

Newspaper Clips

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Hindustan Times ND
18/03/2011 p-12

Under cloud, IIT-M director quits mid-term

ht **EXCLUSIVE**

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NEW DELHI: The director of the Indian Institute of Technology Madras has quit amid a slew of allegations ranging from questions over the legality of his appointment to lingering charges of caste bias and corruption under his administration.

Chemical engineer MS Ananth has submitted his resignation to the human resource development (HRD) ministry, over a year before his current term as IIT Madras director ends, top government officials confirmed to HT.

He has been asked to stay in office till July, while the government looks for a replacement.

Ananth is the first IIT director to quit mid-term under a cloud, though he is understood to have resigned on his own and is also credited by many as an innovator.

He started the National Programme on Technology Enhanced Learning (NPTEL) — based on the open source learning of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology — which allows students anywhere access to recorded IIT lectures

**THE ADMINISTRATION
UNDER ANANTH FACES
SERIOUS CHARGES OF
SQUANDERING PUBLIC
MONEY FROM THE CAG**

in several subjects.

But Ananth is also the first —and only — IIT director whose appointment was struck down legally.

The Madras high court in December 2008 concluded that the government had violated law in reappointing him for a second term the previous year.

A division bench stayed the decision against Ananth, but his second term — which started in July 2007 — only brought more controversy.

An IIT Madras alumnus, Dr. E. Muralidharan, accused Ananth of caste bias in denying him a teaching post.

Ananth and the IIT administration were accused of caste discrimination during his first term — from 2001 to 2007 — as well.

The administration under Ananth also faces serious allegations of squandering public money from the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG), which is currently probing the charges, sources said.

Economic Times ND 18/03/2011 P2

Ministry Considering Bio-Shields Against Tsunami

URMIA GOSWAMI
NEW DELHI

The Environment Ministry is considering the idea of developing bio-shields comprising mangrove and non-mangrove species in coastal areas adjoining critical infrastructure projects such as power plants and oil storage depots.

The idea of promoting mangroves and other biological shields to provide a 'speed breaker' was suggested by agricultural scientist and Rajya Sabha MP MS Swaminathan. The suggestion is being followed up by the expert group appointed by Environment Minister Jairam Ramesh to evaluate additional safeguards against the risk of tsunami.

In a letter to Ramesh, Swaminathan referred to the manner in which dense mangrove forests served as a "speed breaker, reducing the damage done" during the 2004 tsunami which affected Tamil Nadu and other southern states. "The concern now about the safety of nuclear power plants located along the coast such as Kalpakkam and Kudangulam in Tamil Nadu makes me feel that in addition to other steps we should promote bio-shields comprising mangrove and non-mangrove species in coastal areas adjoining nuclear power plants," Swaminathan wrote.

Swaminathan has also suggested that suggested that the coastal areas adjoining the nuclear plants

could be declared as critically vulnerable coastline. The senior agricultural scientist said that the idea of using mangroves as line of defence against coastal storms and tsunamis came following a discussion with older generation of Japanese scientists in 1989.

Ramesh has asked the expert group headed by former secretary department of ocean development AM Muthunayagam to follow up on this suggestion.

The four member group is undertaking a review of the current systems for assessing tsunami-type risks as part of the environmental impact assessment of projects in coastal areas. The group will also evaluate additional safeguards that are needed for existing projects and suggest measures to be taken for environmental impact assessments for future projects.

Additionally, the ministry's expert appraisal committees relating to industry, infrastructure, thermal power, and nuclear power have been to "deliberate on tsunami-related risks and to examine how they can be included in the terms of reference for environment impact assessment for future projects."

Ramesh has said that since a large number of critical infrastructure projects would have to be developed in coastal areas, there was a need to establish the carrying capacity of the 5,400 km of the country's main coastline. The ministry has already



SANE VOICE: Agricultural scientist and Rajya Sabha MP MS Swaminathan

initiated the exercise of hazard line mapping along the coastlines.

This is being undertaken by the Survey of India and will be completed in 24 months.

Earlier this year, the ministry had delinked the management of Andaman and Nicobar and Lakshadweep Islands from the coastal regulation zone notification. This was done in recognition of the dangers

posed to these islands by the natural disasters including earthquakes and tsunami. A separate Island Protection Zone notification had been issued in January. This calls for an Integrated Island Management Plan for each of the 340 islands of A&N and 32 islands of Lakshadweep taking into account the natural disasters including the tsunami like event.

Economic Times ND
18/03/2011 P10

First-Time Recruiters Flood IIMs



AVINASH NAIR & PARAG DAVE
AHMEDABAD

First-time recruiters, especially foreign companies, have come in search of quality talent at the Indian Institutes of Management this year. ChrysCapital, EXL Services and Deutsche Post DHL are some of the names that have knocked on IIM doors in search of talent this year. They are also offering 20% more than the average salary notched up by the institutes for positions in some of the fastest-growing economies of the world.

While IIM-Bangalore saw a 100% rise in first-time recruiters, IIM-Lucknow registered a 60% rise. There has been a similar rush at the other IIMs, where these recruiters were seen offering jobs in economically-flourishing locations in the Middle East, like Abu Dhabi, and in the Southeast Asian cities of Singapore and Hong Kong.

"The turnout of first-time recruiters was indeed unprecedented and much higher this year than in the past few years. First-time recruiters that visited only IIM Calcutta (IIM-C) include international firms like Japanese Investment Bank, Daiwa and the consulting firm Essex Lake Group," says Sharad Venkataraman, recruitment coordinator at the institute. He adds the number of new recruiters has gone up to 21 from last year's 15.

"We expect the salaries offered by the new recruiters to be 15-20% higher than the average salary (around Rs 15.6 lakh)," Venkataraman added.

The roles offered by these firms at IIM-C point to an interesting mix. While Daiwa recruited for investment banking positions, Nielsen & Co selected students for their emerging leadership programme in finance. Flipkart attracted students with an entrepreneurial bent of mind and offered roles in various domains. Essex Lake Group and EXL Services recruited students for consulting roles, while Deutsche Post DHL selected candidates for in-house consulting.

Superlative growth in regions like the Middle East and South East Asia are opening the doors to lucrative job offers

Experts believe the superlative growth in regions like the Middle East and Southeast Asia are opening the doors to lucrative job offers. According to the International Monetary Fund, Qatar and Singapore registered a growth of 16% and 14% respectively in 2010. They were among the fastest growing economies in the world last year.

The number of first-time recruiters is far higher at the IIMs of Lucknow, Bangalore and Kozhikode. "Last year, we had around 32 new recruiters at IIM Lucknow, and this year there has been a more than 60% rise in the number," says recruitments cell spokesperson, adding that here, too, students have been hired for positions in Southeast Asia and the Middle East. Some new companies visiting IIM-L were Amazon, Microsoft, IDC, HP, ICICI Securities and Deutsche Post DHL.

IIM Bangalore, which was visited by only 17 new companies last year, saw a 100% increase this time, with companies from Belgium, Hong Kong, Singapore, Australia, the Netherlands, the US and UAE visiting. Among others, ChrysCapital, Nokia, Infosys Consulting, Deutsche Post DHL and Lenovo visited this time.

"There is a huge demand for talent and that's the main reason for the rise in the number of first-time recruiters. With the economy doing well, many companies eyeing the future have come hiring," says Sapna Agarwal, head of IIM-B career development services. Half the first-timers at IIM-B were from finance, she added.

HR consultants feel overseas recruiters are making a beeline for the IIMs because they have left an impressive footprint in the global markets. "Overseas recruiters who plan to set up base in India or expand existing operations, will normally hire from India, provide overseas exposure and deploy them back to the country," says Sunil Goel, director of the executive search firm, GlobalHunt.

Anuj Kumar, VP human resources at Fujitsu Consulting India, which hired for the first time from IIM-K, says the company was happy with the quality of talent and will be back to hire in large numbers next year. At the smaller IIMs like Kozhikode, the number of first-timers, or those visiting the campus after a gap of two years, is 38 — about 35% of the total number of companies that came by.

Economic Times ND
18/03/2011 P19

MCI Concerned Over Entry of Foreign Institutes



OUR POLITICAL BUREAU
NEW DELHI

The health ministry and Medical Council of India have expressed their concerns over opening up the higher education sector to foreign education institutions. Officials from the health sector, on Thursday, deposed before the Parliamentary Standing Committee on human resource development. The parliamentary panel has been discussing the Foreign Educational Institutions (Regulation of Entry and Operation) Bill, 2010.

Sources said that both the senior health ministry official and head of the Board of governors of the Medical Council of India SK Sarin expressed concern over the impact of opening up the sector to foreign education providers. Deposing before the panel, the ministry official said that the health ministry was working on a separate bill that would address the issues of education in the medical sector. Sources said that the ministry official told the panel that the bill, which would deal comprehensively with the health sector, was in advanced stages of preparation.

In elaborating their concerns about allowing foreign education providers in the health sector, the officials raised the issue of faculty shortage and standardisation of quality. The panel was told that there is at present a shortage of 3,000 to 4,000 faculty members in the existing institutions in the health sector.

There also exists a shortage of 700,000 to 800,000 doctors. In what would be an echo of concerns raised by the BJP, Left and sections of the domestic higher education segment, the health officials raised the spectre of faculty moving out to the foreign education providers on the back of better remuneration and facilities. This would deepen the crisis that is already quite acute in the domestic medical institutions.

Ethical issues regarding quality was another concern. The Medical Council of India has maintained that any institution that offers medical degrees has to submit to its scrutiny. The Foreign Educational Institutions Bill does not provide for this scrutiny. The Medical Council had earlier written to the HRD ministry drawing attention to the fact that the bill in its current form does not allow for the MCI to undertake rigorous scrutiny prior to setting up a campus. The council has been designated as the statutory authority for health sector, but there appears to be no reference to scrutiny. Sources said that the parliamentary standing will now be consulting foreign experts from institutions like the London School of Economics, Oxford and Stanford. It will also invite representatives of foreign universities which have footprints outside their home country, this would include French business school INSEAD, which has campuses in France, Abu Dhabi and Singapore, and the Wharton Business School which has a campus in Singapore.

Mint ND 18/03/2011 P-5

INTERIM RELIEF

SC breather to B-schools on govt regulation

New guidelines, which cover course fees and selection of students, were notified in December by AICTE

BY PRASHANT K. NANDA
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NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Thursday gave a breather to hundreds of management schools by ordering an interim stay on the new guidelines issued by the government to regulate their admissions and fees.

The order will allow business schools that offer a post-graduate diploma in management (PGDM) to decide their course fees and select students from entrance examinations of their choice in the forthcoming academic year.

Lobby groups Education Promotion Society of India (EPSI) and Association of Indian Management Schools had approached the apex court against the regulations notified in December by the All India Council of Technical Education (AICTE), the country's nodal technical education regulator.

According to the regulations, the course fee at PGDM institutes would be fixed by committees constituted by the respective state governments. The schools would have to rely on state-level entrance examinations to admit students and include five state government and AICTE officials on their management boards.

"The apex court has now given an interim relief to all PGDM institutes. They can select students based on CAT

(Common Admission Test for management schools), MAT (Management Aptitude Test) or a state-level entrance, if there is any," said Naresh Kaushik, a lawyer for EPSI.

"We have not seen the order so far and will comment after reading the court direction," AICTE acting chairman S.S. Mantha said.

Kaushik said the schools would continue to decide their course fee for now, but would have to inform AICTE and state governments about it.

The court also ordered that the management boards of these schools would have only two official invitees, one each from the state government and AICTE.

The stay order is only for this year. Kaushik said AICTE could submit a counter-affidavit in the court challenging the stay. He also said AICTE's decision to ban all part-time courses in management would not come into effect immediately—following the court direction—until a decision is taken by the court.

H. Chaturvedi, director of Greater Noida-based Birla Institute of Management Technology, said business schools are relieved by the stay order.

"This is good news for all PGDM institutes and thousands of students. This will help us as the admission session is coming up. If anybody is cheating, then we are in favour of punishment for those institutes, but AICTE should not target everybody," said Chaturvedi, a member of EPSI and AIMS.

Some 550 PGDM institutes will benefit from the order. Chaturvedi said more than 100,000 students are enrolled at these institutes.

AICTE's new focus: Churning out more PhDs

■ Decision to include all govt & govt-aided institutions as QIP centres to help promote research among faculty members

Kirtika Suneja
New Delhi, Mar 17

IN order to promote research among faculty members and help produce more PhDs, the Indian Council for Technical Education (AICTE) has decided to include all government and government-aided institutions as quality improvement programme (QIP) centres. At present, there are 200 such centres but after the inclusion of all government-aided institutions, the number will increase by 350.

Under the QIP, faculty members of degree-level institutions are given the opportunity to upgrade their qualifications to Masters and PhD levels. Similarly, under the scheme QIP (poly), polytechnic teachers can pursue Masters degree programmes. Course-wise development and other short-term training programmes are also conducted under the QIP.

"This will revive research amongst faculty and produce more PhDs. Hence, a more faculty members would be needed to be provided with QIP



Under the quality improvement programme, faculty members of degree-level institutions are given the opportunity to upgrade their qualifications to Masters and PhD levels

scholarships. This is already in place and we introduced this almost three months back," said SS Mantha, acting chairman, AICTE.

The QIP was initiated in 1970-71 to improve the quality and standards of technical education by focussing on faculty development, which includes M Tech and doctoral programmes. Short-term courses at QIP centres includes curriculum development, which consists of laboratory development, preparation of instructional materials and

THE PROGRAMME WAS INITIATED IN 1970-71 TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY AND STANDARDS OF TECHNICAL EDUCATION

text-books and practical training in industry for teachers of engineering colleges and polytechnics.

At present, almost 500 teachers are being supported under this scheme. These

programmes are generally carried out in the IITs and several other select institutions in the country.

The council will partially fund the new centres for offering these services. The criteria for institutions to qualify in becoming QIP centres is that they should be conducting post graduate programmes for five years in that discipline.

IIT Madras has 107 QIP scholars of which 99 are for PhD and M Tech. They include 20 women in PhD and 4 in M Tech.

Times of India ND 18/03/2011 p-4

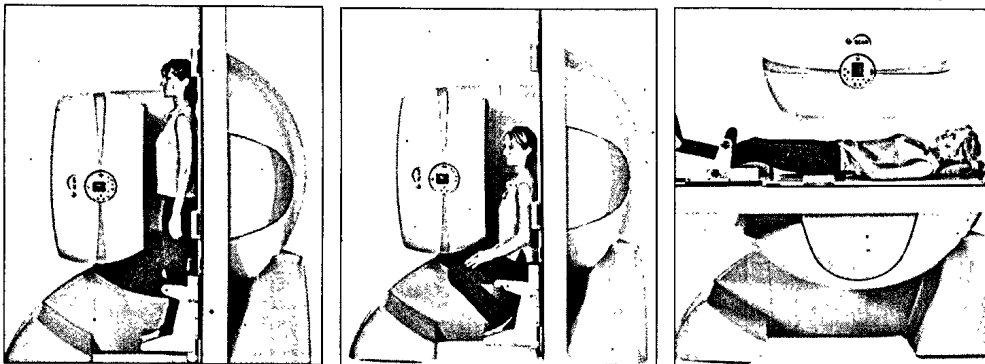
Now you can get MRI done while standing, watching TV

Kounteya Sinha | TNN

New Delhi: Do you avoid getting a magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) done because it makes you claustrophobic?

Now, an MRI scan will be as simple as standing in front of a mirror. New-age MRI scanners being put in place can scan people while they simply stand, sit or lie in front of them. And what's best, the new scan machines are noiseless, doing away with that loud knocking sound that can scare anybody out.

Speaking to TOI, eminent radiologist Dr Harsh Mahajan, who has introduced open, standing MRI scanning system, said, "This open, standing MRI system is unique because it can perform scans with the patient lying down, standing or sitting. This enables true weight-bearing examination which was not possible before and was one of the greatest challenges to MR imaging. It is also a boon for claustrophobic patients who are scared of



NO LONGER A CLOSED AFFAIR: The new-age MRI machines can carry out the scan while the person is standing, sitting or lying down in the open

being scanned by the traditional tunnel-shaped scanners."

Explaining its benefits, Dr Rakesh Malhotra, professor of orthopedics, All India Institute of Medical Sciences, said that many

times, the mechanics of the joint is different when the patient is standing on it or when lying on it. Some people may have stretched ligaments which aren't functioning. This gets exposed when the

patient stands up and puts weight on that joint.

"When lying down, the patient hardly puts weight on the lower limb because of which a scan can't pick up some vital prob-

lems. When standing, the scan tells us about functional alignments of our joints — how it will behave, progress and whether the condition will get worse. Static MRI tells us the structure of the

alignment. But what looks structurally intact can be functionally incompetent," Dr Malhotra told TOI.

According to Dr Mahajan, when we are in a weight-bearing state like in standing position, doctors can see if smaller discs have a problem, is there a reduction in disc height or whether there is a soft tissue bulging out. "When you lie down, everything comes into a neutral position," Dr Mahajan added.

The cost difference isn't much between a normal MRI and the open, standing MRI. While the present day routine MRI costs Rs 6000, the one carried out in standing or lying positions would jointly cost Rs 9,000. "The new machines are also absolutely noiseless," Dr Mahajan added.

Experts say the open MRI design eliminates claustrophobia and accommodates patients of all sizes. It also allows most patients to be able to be scanned without sedation. So now, patients can sit and watch TV during their scan.

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Govt Can't Hide Behind A Smokescreen Called Science

Everyday science, earthquakes and hallowed N-scientists

Earthquakes do not kill. Buildings kill. As Japan struggles to cope with its horrific calamity and the world faces the prospect of a nuclear catastrophe, it is time we assessed our risk preparedness.

Let's take the issue of nuclear safety. The world's industry is looking at India and China to fuel the nuclear renaissance dead cold since the Chernobyl disaster. We have already signed up with French nuclear giant Areva for Jaitapur plant in Maharashtra and are in the market for many more. But have we sorted out the safeguards needed for this high-risk technology? The current crisis in the Fukushima Daiichi power station reveals that even the best

planned and executed safeguards may have failed. In this case, the engineers seemed not to have foreseen a double-whammy of a quake followed by a tsunami, which killed the power backup.



ECO LOGIC
BY SUNITA NARAIN

I ask this with no real answers. The problem is that the nuclear establishment in India has survived on the basis of complete secrecy and closed door working. The paranoia of its scientists is astonishing: if you ask an uncomfortable question, the first response is that you are not qualified to understand the answer (in other words, you are not a nuclear scientist). If you persist, the response will get even more religious and strident: the country needs nuclear power and any questions are irrelevant (and irreverent). In other words, you are either with us or against us.

This attitude persists when it comes to



LESSONS FOR TOMORROW

the Jaitapur plant. The fact is that there are two reasons for the local protest against the project: one, the takeover of land and water, which is the livelihood support of people and two, the fear of hazards of high-risk technology.

The only way to deal with people's apprehensions is to come clean on all matters related to the design and safeguards of the plant. Instead, the government wants to ride roughshod. The environmental impact assessment, used to give clearance to this 10,000mw project is shoddy; it misses key technical and safety issues. But the nuclear establishment wants people to take their word for it, not realizing their word has no meaning in this world of open public debate and news.

This matter of safety of high-risk technology becomes even more serious, when you realize there is now an unholy alliance between the closed and unaccountable nuclear establishment with powerful industry. This industry has influential friends — French President Nicolas Sarkozy was in India to peddle the Areva technology; US President Barack Obama acts as the middleman for his companies in the nuclear deal. In this situation, people's fears are compounded. They don't know if knowledge or power is driving decisions and in whose interests. It then becomes even more important and urgent to build the credibility of the decision-making system and not to compromise it with arrogance, silence or poor science.

In Japan, the nation, which lives on the edge of seismic activity, building designs incorporate technologies to withstand tremors and even earthquakes of enormous magnitude. Just think that the current shock was of magnitude 9 but devastation however bad was contained. This incorporation of science into everyday design requires a scientifically literate society and knowledge-driven systems of governance. We have neither.

To build these systems of science in governance will require much more than just new rules. It will require a culture of public debate, dissent and discussion on scientific issues. Indian scientists, who take silence as their best insurance and closed door government committees as their best defence, must be prepared to take some risks. The rowdy Indian democracy needs their engagement. Japan's devastating earthquake should teach us this.

*The author is director of
Centre for Science & Environment*

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MCI to grade medical colleges

Hemali Chhapla | TNN

Mumbai: For medical aspirants across India, the options during admission broadly boil down to two. Their first preference is almost any public college which offers the MBBS degree at throw-away rates, followed by the private colleges where education is a lot dearer.

But, which is the second best college among the government institutes in Maharashtra or Tamil Nadu or Karnataka? Making that choice will get a lot more hardboiled as the Medical Council of India (MCI) has decided to assess and grade their colleges. A student will now be able to make a tough call on whether to sign up at JIPMER, Puducherry, Christian Medical College, Vellore, or at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences.

The Council, which has so

One-yr extension for MCI governing body

The governing body of Medical Council of India (MCI), which is preparing the new undergraduate and post-graduate medical curriculum, has got a year-long extension. The Union Cabinet extended the term of the six-member board of governors by a year. Tainted by corruption charges, the 76-year-old MCI was dissolved last year, and replaced by a six-member panel of eminent doctors to carry out its duties. An ordinance dissolving the all-powerful body was signed by President Patil, and notified by the law ministry. **TNN**

far been a college-recognising and doctor-licencing body, is now looking at expanding its mandate. "We want to see how we can improve the quality in medical education. To date, we just checked the faculty strength, infrastructure and looked at other parameters. Now, we need to see how to up the quality of the country's medical colleges," said Dr Devi Shetty, a member of the MCI board of governors.

Stemming the rot that has set in will not be easy. But im-

proving quality of medical institutes is in sync with the larger framework that the MCI's vision document 2015 spells out: raising the bar for Indian healthcare to match the global standards.

The Vision-2015 document prescribes sweeping reforms for the under-graduate and post-graduate medical education programmes. The document aims at evolving strategies for the road ahead in an ever-expanding medical education sector that has not been

able to focus on quality.

So, from the quality of the curriculum to the patient inflow, from adopting new technology in teaching-learning to the quality of research carried out, the assessment process will consider all that before a college is graded. While the National Assessment and Accreditation Council, has graded some medical colleges of the country, not all the institutes are graded.

It is unclear if the MCI will make assessment mandatory or not, but Dr Shetty added, "We are in the process of taking inputs from the NAAC and the National Accreditation Board for Hospitals & Healthcare Providers on the quality processes we need to develop."

With the MCI rethinking the direction medical education should take, colleges will have to put the quality factor on steroids.

Times of India ND 18/03/2011 p-19

Booze buster: New tech to spot spurious whisky

London: Alcohol lovers who often get cheated while buying whisky can now heave a sigh of relief, as British scientists have developed a new technology which they say could help detect whether the produce is genuine or fake.

The technique, developed by a team from the University of Leicester, relies on detecting the differences between the characteristics of light reflected from the liquid inside the bottle or its label.

A white light is shone through the liquid and the



© Macduff Everton/CORBIS

LET THERE BE LIGHT: Comparing the light reflected from the liquid inside a bottle with the original product can help detect fakes

spectrometer analyses whether the signature matches that of the genuine article or not, the NewScientist reported. The team believe the technology could also be applied to analyse liquids in airports.

Apart from taste, fake spirits can contain high levels of methanol, a chemical that can cause liver damage, blindness, coma, breathing difficulties and even death. In 2009 it was revealed radiocarbon-dating can also be used to spot fake spirits by discovering how much carbon-14 they contain.

Times of India ND 18/03/2011 p-20

Robots everywhere, but not in N-plants

Tokyo: Japan may build robots to play the violin, run marathons and preside over weddings, but it has not deployed any of the machines to help repair its crippled reactors.

While robots are commonplace in the nuclear power industry, with EU engineers building one that can climb walls through radioactive fields, the electric power company running Japan's Fukushima Dai-ichi plant has not deployed any for the nuclear emergency.

Instead, its skeleton team has been given the unenviable and perhaps deadly task of cooling reactors and spent nuclear fuel on their own, only taking breaks to avoid overexposure. A science ministry official said a robot used to

detect radiation levels is at the site of the accident in Fukushima, north of Tokyo, but nuclear safety agency official Hidehiko Nishiyama said, "We have no reports of any robots being used."

That robot would have come in handy early on Thursday when workers monitoring radiation had to back away from the plant because it was becoming too hot.

While Japan is renowned for its cutting edge technology, it also maintains an anachronistic element in its society that relies on humans for tasks that have given way to automation in many other parts of the world, such as operating elevators and warning motorists of road construction.

In one of Japan's worst nu-

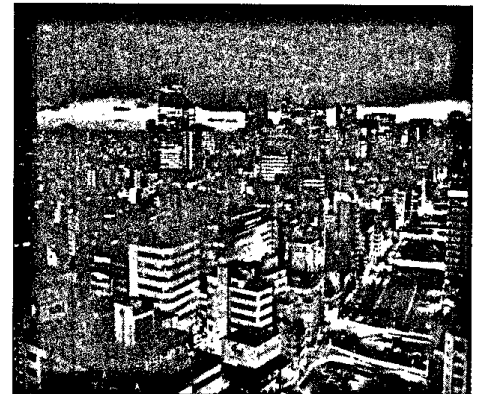
clear accidents, two workers were killed in 1999, when workers at a nuclear facility in Tokaimura, northeast of Tokyo, set off an uncontrolled nuclear chain reaction by using buckets to mix nuclear fuel in a lab. Japan is a world leader in robots, using them to automate the most complicated manufacturing processes and to sift through rubble to look for victims in earthquakes.

Robots were also used after two infamous nuclear disasters — Three Mile Island and Chernobyl, and will almost certainly be used at Fukushima for work in highly radioactive areas. Kim Seung-ho, a nuclear official who engineered robots for South Korea's atomic power plants, said: "You have to design

emergency robots for plants when they are being built so they can navigate corridors, steps and close valves."

The Fukushima plant was built in the 1970s, well before robots were able to work on sophisticated tasks. Robots are in place in many nuclear plants for structured situations such as monitoring pipes and simple maintenance.

Kim, a deputy director in nuclear technology for the Korea Atomic Energy Research Institute, said budget constraints and denial have kept emergency robots out of many plants in his country and around the world. "Nuclear plant operators don't like to think about serious situations that are beyond human control," he said.



DARK NIGHT: Lights go out in Tokyo on Thursday as part of rolling blackouts aimed at saving scarce energy

Times of India ND
18/03/2011 p-19

Iran sends life-supporting capsule into space

Iran says it has sent the country's first space capsule that is able to sustain life into orbit as a test for a future mission that may carry a live animal. The state IRNA news agency says the capsule was carried by a rocket dubbed Kavoshgar-4 – or Explorer-4 in Farsi – some 120km into orbit. The launch of the capsule is a part of Iran's ambitious space programme. Last year, Iran sent its first domestically made telecommunications satellite into orbit and announced it had successfully launched a rocket carrying a mouse, turtle and worms into space for research purposes.

Times of India ND
18/03/2011 p-19

Gene therapy to treat Parkinson's:

Scientists have developed a novel gene therapy called NLX-P101 that dramatically reduces movement impairment in Parkinson's patients. The approach introduces a gene into the brain to normalize chemical signalling. The result of a Phase 2 study is the first successful randomized, double-blind clinical trial of a gene therapy for Parkinson's or any neurologic disorder. "Patients who received NLX-P101 showed a significant reduction in the motor symptoms of Parkinson's, including tremors," the team said.

Times of India ND

18/03/2011 p-19

Largest plant-eating dino found:

Scientists have unearthed what they say are the remains of one of the largest ever plant-eating dinosaurs that roamed the world 90 million years ago. An international team, which found the fossils of the giant animal from a region in Angola, believe the creature was a long-necked plant eater and could be bigger than T.rex – the largest land-based carnivores of all time. Dubbed the Angolatitan adamastor, or Angolan giant, it is believed to be part of a previously unknown dinosaur.

Times of India ND p-20
18/03/2011

Radiation plume likely to reach California today

William J Broad

A United Nations forecast of the possible movement of the radioactive plume coming from crippled Japanese reactors shows it churning across the Pacific, and touching the Aleutian Islands on Thursday, before hitting Southern California late on Friday.

Health and nuclear experts emphasize that radiation in the plume will be diluted as it travels and, at worst, would have extremely minor health consequences in the United States, even if hints of it are ultimately detectable. In a similar way, radiation from the Chernobyl disaster in 1986 spread around the globe and reached the West Coast of the United States in 10 days, its levels measurable but minuscule.

The projection, by the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty Organization, an arm of the UN in Vienna, gives no information about actual radiation levels but only shows how a radioactive plume would probably move and disperse. The forecast, calculated Tuesday, is based on patterns of Pacific winds at that time and the predicted path is likely to change as weather patterns shift.

The forecast shows radioactive plume will probably miss the agency's monitoring stations at Midway and in Hawaiian Islands but is likely to be detected in the Aleutians and at a monitoring station in Sacra-

China seeks swift, exact updates

China urged Japan to report any developments in its nuclear crisis quickly and accurately as concern spread over whether officials in Tokyo had downplayed the scope the radiation risk. At a news briefing, Jiang Yu, the foreign ministry spokeswoman, said, "We hope Japan reports details to the world in a timely and accurate manner." Her remarks followed comments by a top US nuclear official that damage to at least one reactor at the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station was far more serious than Japan had acknowledged. NYT

Table salt vanishes amid radiation scare: There was a run on table salt across China as people flocked shops to stock it up to protect themselves against nuclear radiation. Text messages flooded the country, advising people on the use of iodised salt for protection. TNN

amento. The forecast assumes radioactivity in Japan is released continuously and forms a rising plume. It ends with the plume heading into Southern California and American Southwest, including Nevada, Utah and Arizona. The plume would have continued eastward if scientists had run the projection forward. NYT NEWS SERVICE