

# Newspaper Clips

March 14, 2011

Financial Express ND 14/03/2011 P-7

## HRD min moots more state funds for varsities

**S Saroj Kumar**

Chennai, Mar 13: While central government is increasing its annual fund allocation to various state and central government instituted universities in the country, to the contrary a similar kind of allocation from state governments towards state-owned universities is decreasing, said Purandeswari, minister of state, HRD ministry at CII conference.

"There are 30 central universities and manifold state universities. The government of India allocation towards state and central universities had increased by 23 to 24%, on the contrary the funds outflow from the respective state government is dwindling. Many state promoted universities are languishing due to

**THE CENTRE ALLOCATION TOWARDS STATE AND CENTRAL UNIVERSITIES HAD INCREASED BY 23 TO 24%, ON THE CONTRARY THE FUNDS OUTFLOW FROM THE RESPECTIVE STATES IS DWINDLING**

non-allocation of requisite funds by the respective local governments. The regional government should release the set apart funds so as to enable the varsities to deliver goods on a par with central varsities", she said.

Reiterating that proliferation of central universities would not be a solution to solve the demand-supply scenario in the higher education sector, she added: "To bridge the demand-supply gap in higher education, we need proactive participation of private sector in setting up colleges, uni-

versities and other specialty institutions. Government intervention would be in addressing the lopsided growth of the institution spread like addressing the issue of accessibility and affordability. With most of engineering colleges situated in urbanised localities, how to enable students from different demographic locations gain access. Secondly, extending loan programmes to assist students to finance the tuition fee and other fee costs at private run colleges." Speaking on the issue of at-

tracting private funding in higher education, Purandeswari said steps like granting of infrastructure status to educational sector and viability funding in some way would boost the investment flow in the growth of higher education.

Earlier S Gopalakrishnan, chairman, CII Southern Region and Managing Director, Infosys Technologies Ltd sounded a note of caution on experimenting with privatisation of higher education. He underscored how ineptly run engineering colleges and management schools crashed out of existence with disastrous consequences due to poor or no proper regulatory oversight. He called for setting up industry institute cluster by according of industry status to higher education.

Financial Chronicle ND 14/03/2011 P-10

## 'States don't allocate enough for education'

**S SHYAMALA**

Chennai

THE onus of imparting education should be equally shared by the Centre and states. While the Central government has been consistently increasing its fund allocations for the education sector, states do not spend on par, explained D Purandeswari, minister of state for human resource development (higher education), on Sunday.

"In its 11th five-year plan underway now, the Central government has allocated 19 per cent of the budget for education. The

Centre's target is to achieve six per cent of the gross domestic product from the education sector. Both the states and Centre are supposed to spend to achieve the target. There has been an apprehension that state governments have not been making the required fund allocations. They have put in only about 3.8 per cent overall. States should make education their top priority and allocate funds at least on par with the Centre," she said at the Confederation of Indian Industry's (CII) conference on education for sustainable development.

**"THE Centre's target is to achieve 6% of the GDP from the education sector"**

**D Purandeswari**

Minister of state for human resource development

Moreover, the Union government has conferred infrastructure status to ed-

ucation in this year's budget announcement. This will encourage private players to actively participate in the segment. Annual allocation to the sector has been raised by 24 per cent over last year to about Rs 52,000 crore. While the Centre has been increasing its spend over the years, states have been found to lower their allocations. State universities are suffering due to scarcity of funds and unless governments come forward, national goals for education cannot be met, she added.

The minister also sought the cooperation of the

states to bring in a common curriculum for core subjects such as science, math and commerce in schools. The scope of the ministry of human resource development's responsibilities is restricted to the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) schools. Forty state boards have to agree to implement the common curriculum across the country, she said. The proposal has been placed before the boards and they should arrive at a consensus soon.

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# Sculpting success in engineering

After growing into a conglomerate with interests in hydrocarbons, infrastructure, power & finance, and defeating hostile takeover bids, L&T is now restructuring to leverage its strengths to create more value



20TH YEAR  
OF REFORMS

VIKAS SRIVASTAV

**L**ARSEN & Toubro is Indian in every sense. Over 100 yellow buses that carry thousands of engineers and workers to the company's sprawling campus in Powai, a Mumbai suburb, do not reveal its Danish connection. That legacy is not easily visible at the headquarters of India's largest engineering and construction company. The two engineers from Denmark—Henning Holck-Larsen and Soren Kristian Toubro—who helped set up the partnership in pre-Independent India, in 1938, have barely left an indelible mark, except in name.

The Danish would never imagined that their concern would metamorphose into a global giant. Over the past two decades, the ubiquitous engineer in yellow cap has toiled hard to create this behemoth, better known as L&T. On the back of a new and liberal economy and the resurgence in demand for infrastructure and energy, L&T has grown into sectors such as hydrocarbons, infrastructure, power and finance. And the growth has been phenomenal. Its sales and profits have grown more than 5,000 per cent in the past 20 years and its market cap reached Rs 95,000 crore on March 11, 2011 from Rs 900 crore in 1991.

AM Naik, the chairman of L&T, who was not available to meet FC team despite several rescheduled appointments, said in an email, "I do not think we need to be the biggest to prove anything. What we need to be is among the best in the world in whatever we do. That has been my mission in L&T—make it a global best-in-class company. In the process, we will create value in terms of both revenue and margin growth and in stakeholder value."

Experts believe each L&T unit has grown into a sizeable company and, as per the flow of orders and demand in their sectors, they are poised to grow into billion-dollar-plus companies in a few years. That is why L&T is restructuring, splitting itself into nine vertical units with five subsidiaries. It plans to list these companies in a few years.

Deven Choksey, managing director of KR Choksey, says L&T's strength lies in its ability to deliver engineering projects on time. "In the last 4-5 years, the company has moved into divisions such as finance, construction, nuclear and defence, with special focus on power and infrastructure. The company has also moved out of non-core businesses like cement, glass and petrol pumps over the last few years."



Bloomberg

"They have realised that along with the core focus on infrastructure and the requirement of delivery within the infra space, the company has to focus on technology and reduction of non-core business, which they have been doing over the past few years. Restructuring of the company would allow them to leverage their strengths and develop into sizeable companies," Choksey said.

While announcing the restructuring, JP Nayak, L&T's whole-time director and president of machinery and industrial products, had said that each unit would have a separate board consisting of a chairman, a chief executive officer designated as business head, three executive members and three non-executive directors. "In addition, a member of the L&T board of directors will also be on the board of each company," he had said.

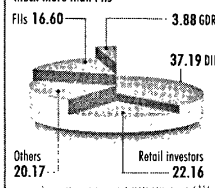
The process of selecting external directors with substantial domain expertise for all the nine companies is expected to be completed in two months. Since these companies have not been registered and they are not legal entities, the power to hire and fire a business head will rest with the L&T board.

A professionally managed company like L&T has challenges that are different from those faced by peers of similar size but led by an identifiable promoter. Over the years it has been the target of big business houses like Reliance Industries and Aditya Birla group who wanted to take control of the company. In April 1989, Dhirubhai Ambani, chairman of RIL, became the chairman of L&T on the strength of RILs approximated 10 per cent stake in the company. But the attempt was thwarted by LIC, the largest stakeholder, and GIC, culminating in Ambani's resignation from the board in 1990.

The next challenge came soon as L&T's cement rival Grasim, the Aditya Birla group flagship, mopped up the entire L&T stake offloaded by RIL. The group then made an open offer for ad-

## Strong domestic holding

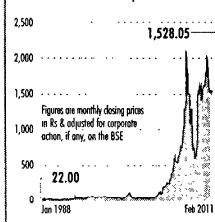
DIs show their faith in a promoter-less L&T much more than FIs



Figures in per cent as of December 31, 2010. Promoter holding is nil. FIs: foreign institutional investors; DIs: domestic institutional investors (mutual funds, insurance companies & banks); GDRs: Global Depository Receipts; Others include L&T Employees Welfare Foundation and other non-promoter, non-institutional, non-individual investors

## High volatility

Early investors gained the most, new ones encounter volatile share price movement



ditional stake in L&T and forced it to demerge its cement business into Cemco, which was renamed UltraTech Cement, while L&T Employees Foundation took over the group's 15 per cent stake to wrest control of L&T.

Despite threats of hostile takeovers, investors were upbeat on the company's growth. Many of them, like LIC, UTI and GIC, which entered the com-

## Debt-driven sales growth

Financials reflect a mixed growth trend as well as challenges facing the company

FY-ended	Net Sales	Adjusted Net Profit	Total Debt	Total Assets
Mar '10	43,837	3,845	24,607	46,686
Mar '09	40,377	2,924	20,370	35,416
Mar '08	29,311	2,232	12,316	24,070
Mar '07	20,508	1,800	6,432	13,999
Mar '06	16,539	1,017	3,499	8,570
Mar '05	14,487	760	3,454	6,875
Mar '04	10,287	735	2,767	5,471
Mar '03	10,312	335	4,701	7,968
Mar '02	8,684	287	4,978	8,160
Mar '01	7,379	268	4,263	8,263
Mar '00	6,956	309	3,974	7,838
Mar '99	6,883	396	3,359	7,065
Mar '98	5,305	432	2,819	6,241
Mar '97	4,982	417	1,985	5,090
Mar '96	3,990	378	1,138	4,013
Mar '95	3,055	277	659	2,772
Mar '94	2,561	184	493	2,029
Mar '93	1,987	115	263	1,695
Mar '92	1,610	94	556	1,433
Mar '91	1,387	69	657	1,181
Mar '90	997	39	769	1,186

All figures are in Rs crore. Financials are consolidated from FY 2001-02, rest are stand-alone. Adjusted net profit is profit after tax adjusted for exceptional & non-recurring items, if any. Source: Capitaline Neo, IC Research Bureau

95,000 crore. This is a phenomenal growth and we would continue to retain our stake in the company," he said.

L&T has grown into a multi-divisional company over the past 73 years and considering its order book and project execution capabilities it has shifted focus on big nuclear power, defence and metro projects.

"The focus has definitely shifted towards higher margins and higher profits," said SP Tulsian, a broker.

L&T has ambitious plans. Its plan to acquire Satyam Computers was a calculated move and it reaped gains by selling the stake. "Though they could not acquire the company, L&T proved the move was right," Tulsian said.

The demerger of L&T Cement into UltraTech Cement was also on L&T's terms and not like the way AV Birla group desired. "They thwarted attempts by Reliance to acquire managerial control and also forced Birlas to follow their terms on L&T Cement," Tulsian said. Over the long term, Tulsian is bullish on the firm and sees orders flowing to its divisions. However, management of a behemoth like L&T is an issue that the company has to handle. Its biggest strength, an experienced top brass, is also its biggest weakness because most of them would retire in a few years.

Naik will retire next year, while Nayak, the senior-most official on the board, will retire by the end of this month followed by KV Rangaswamy by the end of this year and VK Magapu in 2012, which means other than Ravi Uppal and MV Kotwal all board members will retire by 2012. Against this backdrop of top-level vacancies, the new directors will be tasked with an ambitious plan to double business in the next five years, putting pressure on the company's next chief.

Questions have been raised over L&T's lack of interest in grooming a successor to Naik. When Naik became L&T chairman in 2003, no one else was given the post of CEO or MD, and he contin-

ued as MD and got an extension as chairman. But Ban Capital and McKnsey are now working on a succession plan and the report is expected in a year.

According to the LIC official, mentioned earlier in this report, as businesses grow and units leverage strengths to grow bigger, managing the group would become difficult. "Though verticalisation of the company into nine units would throw up lot of talent who can be groomed into MDs and financial officers, retaining that talent would be another challenge," he said.

L&T has grown exponentially in the past 20 years: net profit has soared to Rs 5,450 crore in 2010 from Rs 91.34 crore in 1991 while sales have grown from Rs 1,387 crore to Rs 43,837 crore.

A look at consolidated financials in the past eight years up to FY10 reveals L&T's sustained reliance on engineering and construction with 71 per cent of revenue coming from the segment on an average. While electrical and electronics segment, from which it gets the next biggest share of revenue of 8.55 per cent, has been stable, the contribution of machinery and industrial products has dropped. On the other hand, revenue from financial services has risen since FY07 when it got into it.

L&T still maintains its performance and its order book has multiplied several fold to Rs 1,20,000 crore. Market experts say L&T is on track to achieve year-on-year sales growth guidance of 20 per cent in 2011. However, they caution that it may miss targeted year-on-year order inflow growth of 25 per cent in 2011 as it needs Rs 37,500 crore in the fourth quarter. "Meeting that target appears to be a daunting task, even after assuming that it will get an EPC order for Hyderabad metro project, which has a financial closure deadline of March 4, 2011," a senior analyst at First Global said.

But company officials are hopeful. K Venkatraman and KV Rangaswamy, directors of hydrocarbon and construction divisions respectively, believe these sectors will flourish despite sluggishness in the past few quarters.

"There are several large orders that are expected to be finalised in the next six months. Overall, we are confident that it will be a major growth enabler for us," Venkatraman said via email.

An official from UTI said the market has misunderstood the new structure of L&T and they don't know why independent companies would not be separate legal entities. "The stock market believes each unit should have been a separate legal entity with autonomous powers, if leveraging strength was the main reason for the split," he said.

According to him, L&T aims to control units in line with big groups like the Tatas. "The Tata group has several listed entities operating separately but under the strong influence of the parent."

In the end, the main concern of the market, according to a senior JP Morgan analyst, is its ability to meet order inflow guidance of Rs 87,000 crore. L&T management hopes, despite the delay, they can achieve it if big projects, like Hyderabad Metro (Rs 9,500 crore) and NTPC boilers (Rs 11,000 crore), see traction. Time will tell.

(With inputs from Rajesh Gajra, FC Research Bureau) vikassrivastav@mydigitallife.com

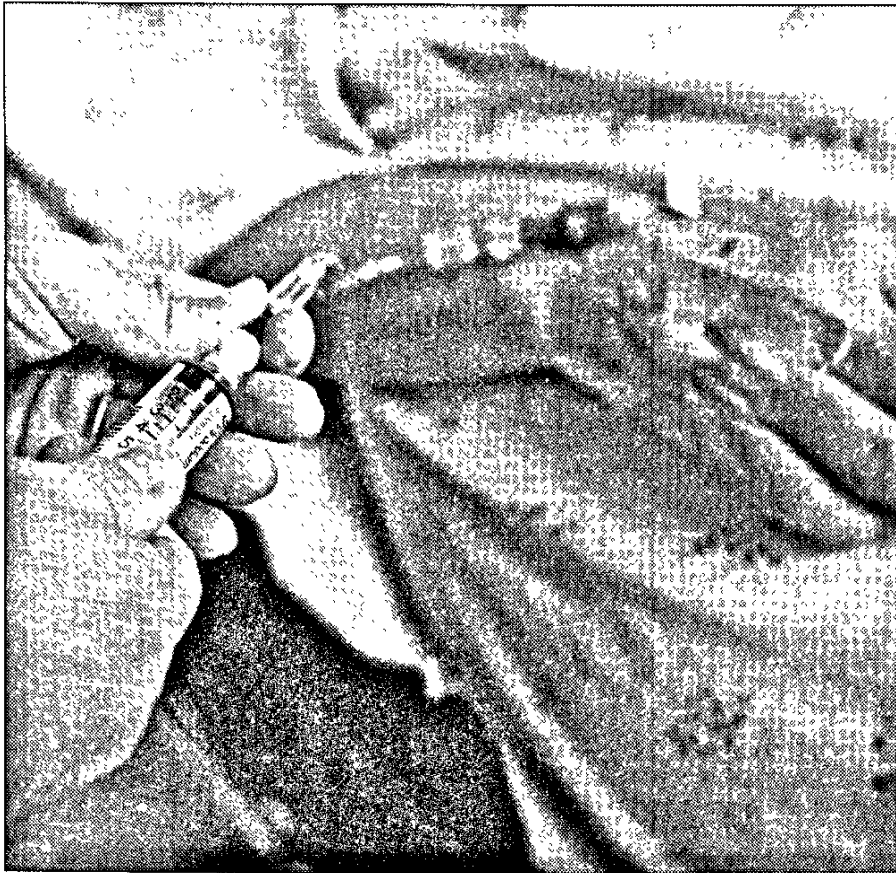
# Euthanasia: Mercy or murder?

**T**HE Supreme Court has stirred up a heated debate on euthanasia in the wake of its judgement on Pinki Virani's application to allow her friend Aruna Shanbag, who has been in an irreversible coma for the past decade to be euthanised. The Supreme Court has refused permission to allow Shanbag to be euthanised but has said that passive euthanasia is permissible under the "rarest of rare circumstances". The court's ruling in a way equates euthanasia with capital punishment, both to be applied in the rarest of rare cases.

I personally believe euthanasia or the right to end life is a very personal matter and the person concerned and people close to him/her must be allowed to exercise that option with certain checks and balances. Every person has the ability to make a will, the ability to donate organs and even their bodies after death. Families of people, who are declared brain dead, have the option of donating their organs and to take their loved ones off life support. Why can't a person in all their senses make a declaration that if they ever go into an irreversible coma or become such that they lose all ability to live on their own be allowed to end their lives?

A person having made such a declaration would have to nominate at least two people and empower them to process their application to its logical conclusion. There could be a special court that could rule on such cases. The court could then await objections to the application for a fixed period of time and then pass an order. This would ensure that there is no malpractice because the loudest objections to euthanasia are from people voicing concerns

Tushar Gandhi



**CLOSING A CHAPTER:** We have always worshiped people who voluntarily embraced death, in the age-old tradition of *samadhi* and *sati*. But, there is so much horror when euthanasia is mentioned

about its misuse, which include ending the life of unwanted elders and to usurp property.

Life is all about dignity. Shanbag is alive but there is no dignity in her life; she is dependent on others. What is the worth of a life where one has no control over bodily functions? Before she was assaulted and raped, Shanbag was a promising and vibrant young woman. Technically, her rapist and assaulter murdered the real Shanbag. I was acquainted with the case from day one, because one of the

doctors in KEM Hospital in Mumbai was a very close family friend. It was well known right from day one that she was never going to recover. I remember the doctor and my parents talking at length about the tragedy. The doctor would many a times talk of the desire to switch off all the support machines and let her slip away. No one had the courage to do it.

When we speak of euthanasia, there is a lot of horror expressed in our society. But, we have always worshiped people who voluntarily

embraced death, in the age-old tradition of *samadhi*. Those who achieved *samadhi* have been elevated to the level of saints. In Jainism, there is the practice of *santhara*, which is revered. Hinduism practiced the tradition of *sati*, which was in most cases not voluntary, and revered it. The countless 'Rani Sati' temples all over India are a testimony to it. So the tradition of ending life voluntarily or by force is deep-rooted in our society. I am perplexed why, whenever the topic euthanasia is revived, there is so much horror

and shock expressed?

India has legalised abortions. It has opened the doors to infanticide too. Abortion is legalised to save a woman from unwanted pregnancy. Here a mother is given the right to terminate a life. I don't know when life is recognised legally? Is it at inception or birth? Both the times when my wife was expecting, I started treating the foetus as my child the day I saw the blue dot confirming her pregnancy, from the pregnancy test kit. I formed a relationship with my child the day the gynaecologist put a microphone on my wife's belly and I heard the heartbeat of my child. From that instant, there was a life growing in my wife's womb. Yet, she had the ability to terminate the life if she so desired and it would have been perfectly legal. Some time ago, there was a case of a couple who were refused permission to terminate pregnancy at a very advanced stage after the doctor had confirmed that the baby she was carrying had a severe disability and would only survive on life support.

I am faced with a dilemma. A couple can get a gender test done on a foetus illegally and then get the pregnancy terminated legally. A young girl or a woman can indulge in unprotected intercourse and if she becomes pregnant, she can get an abortion to terminate a life, and then continue with a bohemian lifestyle. But someone who has no dignity in life, who for 30 years has not shown any intelligent signs of life, cannot have the dignity of ending that worthless existence. I do not oppose abortion, I also want the right to a dignified death.

(The writer is founder president, Mahatma Gandhi Foundation)

# IS INTERNET EXPLORER WARY OF CHROME?

*Even as Microsoft's browser rules the roost when it comes to the number of users, Google Chrome users displayed loyalty with only 35 per cent switch-outs*

PRIYANKA JOSHI  
Mumbai

**W**ith no clear preference when it comes to browsers, Microsoft and Google are targeting Indian internet users to have greater share of the market. A Juxt study estimates the average Indian internet subscriber uses 2.3 browsers and the duplicate user base in browser usage stands at 31 per cent.

A Statcounter study says Microsoft's Internet Explorer (IE) leads with a 44.26 per cent share in India, followed by Firefox at 32.53 per cent and Chrome at the third position, with a 19.61 per cent share.

## USP of Google Chrome

What is it about Chrome that people like? Is it because it is a lightweight browser or because it is secure? Or the minimalist look and feel? Is it the easy updates option or because of Google's marketing strategy? According to Juxt, users' loyalty with Chrome is the highest, at 64 per cent, followed by Firefox, at 36 per cent, and IE at 29 per cent. This can be attributed to the steady growth of Chrome, which has had only 35 per cent switch-outs and 61 per cent switch-ins over the last one year, the report says.

An engineering student, Nikhit Pandey, says: "The blue 'e' icon on the computer is the most common association users have with the Internet. But when I heard friends talking about Google's browser, I wanted to have a go and downloaded it."

Last week, Pandey upgraded to the latest version of Chrome 10 browser and claims the new preference page makes it easy to sync bookmarks, passwords and other settings between each computer you run Chrome on. "You can also import data from other browsers like Firefox and Internet Explorer with just one click."

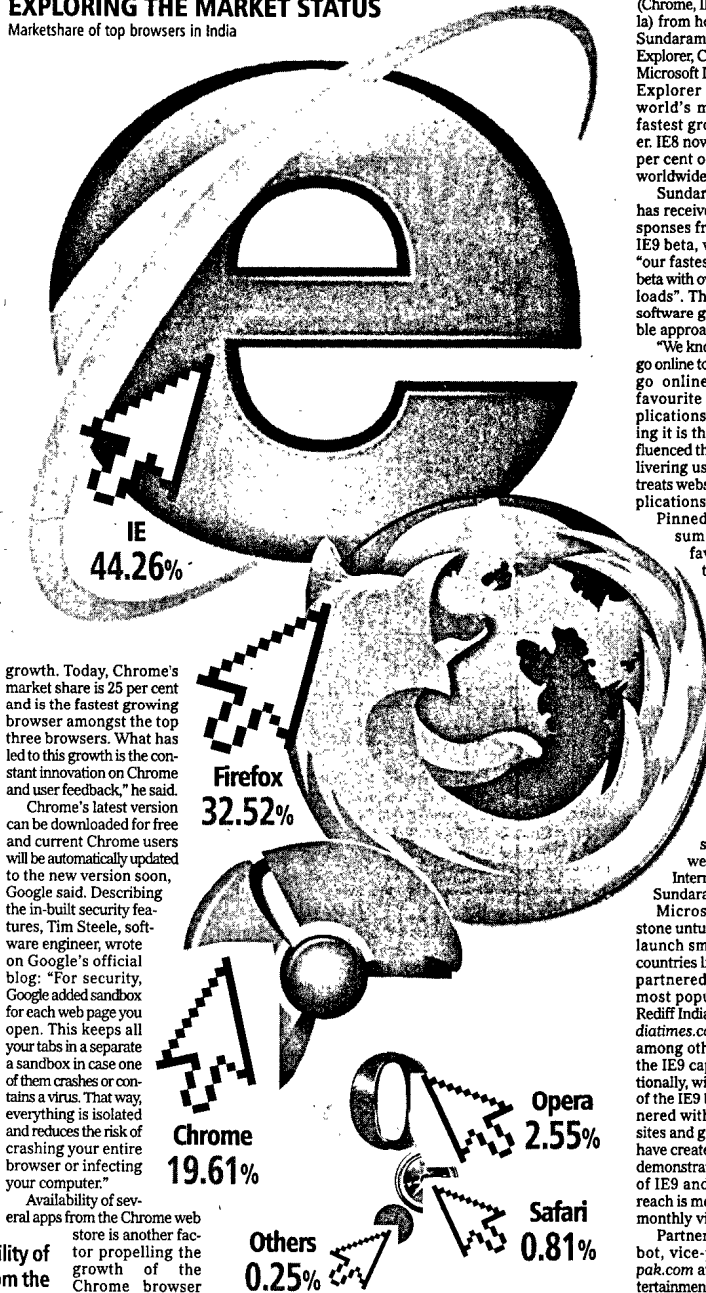
This year, the number of people using Chrome had tripled from 40 million to 120 million, wrote Google Vice-President (Engineering) Linus Upson and Vice-President (Product Management) Sundar Pichai, on the company's official blog. "Speed is what people love most about Chrome and we're always working to make the browser even faster," said the post.

Nikhil Rungta, country marketing head, Google India, echoes the sentiments.

"Google was the last browser to enter the market in 2008 and, since then, it has seen tremendous

## EXPLORING THE MARKET STATUS

Marketshare of top browsers in India



growth. Today, Chrome's market share is 25 per cent and is the fastest growing browser amongst the top three browsers. What has led to this growth is the constant innovation on Chrome and user feedback," he said.

Chrome's latest version can be downloaded for free and current Chrome users will be automatically updated to the new version soon, Google said. Describing the in-built security features, Tim Steele, software engineer, wrote on Google's official blog: "For security, Google added sandbox for each web page you open. This keeps all your tabs in a separate sandbox in case one of them crashes or contains a virus. That way, everything is isolated and reduces the risk of crashing your entire browser or infecting your computer."

Availability of several apps from the Chrome web store is another factor propelling the growth of the Chrome browser among young users. "The Chrome Web Store hosts several apps (paid and free), which can be downloaded according to one's choice," says Kamen Bhagat, a computer science student at the Uni-

versity of Mumbai. Talking about the new Chrome 10 features, she raves about the background WebApps that allows web applications from the Google Chrome store to run in the background, even when Chrome itself is not run-

ning (visibly). "This allows web apps to behave even more like native applications, as they can be launched at startup without launching a Google Chrome window and can continue to run even when you are done with your browsing."

## Microsoft pins hope on IE9

With 41 per cent of internet users using all three browsers (Chrome, IE and Firefox/Mozilla) from home, Senthilkumar Sundaram, director (Internet Explorer, Consumer & Online), Microsoft India says: "Internet Explorer 8 remained the world's most popular, and fastest growing web browser. IE8 now runs on nearly 40 per cent of all Windows PCs worldwide."

Sundaram says Microsoft has received very positive responses from consumers for IE9 beta, which has become "our fastest adopted browser beta with over 36 million downloads". The Redmond-based software giant adorns a humble approach with IE9.

"We know that people don't go online to use a browser, they go online to access their favourite sites and web applications," he says. Claiming it is this thought that influenced the design of IE9, delivering user experience that treats websites almost like applications. Innovations like Pinned Sites allow consumers to pin their favourite sites to the task bar and access features like Dynamic JumpLists to get to their favourite content. "We have also launched an IE9 experience site, [www.beautyoftheweb.co.in](http://www.beautyoftheweb.co.in), that showcases the websites that consumers can visit today to experience faster, safer and cleaner web experiences with Internet Explorer 9," says Sundaram.

Microsoft is leaving no stone unturned to make IE9's launch smooth in emerging countries like India. "We have partnered with some of the most popular websites like Rediff India, Zapak Games, [Indiatimes.com](http://Indiatimes.com) and [NDTV.com](http://NDTV.com), among others, to bring alive the IE9 capabilities. Internationally, with the introduction of the IE9 beta, we have partnered with over 70 top websites and global brands which have created new experiences demonstrating the capabilities of IE9 and whose collective reach is more than two billion monthly visitors."

Partners like Deepak Abbot, vice-president for Zapak.com at Zapak Digital Entertainment says: "With the beta availability of IE9, Zapak will take on a new smooth and sleek avatar. With HTML5 for gaming, [www.zapak.com](http://www.zapak.com) can now deliver rich user experience to consumers. Zapak.com can now be directly installed on PCs just like any standard Windows application, making it quick and easy for users."

Source: StatCounter Global Stats

Business Standard, ND 14-Mar-11 p-13

# Indian scientists: missing in action

**I** suspect Indian scientists have retired hurt to the pavilion. They were exposed to some nasty public scrutiny on a deal made by a premier science research establishment, Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), with Devas, a private company, on the allocation of spectrum. The public verdict was that the arrangement was a scandal; public resources had been given away for a song. The government, already scambused, hastily scrapped the contract.

Since then there has been dead silence among the powerful scientific leaders of the country, with one exception. Kiran Karnik, a former employee of ISRO and board member of Devas, spoke out and explained it is wrong to equate this deal with the scam of mobile telephony. The cost calculations done for terrestrial spectrum cannot be used to estimate the loss to the exchequer in the ISRO-Devas contract, which involves S-band spectrum.

Clearly, there is much more to this story. But when the scientists who understand the issue are not prepared to engage with the public, there can be little informed discussion. The cynical public, which sees scams tumble out each day, believes easily that everybody is a crook. But, as I said, the country's top scientists have withdrawn further into their comfort holes, their opinion frozen in contempt that Indian society is scientifically illiterate. I can assure you in the fu-

ture there will be even less conversation between scientists and all of us in the public sphere.

This is not good. Science is about everyday policy. It needs to be understood and for this it needs to be discussed and deliberated openly and strenuously. But how will this happen if one side — the one with information, knowledge and power — will not engage in public discourse?

Take the issue of genetically-modified (GM) crops. For long this matter has been decided inside closed-door committee rooms, where scientists are comforted by the fact that their decisions will not be challenged. Their defence is "sound science" and "superior knowledge". It is interesting that the same scientists will accept data produced by private companies pushing the product. Issues of conflict of interest will be brushed aside as integrity cannot be questioned behind closed doors. Silence is the best insurance. This is what happened inside a stuffy committee room, where scientists sat to give permission to Mahyco-Monsanto to grow genetically-modified brinjal.

This case involved a vegetable we all eat. This was a matter of science we had



**DOWN TO EARTH**  
SUNITA NARAIN

the right to know about and to decide upon. The issue made headlines. The reaction of the scientific fraternity was predictable and obnoxious. They resented the questions. They did not want a public debate.

As the controversy raged and more people got involved, the scientists ran for cover. They wanted none of this messy street fight. They were meant to advise

prime ministers and the likes, not to answer simple questions of people. Finally, when environment minister Jairam Ramesh took the decision on the side of the ordinary vegetable eater, unconvinced by the validity of the scientific data to justify no-harm, scientists were missing in their public reactions. Instead, they whispered about lack of "sound science" in the decision inside committees.

The matter did not end there. The minister commissioned an inter-academy inquiry — six top scientific institutions looked into GM crops and Bt-brinjal — expecting a rigorous examination of the technical issues and data gaps. The report released by this committee was shoddy to say the least. It contained no references or attributions and not a single citation. It made sweeping statements and lifted

passages from a government newsletter and even from global biotech industry. The report was thrashed. Scientists again withdrew into offended silence.

The final report of this apex-science group is marginally better in that it includes citations but it reeks of scientific arrogance cloaked in jargon. The committee did not find it fit to review the matter, which had reached public scrutiny. The report is only a cover for their established opinion about the 'truth' of Bt-brinjal. Science for them is certainly not a matter of enquiry, critique or even dissent.

But the world has changed. No longer is this report meant only for top political and policy leaders, who would be overwhelmed by the weight of the matter, the language and the expert knowledge of the writer. The report will be subjected to public scrutiny. Its lack of rigour will be deliberated, its unquestioned assertion challenged.

This is the difference between the manufactured comfortable world of science behind closed doors and the noisy messy world outside. It is clear to me that Indian scientists need confidence to creatively engage in public concerns. The task to build scientific literacy will not happen without their engagement and their tolerance for dissent. The role of science in Indian democracy is being revisited with a new intensity. The only problem is that the key players are missing in action.

# TAX BENEFITS TO AID RESEARCH IN IITs

Provision of a weighted tax deduction to organisations donating for research to IITs may boost scientific research

VINAY UMARJI & KALPANA PATHAK

The Indian Institutes of Technology (IIT) are hopeful. The Budget announcement of a weighted tax deduction on payments for scientific research from 175 per cent to 200 per cent, they say will help them generate more funds for scientific research in the institutes.

The Finance Minister proposed this tax exemption on donations made to — national laboratories, universities and the IITs.

"This is a welcome move. The share of research from industry to academia is growing and this move will certainly give it a fillip. Overall however, government would still be a major source of research and development funds at IITs," said a senior faculty member from IIT Bombay.

IIT Bombay says of ₹105 crores that it spent on research, 18 crores came from the industry. Research revenues have grown at the rate of 40 per cent over the past year with the institute clocking revenue of ₹140 crore in 2010 against ₹70 crores in 2008.

IIT-B says till over a year ago, it had been filing around 20 patent applications per year, but the number has gone up to 50 patent applications a year now.

IIT Gandhinagar (IIT-Gn) director Sudhir Jain too feels the move will enhance the corporate-academia relationship. "As compared to western countries, research in India has a lot to catch up and that can be done through the collaboration of corporates and academic institutions. The tax benefit will only enhance this area and provide a much needed thrust to more projects being worked upon in tandem by both the sides," says Jain.

IITs have been working with national and international companies which approach them to consult on various projects. IIT Bombay for instance, has worked with over 700 companies on various research projects.

IITs do not get separate funding for research. Of the plan allocation that the institutes get, it saves a small portion of the same to create research facilities. IITs also generate funds from sponsored research which largely means sponsored projects for government agencies like the department of science and technology, Aeronautics Research and Development Board, Council of Scientific and Industrial Research etc. These projects usually spread over three to five years.



IITs have suggested that the ministry for human resource development provide special grants for creation of research infrastructure. Also, IITs do not have a dedicated staff to help with research. At present, these institutes engage staff in the sponsored projects but their service terminates with completion of the project.

According to Bharat Gulia, senior manager—education sector, Ernst and Young, the move is an effort to bring tax benefits in line with the 200 per cent deduction already available for in-house R&D.

"With 200 per cent weightage deduction now available for both in-house and outsourced R&D, this could boost research work by corporates in the long run. Al-

so, it could be seen more in the newer sectors like telecom, technology and automobiles," says Gulia.

Auto companies Renault-Nissan are already working with IIT Madras on technology for automobiles and as the company scales up its presence in India, R&D would be an important part of its strategy, it says. Japan's third largest automaker Nissan Motor Company had last October, signed memorandum of understandings (MoU) with the Indian Institute of Technology, Madras, for comprehensive research in automobile technology.

Renault-Nissan have a plant in Chennai. At the AutoExpo 2010 (in New Delhi), Renault announced its will to intro-

## Budget grant: DSE to offer PhDs

PIYALI MANDAL

A budget grant of ₹10 crore to the Centre for Development Economics (CDE) the Research arm of Delhi School of Economics and to Ratan Tata Library, will help CDE launch a fellowship programme for PhD students.

The institute will select three students and provide a fellowship of ₹30,000 per month for five years. Lack of proper scholarships and full fellowships has been considered a major impediment to attract students to take up PhD.

Though the exact break-up could not be ascertained, it is expected that of ₹10 crore, ₹3 crore will be used by CDE to fund the fellowships. The balance ₹7 crore will be used by the Ratan Tata Library.

"About ₹12 lakh will be used every year for financing the fellowships and another ₹8 lakh will be used towards foreign faculty," said Prof Santosh C Panda, Executive Director, CDE Council.

At present, the department does not offer a PhD programme. University Grants Commission offers fellowship for PhDs but for availing the same a student has to sit for exam and can only access the results a year later.

"Getting students to do PhDs is really difficult as they have to leave a corporate job. So we need to offer them in-



centives," Panda added.

However, at the Master's level there are number of scholarships for the students including the Manmohan Singh scholarship offered by Prime Minister himself.

The CDE was set up with a grant from the Ministry of Finance, as a research adjunct of the Delhi School of Economics. It is a non-profit organisation that supports research in all areas of economics. It came into existence in August 1992 and began

effectively functioning from early 1993. Its list of advisors include Nobel Laureates like Amartya Sen, Kenneth Arrow and Joseph Stiglitz among others.

Part of the fund will be used by Ratan Tata Library, considered to be the best library for economics in the country. It has a total collection of over 300,000 books; subscribes to 500 journals; annual reports of 800 joint-stock companies and numerous publications of the UN and other

international agencies.

"We will use part of the fund for subscribing to research oriented journals in the field of economics, geography, commerce and sociology. A part of the fund may also be used for preserving and digitising the census reports which are in bad condition now," Head of Ratan Tata Library Lokesh Sharma said.

The library had made a demand for ₹7 crore towards preserving the journal and ₹2 crore for digitising the census.

duce a full range in India in a 4 years timeframe.

Hyderabad-based Vasant Chemicals which invests around four per cent of its sales into research, is currently working on several research projects with Hyderabad-based Indian Institute of Chemical Technology (IICT).

"The industry is recognising academic research through increased outsourcing of projects. The overall research climate has been improving. At such a time, the proposal for tax benefits adds as a catalyst to the phenomenon," Venkat Raman, executive director, Vasant Chemicals. Though the deductions would come in ef-

fect from April 2012, Mahindra Satyam's chief executive officer, CP Gurnani, is of the view that giving tax deductions will not be the only game changer. "Incentives like paying higher grants, payments per patent and better infrastructure are also equally needed to boost scientific research in the country," adds Gurnani.

P&B Daily ND 14/03/2011 p-4

# IIT Mandi to lay stress on Green Energy Technology

**VK THUKRAL**

**SHIMLA, MARCH 13**

INDIAN Institute of Technologies (IIT) would lay stress on research relating to the development of Green Energy Technology.

The issue was discussed between the Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Prem Kumar Dhumal and the Director of the Institute Professor Gonsalves, who called on him in Shimla today to discuss the construction of the infrastructure and buildings of the IIT.

Chief Minister assured Gonsalves that all possible support required from the state

administration for the ongoing project would be forthcoming to ensure speedy completion.

Dhumal said since the classes have begun in the prestigious IIT in the state looking into the local conditions and priorities solar, geothermal and bio-mass besides mountain development and roads construction techniques need to get due attention in the studies and research to be undertaken.

Gonsalves assured that the institute would become fully operational by 2012 and all such studies which benefit the hill environment would get preference.

Chief Minister said it is the endeavour of the state to build the state as a main hub for higher education.

He said the peaceful atmosphere of the state is ideal for the young minds to work and research on all subjects which come under the scope of the IIT.

Dhumal said hydro power rail and road transport besides other sectors are the key areas where lot of efforts are required.

He expressed the hope that the dream institute which has finally come under the sun of the state would make the state shine and accomplish further dreams.

**FROM SHORT VISITING SCHOLARSHIPS TO DOCTORAL AND POST-DOCTORAL FELLOWSHIPS, STUDENTS CAN LOOK FORWARD TO A RANGE OF FINANCIAL OPTIONS. EDUCATION TIMES PROVIDES A SNAPSHOT**

# RESEARCH OPTIONS IN GERMANY

Tirna Ray/TNN



Torsten Fischer

WHEN it comes to funding, traditionally, arts and humanities have always been a step behind. However, with the German Research Foundation (DFG) investing heavily, Indian research scholars working in these fields have a reason to celebrate.

Torsten Fischer, director of the German Research Foundation (DFG) India office, points out, "We fund basic research in all the scientific disciplines including arts and humanities."

Sciences may be a favourite with Indians. But, he says, there is a big difference between the philosophy of the Indian funding institutions and the German system, which gives arts and humanities equal weightage. He adds, "If you compare the number of projects 'submitted' to the number of projects 'approved,' it is between 35 and 45%."

## HOW TO GO ABOUT IT

DFG's focus lies in promoting young researchers. It has two tailor-made programmes for post-doctorate students. The first programme, One's Own Position, allows an Indian scholar to go to Germany and work under the guidance of a supervisor on a specific topic for two years.

### SCIENCES

- Molecular Biology
- Theoretical Chemistry
- Computer Science

### SOCIAL SCIENCE

- Political Science

- Economics
- Social Anthropology

### ARTS AND HUMANITIES

- Indology
- History
- Dance Performing Theory

## DOS AND DON'TS

- IN YOUR APPLICATION, STATE YOUR PURPOSE SPECIFICALLY
- DO NOT ADDRESS INFORMALLY AS "HI PROF"

Applicants need to submit the same thesis that they have submitted as their doctoral thesis, substantiated by a written confirmation from the concerned university. Also, scholars need a written confirmation from a German institute, stating that it is willing to take over the employer's responsibility. The programme allows scholars total independence. Depending on the particular discipline, one can even travel outside Germany for research purposes.

The second funding includes a research fellowship. In this case, the university — with the DFG funding — pays the fellow. The fellow does not necessarily have to stay on in Germany and may even come back to India to complete his or her project.

## BOLOGNA BOOST

With education blurring geographical contours, research is no longer restricted to countries. Hence, Fischer points out, German universities are realising that if they want international co-operation they not only need to standardise the system through the Bologna process, but also open up in terms of curricula research and training curricula.

He adds that though English has been introduced in arts and humanities, it is yet to catch up with the hard sciences. "To address these concerns, we are funding research training groups."

Such groups are established by universities to promote young researchers. Their key emphasis is on the qualification of doctoral researchers within the framework of a focused research programme and a structured training strategy. "The aim is to prepare doctoral researchers for a complex job market and simultaneous-

## Take your pick

- **Individual grants programme:** Any researcher can apply for financial assistance for an individual research project
- **Priority programmes:** These allow researchers from various research institutions and laboratories to co-operate within the framework of a set topic or project for a period of time, each working at his or her research institution
- **Collaborative research centres:** Long-term university research centres in which scientists and academics pursue joint interdisciplinary research undertakings
- **Excellence initiative:** Promotes top level research in German universities and research institutes. Funding provided for graduate schools, clusters of excellence and institutional strategies
- **Starting point:** Any Indian researcher interested in one of DFG's programmes, first needs to identify a German counterpart who will formally submit the application to the DFG head office in Bonn, Germany

[www.dfg.de/en](http://www.dfg.de/en)

ly to encourage early scientific independence. Indian students should certainly consider applying to such programmes," he says.



# MBBS students to visit wards from 2nd year

## They Will Not Treat Patients While Visiting

Kounteya Sinha | TNN

**New Delhi:** Undergraduate medical students will now get the feel of being a real doctor — ward visits, patient interaction and evening rounds — from the second year of MBBS onwards.

The Medical Council of India (MCI), as part of its new curriculum for undergraduate medical education, has decided to introduce a new training or “clerkship” under which medical students will be attached to resident doctors to accompany them during rounds, help in managing patients and talk to them, thereby improving their communication skills and help patients cope better with their illnesses. They however, will not treat patients.

Speaking to TOI, member of MCI's governing body Dr Sita Naik said, “The current medical training is boring and classroom oriented. We are therefore reviving a practice that used to exist 20 years back in India — assign undergraduate students to wards. They will then help resident doctors with managing patients. They will, however, not prescribe treatment but just assist residents.”

## 84 applications for new med colleges

The Medical Council of India has received 84 applications across India seeking permission to start medical colleges offering MBBS courses from the coming academic year. In 2010, there were just 19 applications for starting new colleges. The four-fold increase in the number of applications could be attributed to the rise in demand for MBBS and postgraduate courses in medicine, said MCI board of governors head Dr Shiv Kumar Sarin. Medical education, he said, was fast becoming a popular option. The council received 3,000 applications for increasing postgraduate seats. “There is a huge shortage of doctors in the country. For this, existing colleges must also expand. We are in the process of reviewing all the applications that we have received,” he said. TNN

Dr Naik added, “This will give them early clinical exposure and excite them. Right from the second year, students will have access to wards and clinics. This will make them feel they are part of clinical practice. At present, students don't go to wards. Instead, they are taught anatomy and physiology in class.” According to MCI, medical science “attracts the brightest minds but does not challenge their brains”.

“This practice of students assisting resident doctors fell through in the last 20 years as medical training became more classroom oriented. Maybe it was because too many students were attached to a single resident who found it an additional headache. Now, we will reintroduce the system to make medical education more clinical based,” Dr Naik said.

MCI governing body member Prof Ranjit Roychoudhury told TOI that the crucial meeting to finalise the UG and PG

curriculum will take place on March 29. Union health secretary K Chandramouli will chair the meeting which will be attended by top academicians and vice-chancellors.

Speaking to TOI, health secretary K Chandramouli said, “Experts will meet on March 29 and talk about the latest developments in medicine and go through various subjects. Curriculum always need to be finetuned to move with the times. We will see what important things are not there in the curriculum at present. After reaching a consensus, we will implement whatever can be incorporated into the curriculum immediately while the rest will be put later.”

At the end of the undergraduate medical training, MCI says, the students should be able to perform a thorough and systematic physical examination of any organ-system of the body, performing core clinical tasks.

## 'Technology wars are fought by proxy'

**B Rajaram designed and developed the Anti-Collision Device (ACD) as managing director, Konkan Railway. He spoke to Sudip Talukdar about how it would deliver passenger safety in the light of the decision to implement it in eight railway zones:**

**■ What were the circumstances under which you came to design and develop the ACD?**

The recurring loss of lives in collisions prompt a few words of shock and solace, besides some compensation, followed by same old routine of inquiries and announcements of mega investments in safety. Shamed by this charade as a railway engineer, I visualised and configured a safety network of decentralised units that is much more effective than the centralised European system. The ACDs can see far ahead of loco drivers, respond faster to exigencies and chat with their counterparts.

**■ How does a product like the ACD mark the successful example of public-private partnership?**

A patent is as good as a piece of paper unless it is produced and commercialised. I consider the MOUs between the Konkan Railway and Kernex Microsystems, a deemed public-private initiative, unique in our country. This experiment has produced a very sophisticated knowledge embedded

### Q&A

next generation ACD. Kernex took all the risk for raising the capital, both human and financial and developing the manufacturing technology as required, in return for manufacturing rights, while Konkan Railway retained marketing rights. The arrangement has survived a decade of trials and tribulations. The cost of development is the lowest in the world for this type of functional product.

**■ Given your long stint with the Railways, do you see any**



**technical problems likely to arise in ACDs' implementation and how can they be overcome?**

Really there are few technical problems now in implementation. What I can foresee are ownership problems. Who will take over and maintain the sophisticated microprocessor-based system? The Railways should nominate competent persons, trained to maintain the system at the manufacturing facility. I feel that a

miniaturised version of ACD should be permanently fixed to the guard's cabin at the tail end of a train, instead of having it carried daily into such a cabin or van, which is open to human error.

**■ Why do you think it took the Railways so long to accept the ACDs, despite certification by Lloyds Research, Design and Standards Organisation (RDSO) and Electronics Test and Development Centre (ETDC)?**

The experts in signals did find it very difficult to accept the ACDs, influenced more by the high-pressure sales pitch of multinationals. Besides, repeated testing of the safety device, when the Railway Board shifted mutually agreed goal posts from time to time, delayed the ACDs. Like ants, ACDs are weak individually but phenomenally powerful when networked. They function like the fuzzy logic of our brains to prevent collision on all stretches, delivering much more than the

centralised and prohibitively expensive European system.

**■ In a recent letter to railway minister Mamata Banerjee, you drew her attention towards powerful lobbies and bureaucratic systems which could still create hurdles in ACDs' implementation. How?**

Technology wars are fought by proxy. The inimical lobbies may sow seeds of fear and doubt by saying Konkan Railway should now have multi-vendors, misquoting Central Vigilance Commission guidelines. Proprietary products have separate status. Public interest is well protected in the current arrangement. But if the authorities fall prey to the fears created by the bureaucracy, then ACD will not be implemented. We will see only court cases. I hope not. It's wiser to see it as a successful public-private initiative, which will add a feather to the Railways' cap. I wish RDSO adopts this as a standard model to deliver new research products.

राज्यों के मुख्य सचिवों, औद्योगिक संगठनों व विशेषज्ञों को बुलावा

# नई आईआईआईटी पर 18 को बैठक

मनोज कुमार @ नई दिल्ली

देश के बीस राज्यों में सार्वजनिक-निजी भागीदारी (पीपीपी) के आधार पर प्रस्तावित नई आईआईआईटी की स्थापना सम्बंधी कवायद में जुटी केन्द्र सरकार अगले सप्ताह राज्यों के प्रतिनिधियों के साथ अहम बैठक करने जा रही है।

आगामी 18 मार्च को आईआईटी दिल्ली में होने वाली बैठक के लिए सभी राज्यों के मुख्य सचिवों, औद्योगिक संगठनों, नैस्कॉम व स्थापना को लेकर केन्द्र के स्तर पर गठित उच्चस्तरीय विशेषज्ञ समिति को बुलावा भेजा गया है। मानव संसाधन विकास मंत्रालय के उच्च पदस्थ सूत्रों

ने बताया कि बैठक में स्थापना सम्बंधी मानदण्ड को अंतिम रूप दिए जाने के आसार हैं। सरकार की योजना वर्ष 2012-13 के अकादमिक सत्र से देश में कम से कम चार से पांच नई आईआईआईटी की पीपीपी मोड में शुरूआत करने की है। इस सम्बंध में निजी क्षेत्र की जानी-मानी आईटी कम्पनी इन्फोसिस के टीवी मोहनदास पाई की अध्यक्षता वाली समिति स्थापना सम्बंधी मानदण्ड को लेकर अपना प्रजेन्टेशन देगी।

इसमें निजी भागीदारों के लिए चयन का आधार और नई आईआईआईटी के लिए आदर्श मानदण्डों का उल्लेख मुख्य रूप से

होगा। इसके बाद राज्यों की इस पर राय ली जाएगी।

मंत्रालय के सम्बद्ध विभाग के वरिष्ठ अधिकारी ने बताया कि नई आईआईआईटी पर केन्द्रीय मंत्रिमण्डल से मंजूरी मिलने के बाद बीते जनवरी में स्थापना सम्बंधी तैयारी को लेकर भेजे गए पत्र का आधे से अधिक राज्यों की ओर से सकारात्मक रिस्पांस मिला है जबकि राजस्थान और मध्यप्रदेश समेत चंद राज्यों ने इस सम्बंध में जल्द विस्तृत ब्यौरा भेजने की बात कही है। छत्तीसगढ़ समेत एक दर्जन राज्यों से अभी जवाब का इंतजार है।

वरिष्ठ अधिकारी ने बताया कि कई राज्यों ने बैठक में स्थापना

सम्बंधी प्रस्ताव पेश करने का संकेत किया है। अधिकारी ने बताया कि राज्य चाहें तो अपने साथ चिन्हित निजी भागीदारों को भी ला सकते हैं।

उल्लेखनीय है कि कुल 128 करोड़ की अनुमानित लागत से स्थापित होने वाली प्रत्येक आईआईआईटी में केंद्र, राज्य और निजी क्षेत्र की हिस्सेदारी क्रमशः 50:35:15 प्रतिशत होगी। राज्य सरकारों को इसके लिए 50 से 100 एकड़ निःशुल्क भूमि देनी होगी। इसके अलावा केन्द्र फैकेल्टी डेवलपमेंट के लिए 50 करोड़ और स्थापना के पहले चार वर्षों के दौरान प्रत्येक संस्थान को अधिकतम 10 करोड़ की सहायता प्रदान करेगा।

Times of India ND 14/03/2011

p-15

# Performed through wrist, heart surgery gets safer, simpler

**London:** Believe it or not, you can now get your heart surgery done through an incision in your wrist — all thanks to British cardiac surgeons who have embarked on this unique technique to carry out angioplasty, a media report said on Sunday.

Angioplasty involves clearing blocked arteries in patients, who usually suffer heart attacks, by inflating a tiny balloon inserted through a tube thorough a major blood vessel.

Angioplasty widens the blocked artery, restoring blood flow. And, to retain the improved size, a hollow metal tube or stent is inserted. Traditionally, the surgery is performed via the femoral artery in the groin.

But, a team of cardiologists in Britain is now using the radial artery in the wrist to carry out the life-saving operations after a major heart attack.

"This is the future of angioplasty. It is safer and more comfortable with the chances of complications much reduced. The patient, in most routine cases, can also go home much sooner," said cardiologist Dr Rod Stables of the Liverpool Heart and Chest Hospital.

According to the cardiac surgeons, radial angioplasty

The British surgeons say that performing the operation through the wrist is safer and more comfortable with the chances of complications much reduced

involves a small incision being made in the wrist under local anaesthetic, the Daily Mail reported.

Dr Rod Stables, who now performs 95% of his angioplasties through the wrist, said: "Too few cardiologists are trained in this breakthrough technique."

"They have preferred the femoral artery because it provides a larger blood vessel, making it easier to guide their instruments through, and some patients require bulkier catheters which can't fit through the radial artery," Stables explained.

A 63-year-old patient, Paul Hope, who recently underwent the heart operation through the wrist, said it was only slightly more taxing than a visit to the dentist.

"It was painless and relaxed. I lay on the operating table and rolled up my sleeve," Hope said. ❧