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Education budget rises by 18%

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NEW DELHI: Finance minister Pranab Mukherjee has allocated ₹61,427 crore for education in his budget — 18% more than last year's ₹52,057 crore.

Of this, ₹45,969 crore has been earmarked for school education and literacy while ₹15,458 crore has been allocated for higher education.

HRD minister Kapil Sibal told HT: "It is commendable that the finance minister has continued to invest in education in a difficult year like this. This is the surest road to empowerment."

The allocation to implement the Right To Education (RTE) Act for children between 6 and 14 years was hiked by 21.7%.

"The RTE Act is being implemented with effect from April 1, 2010 through the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan and we propose to increase the allocation to ₹25,555 crore," Mukherjee

told Lok Sabha.

Lauding the role of mid-day meals in enhancing enrolment, retention, attendance and improving the nutrition levels among children, the minister said the budget for the scheme was being hiked from ₹10,380 crore to ₹11,937 crore — an increase of 15%.

Underlining the pivotal role played by the Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan in improving secondary education, Mukherjee said ₹3,124 crore had been allocated for it — nearly 29% higher than last year.

Stressing on the need to set up model schools at block levels, he said in the 12th Plan, there was a proposal to build 6,000 such schools. "Of these, 2,500 will be set up under Public Private Partnership," he said.

To improve the flow of credit to deserving students, a credit guarantee fund would also be set up, he added.

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PSUs dump IIT for Anna varsity graduates

Public sector giants find students in other government engineering colleges more loyal as employees

Vasudha Venugopal

CHENNAI: Public Sector Undertakings, which are considering GATE scores for recruiting fresh engineering graduates this year, have chosen to visit reputed government colleges rather than the elite IITs to hunt for talent.

Anna University saw a number of PSUs including NTPC, Indian Oil Corporation, Bharat Electronics, ID-Bl and Neyveli Lignite Corporation recruiting nearly 70 students from three of its most reputed colleges. Traditionally, the low-paying PSUs have not been considered a lucrative career option by IIT graduates, who tend to move on for greener pastures even if they happen to take up jobs in the government sector. But post-recession, when job security became more important than the pay package, PSUs are back in demand, especially with the implementation of the Sixth Pay Commission recommendations. But these giants are now playing it safe by recruiting only those students who would want a long-term career with them.

"PSUs are no longer the typical government offices they used to be. Promotions are faster and hikes are bigger, and they also let you work on domains you are interested in, which very few private companies too. Today PSUs have suddenly become the most sought-after recruiters, especially for government engineering colleges," says D. Parthiban, an alumnus of the College of Engineering, Guindy, who was hired last year by Bharat Heavy Electricals Limited.

Another contributing factor to this pro-PSU trend is the difference in outlook in students. "Many of our students come from rural areas and their focus is on getting jobs that will help them advance in the domain of their choice, without having to shift from one company to another," says S. Selvam, Di-

Gate opens for village boy

Ask him where he hails from and he immediately asks you if he can write it in your notebook so that you don't get it wrong.

"Kaiasamuthiram, near Chinna Salem. It is not Salem, to be very specific," says Karthikeyan Rajamanickam, a final-year civil engineering student at the College of Engineering, Guindy.

And it is not just the name of his village that he is specific about. Never in the last six months did he once feel like sitting for the campus placements that saw each one of his friends landing up with a plush job. But on Thursday, when his friends told him that he had secured All India Fourth Rank in the GATE, he was really not surprised. "I don't understand management or all these jobs. I feel I have just started studying and have a lot more technical lessons to learn,"



R. Karthikeyan

says the student, who wishes to study 'structures' at IISc, Bangalore now.

Three years ago, he chose to study civil engineering because he felt that was the only branch of engineering relevant to his village. "I was very homesick then and I wanted to come back home as soon as possible. And my father said if there is no studying in the field, it is not a study at all," says

the boy, who hails from an agricultural family. "My parents have not even cleared class X but I wish to study a lot." Not being fluent in English is not a handicap, especially for engineers, because, "it is only logic that matters for us, and yes, how well we communicate it," he says.

There is one thing he dislikes, though. "The whole hype for JEE, CAT, GRE is so much that no one talks about tests such as GATE which are more difficult." Talking about his senior and mentor Ashok Kumar who persuaded him to consider research, he says: "There is a world of engineering beyond B. Tech that most of us don't even want to think because there are jobs. An engineering student is incomplete without a masters' degree," he says. Why only civil engineering? "What else! Isn't infrastructure the biggest concern in every city and town?"

rector, Centre for University (Industry Collaboration), Anna University. "Recruiters themselves have acknowledged that our students have a certain loyalty factor in them that helps both the employer and the employee."

Sources predict that there are over 1,500 jobs available in top-notch PSUs including Indian Oil Corporation (IOC), BHEL, NTPC and Power Grid. IOC and BHEL had announced last year that they would do away with their own written exams for recruitment and would rely on GATE 2012 scores. Officials from NTPC and Powergrid too had said that while easing out their recruitments via college campuses directly, they would soon start considering GATE scores alone.

Nearly 6.86 lakh candidates — almost 70 per cent more than last year — appeared for the GATE exam held in January, out of which 1.08 lakh qualified, according to the results declared on Thursday. IIT-Madras zone, with 17,343 successful students, stands next only to the IIT-Delhi zone, which has 18,927 successful candidates.

"Many of us also took the exam this year because we really wanted to get into one of the PSUs, while others did so because it is important to get stipend for our dual degree courses at the IITs," said S. Roshan, a student at IIT-Madras.

A spokesperson for BHEL noted that while the attrition among IIT graduates may have stabilised over the past couple of years, the

companies are realising that even other colleges produce talents.

"Recruitment through GATE scores will only make the recruitment process more competitive, standardised and ensure only the interested ones get in."

Officials from the IIT-Madras placement office, however, said that despite initial apprehensions that the PSUs might not turn up, a fair number of them, such as NTPC, HAL, ISRO, and Power Grid, finally recruited some of its students. "Many IIT students are not even interested in applying to PSUs because there are better options available. A PSU with a package of Rs. 9 lakh per annum is on the higher side for government colleges, not for us," adds Roshan.

Students from rural areas get a chance too

Vasudha Venugopal

CHENNAI: While many engineering colleges in and around the city are harping on bulk recruitment by software giants, the Anna University, this year, has focussed on getting a large variety of employers to its campus. One outcome of this is that many students from rural backgrounds have landed enviable jobs — in well-known PSUs, manufacturing firms and even in foreign locations.

"The more the number of companies, the better for the university and students in terms of getting internships, jobs, associations and also broadening our network. This is also an attempt to reduce the dependence on a select few companies alone and offer the students more to choose from," said S. Selvam, Director, Centre for University-Industry Collaboration, Anna University.

Over 154 companies have visited the campus in the last six months and 2,600 students have been placed. Thirty of these companies have come for the first time, according to Dr. Selvam. Over 65 per cent of the students in the Anna University college campuses hail from rural places, and of these, over 45 per cent are first-generation learners.

While two 'dream companies', Global scholar and Chromus Software, both founded by Anna University alumni, recruited a number of the students, Alston, the French company which is also associated with the Metro Rail project in the city, recruited 12 students, one of whom will be sent abroad. SAP Labs, which hardly recruits students from campuses, too selected students from the campus this year.

With a move to limiting the internal 'brain drain' (students from core streams moving to IT jobs), officials at the Centre for University-Industry Collaboration, Anna University have been regularly counselling students to orient them towards core jobs. "Jobs in IT MNCs seem very attractive and it is often very difficult to ignore their offers. We tell the students from core branches of mechanical and civil engineering to wait for suitable employers who will pay them the same money and would also value their background education. Most students want this assurance," said T. Kalaiselvan, deputy director of the centre.

The university has classified its recruiters in categories of dream companies that offer outstanding packages; core companies that attract students from mechanical, civil, electrical, electronics, industrial and manufacturing streams; and IT companies. The salary packages range from Rs 4 lakh to Rs 20 lakh per annum — with the highest offer being made this year by Google.

The IT companies that recruited a high number of students include Cognizant, Wipro and Accenture. Core companies, including L & T, Texas Instruments, Voltas, Mahindra and Mahindra, Reliance, Siemens, Renault-Nissan and auto-motive companies Hyundai, Ford, General Motors, among many others too recruited students from the campus this year. Companies including Microsoft, Amazon and financial securities firms such as Morgan Stanley and Goldman Sachs have also been preferred options for students.

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Indian-Americans in full strength at White House

Narayan Lakshman

WASHINGTON: While it was unsurprising that Indian-Americans turned out in full strength for the White House's first state dinner in November 2009, for Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, their presence at President Barack Obama's dinner for British Prime Minister David Cameron on Wednesday seemed to underscore the continuing importance of this administration's links with the community.

Leading the list was Raj Shah, Administrator of the U.S. Agency for International Development. At 39, Dr. Shah is considered one of the youngest Indian-Americans in recent history to be appointed to such a senior position. His wife, Shivam Mallick Shah, who works at the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Innovation, also attended.

A second senior administration official was Arun Majumdar, Director at the Advanced Research Projects Agency – Energy, in the U.S. Department of Energy. Professor Majumdar, who re-

ceived a B. Tech in Mechanical Engineering from the IIT, Bombay and a PhD in Mechanical Engineering from the University of California, Berkeley, was named as Mr. Obama's nominee for the post of Under Secretary of Energy last November.

Another prominent attendee with roots in California was Attorney-General Kamala Harris, accompanied by her sister Maya Harris.

Ms. Harris made history in the mid-term elections held in November 2010 when she became the first woman to occupy the top legal position in the state. She traces her maternal antecedents to Chennai.

Amit Pandya of the Open Society Institute was another. Mr. Pandya served, according to sources on the Policy Planning Staff of the U.S. Department of State and was Deputy Assistant Administrator for Asia and the Near East at the U.S. Agency for International Development. He accompanied Cecilia Munoz, Assistant to the President and Director, Domestic Policy Council.

चुनौतियों पर भारी पड़ेगी धन की कमी

राजकेश्वर सिंह, नई दिल्ली

सरकार भी इस सच्चाई से अनजान नहीं कि पांचवी कक्षा के कुछ बच्चे दूसरी कक्षा की भी पढ़ाई नहीं कर पाते। स्कूलों में उनकी हाजिरी में भी गियवट आई है। छह हजार मॉडल स्कूलों में से चार साल में महज 438 ही शुरू हो सके हैं। कई नए आइआईटी, आइआईएम और एनआईटी जैसे हाइप्रोफाइल संस्थान जरूरी संसाधनों के संकट से जूझ रहे हैं। इन सबके बीच योग्य शिक्षकों की भारी कमी और गुणवत्तापूर्ण शिक्षा का सवाल भी जस का तस है। फिर भी बजट में धन की कमी आड़े आ गई, जो शिक्षा की राह में भारी पड़ सकती है।

स्कूली और उच्च शिक्षा की चुनौतियों से किसी हद तक छुटकारे के लिए मानव संसाधन विकास मंत्रालय ने वित्त मंत्री और योजना आयोग से अपना दुखड़ा रोया था, लेकिन उसे तवज्जो नहीं मिली। बताते हैं कि मंत्रालय को इस बार उच्च शिक्षा में लगभग 30 हजार करोड़ रुपये की दरकार थी, जबकि उसे मिला सिर्फ 15458 करोड़ रुपये। इसी तरह स्कूली शिक्षा में भी उसने जो मांगा, उसके आधे से थोड़ा ज्यादा मिला। बच्चों को मुफ्त व अनिवार्य शिक्षा (शिक्षा का अधिकार कानून) के मद्देनजर



पिछली बार सर्वशिक्षा अभियान के बजट में 40 प्रतिशत का इजाफा हुआ था, जो इस बार 21.7 प्रतिशत की वृद्धि पर सिमट गया। जबकि, राज्यों के हरकत में आने के बाद मुफ्त व अनिवार्य शिक्षा का दायरा बढ़ना लाजिमी है।

सरकार ने पिछले बजट में 6 हजार मॉडल स्कूलों के लिए 1,200 करोड़ का प्रावधान किया था। 2008 में शुरू इस योजना में अब तक 438 स्कूल ही शुरू हो पाए हैं। जबकि पीपीपी मॉडल से खुलने वाले 2,500 स्कूलों के मानक ही अब तक नहीं तय हो पाए। फिर भी सरकार इस बार बजट में इसके लिए सिर्फ 1080 करोड़ रुपये का ही इंतजाम कर सकी। सरकार

खुद मानती है कि योग्य (क्वालीफाइड) शिक्षकों के न होने के चलते गुणवत्तापूर्ण शिक्षा (स्कूली से उच्च तक) नहीं मिल पा रही है। बावजूद इसके बजट में इस अहम मुद्दे को अलग से छुआ नहीं गया।

उच्च व तकनीकी शिक्षा के तहत बीते वर्षों में आठ-आठ नए आइआईटी, दस एनआईटी और लगभग डेढ़ दर्जन नए केंद्रीय विश्वविद्यालय खुले हैं। उनमें से तमाम में अब भी बुनियादी सुविधाओं व संसाधनों की भारी कमी है। फिर भी उच्च शिक्षा का बजट 15,458 करोड़ तक ही सीमित रहा, जबकि मंत्रालय को लगभग 30 हजार करोड़ की दरकार थी।

जानकार मानते हैं कि इस बजट से कोई

- > क्वालिटी शिक्षा जरूरी, फिर भी शिक्षकों की शिक्षा पर फोकस की कमी
- > देश में उच्चस्तरीय शोध की भारी कमी, बढ़ावा को अलग से धन का प्रावधान नहीं
- > मॉडल स्कूलों का एजेंडा पीछे छूटा, फिर भी बजट घटा
- > व्यावसायिक शिक्षा की जरूरतें ज्यादा, बजट में अनदेखी
- > नये खुले केंद्रीय विश्वविद्यालयों, आइआईटी, आइआईएम, एनआईटी में बुनियादी सुविधाओं व संसाधनों की कमी पर नहीं रहा अपेक्षित ध्यान
- > शिक्षा में सूचना संचार प्रौद्योगिकी के व्यापक उपयोग के लिहाज से धन का अभाव

ठोस उम्मीद करना बेमानी होगा। धन की कमी का असर शिक्षा के सुधार के एजेंडे पर भी पड़ेगा। जबकि किसी नई योजना को शुरू करने की उम्मीद तो की ही नहीं जा सकती। इतना ही नहीं, सरकार ने प्राथमिक से लेकर उच्च स्तर तक व्यावसायिक शिक्षा की अलग पाठ्यचर्या का कार्यक्रम तैयार किया है।