked to the administration, students hesitate to confess. But a page on Facebook is a better medium to reach thousands of students," says Arun Saxena. He started IIT Confession page for fun, and within a week it became popular with more than 2,000 likes. The popularity is increasing, and Arun says the page has gone viral.

Many other colleges too have confession pages now. From Delhi University to Amity University, it seems the idea of anonymous confessions is cool and clicking



(Above) Picture for illustrative purpose only; (left) the display picture of a Facebook confession page.

lems, it makes you feel better. And I guess, that is the achievement of this page," he adds.

Though there are many fake confessions made on these pages and sometimes individuals are targeted, Yashita Thakur, who runs another IIT Confession page, says that the motive behind starting the page was to let people speak out. "The whole campus community is abuzz with these confessions. We received some very serious

revelations based on rape and sexual advances.

Those kind of issues hardly find any vent in routine life. Confession makers get solutions to their problems and manage to garner support through the positive messages and comments from batchmates and seniors," says Yashita.

among college-goers. Those administrating the pages refuse to disclose their identities and choose to remain anonymous for fear of rustication. But there's no fear stopping students from making confessions on these pages. "From adventures to mishaps, psychological trauma to sexual pleasures, all sort of confessions are being made on the page," says Jatin Sharma, contributor, Jaypee Confessions.

Prashant Mathur from Amity Confessions, says these pages are solution

providers to many problems that plague students. "It's cool to confess now," adds Prashant.

Arun explains, "I think this page has reached students who need it the most. Those who cannot share their experiences with anyone else have confessed here. Thus, relieving themselves of huge burden and anxiety. If you talk to someone about your prob-

The confession pages have managed to reach those who can't share experiences in person

Some names have been changed to conceal identities of students.

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DU'S PRO VICE CHANCELLOR RESIGNS

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NEW DELHI: Delhi University's Pro-Vice Chancellor (PVC), Vivek Suneja, resigned from his post on Wednesday at what university officials believe to be a very critical juncture.

According to university officials, Suneja resigned due to personal reasons and his resignation was accepted by the university on Wednesday itself.

The four-year-degree programme was a project that was fully supported by Suneja and according to university officials the programme, which has to be initiated from the coming academic year, may suffer a setback because of the resignation.

"The Pro-Vice Chancellor, along with the Vice Chancellor, has been instrumental in informing people about the provisions of the four-year degree programme and thus in getting it passed. He was deeply involved in the process of formulating a structure for its implementation. His sudden resignation is shocking," said a member of the task force for the four-year-degree programme.

Suneja's resignation comes after another important resignation earlier.