

Newspaper Clips March 6-7, 2015

Govt sits on IIT quit letter

http://www.telegraphindia.com/1150306/jsp/nation/story_7180.jsp#.VPqBqo62IbI

Our Special Correspondent

New Delhi, March 5: The Union human resource development ministry has been sitting on a resignation letter sent by IIT Delhi director R.K. Shevgaonkar for over two months, a situation a faculty member described as "highly unusual".

Although the indecision has not affected the premier technology institute's functioning so far, it has led to a sense of unease and uncertainty on the campus.

Shevgaonkar had resigned on December 26 on "personal" grounds but was widely perceived to have quit under the ministry's pressure, prompting teachers and students to rally round him.

Ministry officials have now clammed up, declining to suggest any reasons for the delay in taking a decision.

Two months ago, ministry officials had denied media reports that blamed Shevgaonkar's resignation on government pressure over the arrears due to former faculty member (now BJP politician) Subramanian Swamy, and over a cricket academy on the IIT grounds.

Instead, speaking off-the-record, the officials had linked the resignation to alleged irregularities in the institute's signing of an agreement with the Mauritius Research Council to jointly set up a research academy in that country.

Some of the sources had even hinted that the director had resigned because the ministry had begun probing his role in the alleged irregularities. But a senior official later told **The Telegraph** there was no such probe.

The ministry sources who used to point to the Mauritius deal have gone quiet ever since the Mauritius government wrote to India's foreign ministry asking whether New Delhi had changed its stand on the proposed research centre.

There have for some weeks been hints that the government has softened on the matter and will rectify the alleged procedural lapses so the overseas centre can come into being --- but no progress has happened on this front, either.

According to the Institute of Technology Act, an Indian Institute of Technology director is appointed by the IIT Council after approval from the President, who is the IITs' Visitor.

Under the norms, the ministry should have forwarded the resignation letter to the President. However, it has not, sources said.

"The ministry's not saying anything on the resignation for over two months is highly unusual. It does not speak well of the government's decision-making ability," an IIT teacher said.

A ministry source claimed the director would be free to leave after the passage of three months from the date of resignation. The contract signed by Shevgaonkar with the government says he can leave the institute after

serving a three-month notice period.

However, an IIT official said that even after that, the director would need a formal letter about the acceptance of his resignation --- else he cannot rejoin IIT Bombay, his parent organisation, as a teacher.

IIT Delhi recently advertised a few teachers' posts, for which selection is on. However, it cannot advertise other vacant posts since there is no clarity on the fate of the director.

Institute chairperson Vijay Bhatkar had sometime ago met human resource development minister Smriti Irani to discuss the subject.

Sources said Shevgaonkar was unlikely to withdraw his resignation.

Centre issues order on IIT

<http://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Thiruvananthapuram/centre-issues-order-on-iit/article6968549.ece>

The Union government has issued an order sanctioning an Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) in Palakkad.

A press note issued from Education Minister P.K. Abdu Rabb's office said the State government had received a copy of the order to set up the IIT in 400 acres at Puthussery in Palakkad district that the State had promised to make available for the project.

According to the order, the IIT would function out of the Ahalia Integrated Campus at Kozhippara till buildings came up at Puthussery, Mr. Rabb said in the press note. — Special Correspondent

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NEW GUIDELINES

Centre-funded institutes can now hire non-academics

HRD ministry allows institutions such as IITs to hire professionals in a move to tackle severe faculty shortage

By Prashant K. Nanda
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NEW DELHI

The government has now officially allowed top educational institutions such as the Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) and Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs) to hire non-academics—from bankers to civil servants—for up to three years, in a move aimed at addressing the severe faculty shortage at these elite schools.

The human resource development (HRD) ministry has issued formal guidelines to all central government-funded technical institutes to this effect.

The move comes soon after several new central government-funded institutions were announced by finance minister

Arun Jaitley in his budget speech on 28 February.

The schools can now hire professionals to fill up to a fourth of their allowed faculty strength, and pay them a maximum of ₹1.2 lakh a month, two government officials said, citing a circular from the ministry.

In the last eight years, India has created more than 17 central universities, 14 IIMs and 15 IITs besides other central institutions. India's central universities and institutions have 35% fewer faculty members than they should, according to data from the HRD ministry.

Officials in the HRD ministry said the move to allow recruitment of non-academics will give flexibility to central government-funded institutions to get quality teachers, improve industry-academia relations and job

prospects for students.

"One of the key objectives of these guidelines is to have a strong and robust collaboration between the educational institutions and industry. The guidelines seek to encourage quality involvement of academicians, scholars, practitioners, policy makers in teaching, research,

and related services on a regular basis. Such involvement helps in bringing external perspective to regular teaching to make classes more interesting and to further enrich

existing knowledge of faculty members," said the ministry circular.

According to the guidelines, professionals do not need academic degrees such as an MTech or a PhD to teach but will be given designations such as professor or associate professor,

much like regular teaching staff.

The duration of their appointment will vary between one semester and six semesters (3 years) as decided by the institute. Reputed scientists, engineers, physicians, advocates, artists, civil servants, bankers and other professionals, "both serving and retired can be inducted as adjunct faculty from outside the Institute," the guidelines said.

Such a move could benefit institutions, especially the new ones.

The practice of hiring professionals to teach is prevalent in the US education system but hasn't so far been done formally in India, said Ashwini Swain, a fellow at the CUTS Institute for Regulation and Competition.

If executed well it "can help tide over faculty crunch significantly," he said.

The HRD ministry believes the move will encourage professionals who make the shift to tap their companies' corporate social responsibility resources for chair professorships, scholarships and funds.

Ministry officials say the move will help institutions improve relations with the industry

Times Of India ND 06/03/2015 P-9

HRD mantri asks varsities to settle grievances online

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New Delhi: The Union human resource development (HRD) ministry has asked central universities to forward complaints received online to the public grievances portal for proper tracking. It has asked them to settle a grievance preferably within 15 days from its receipt to enable the ministry to get them disposed off without paperwork.



The ministry has designated registrars as directors of grievances, who would monitor complaints regularly. Officials said the portal will help track, monitor files and address grievances. Sources said the ministry has separately directed universities to shift their websites from "ac.in" to

"gov.in" to help forward files and proposals online without the need for hard copies for faster action to promote e-governance. Sources in the Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) said they will move their website to "gov.in" and have procured a software from the National Informatics Centre for e-governance.

E-governance would do away with delay in action taking process apart from grievance redressal. "The movement of hard files takes time. But the e-governance platform will do away with the bottlenecks and one can track files right from the university level to the ministry and also the action taken at various levels," said a JNU official. The ministry plans to include IITs in e-governance by moving their websites to "gov.in" as well.

It is mulling linking universities online for taking forward the proposed Choice Based Credit System. A ministry official said, "Various initiatives like the public grievance portal and e-governance will help in implementation. Moreover, various agencies, varsities and ministry will be on the same page on status of proposals, action taken and disposal of grievances in time bound manner."

UGC to focus on quality in higher education

<http://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/puducherry/ugc-to-focus-on-quality-in-higher-education/article6965669.ece>

The University Grants Commission (UGC), which has, for over six decades, invested in the development of infrastructure of colleges and universities, will shift focus to quality in the higher education sector, H. Devaraj, UGC Vice-Chairman has said.

Delivering the National Science Day address at Annamalai University in Chidambaram recently, Mr. Devaraj said while the focus so far had not been as much on review or monitoring systems as on building basic facilities, “now we are expecting something back from universities and colleges”.

“Now that the fundamentals have been set in the higher education sector, the time has come for vertical growth,” he said.

Mr. Devaraj had a clear message for the 759 universities and 38,561 colleges across the country, which was that in future the allocation of money would be determined on the basis of performance and quality. Already, norm-based funding was the adjudicating principle for release of money from the UGC for research projects while holding on to its mandate of access and inclusiveness.


According to Mr. Devaraj, while India was doing quite well on sectors such as space science, there was a disconnect between the money spent on higher education and the return in terms of quality and excellence. India invested 4.2 per cent of its GDP on education, of which 1.32 per cent on higher education. While half of the UGC’s Rs. 50,000-crore annual budget was being directly distributed to the higher education system the remaining was disbursed through the Centrally sponsored Rashtriya Uchchar Shiksha Abhiyan.

K. Kathiresan, Dean, Marine Sciences, J. Vasanthakumar, Registrar i/c, Shiv Das Meena, administrator and M.Sabesan, Dean, Faculty of Science participated.

‘Trees in Russia impact monsoon in India’


<http://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/bangalore/trees-in-russia-impact-monsoon-in-india/article6967927.ece>

HOW DEFORESTATION AFFECTS GLOBAL RAINFALL




Inter-Tropical Convergence Zone (ITCZ) comprises bands of clouds and thunderstorms that drive rains

Currently, ITCZ hovers around 8 degree North (just below the tip of mainland India) in summer and 8 degree South (just above Australia)



Removal of trees (which absorb radiation) in Russia and Canada increases the amount of sun radiation reflected there; that is, the land cools in the north

This causes heat from South to move towards North, and ITCZ moves lower



Monsoon movement is strengthened only if ITCZ covers large landmass of South Asia

If it moves further south, ITCZ covers lesser landmass, and monsoons here can decline by 12 per cent

Deforestation region	Temperature rise (degree Celsius)	Decline of global rainfall (percentage)	IMPACT OF DEFICIT MONSOON ON INDIA		
Global level* (all forests removed)	1.5	3.2	Nearly 80 per cent of rice is grown during monsoon months (June-September)	Deficit monsoon in 2002 saw dip in food grains of nearly 30 million tonnes	Delay in monsoons can lead to 25 per cent lesser wheat production
Boreal (Canada, Russia)	0.90	1.70			
Temperate (US, Europe, Central Asia, China, Chile)	0.47	1.01	Food inflation can rise by up to 5 per cent	Impact of deficit rainfall is 2 to 5 per cent dip in agricultural GDP, and nearly 1 per cent in country's GDP	Purchasing power in rural areas will come down
Tropical (around the Equator)	0.04	0.05			
*Nearly 35 per cent of all land mass has already been deforested					

Study: Deforestation in high latitudes could lead to a 12% decline in rains

In the near future, it may just be metaphorical dark clouds that hover over the country, rather than rain-bringing ones.

A study has shown that deforestation in high latitudes and the boreal regions — comprising grasslands and forests of Canada, Russia and Alaska in the U.S. — could affect the monsoon in South Asia. The effect of large-scale deforestation could lead to a 12 per cent decline in the monsoons, says a study by scientists of the Divecha Center for Climate Change at Indian Institute of Science (IISc).

Numerous studies have shown that declining monsoons auger badly for agriculture as well as the macro-economic climate in India.

The report — authored by Govindasamy Bala, N. Devaraju and Angshuman Modak from IISc. — was published in the Proceedings of National Academy of Sciences (PNAS). It shows that the Inter-Tropical Convergence Zone (ITCZ), which drives rain, moves southwards.

“The monsoon is dependent on landmass covered by the ITCZ. If it moves south, it covers more of the Indian Ocean, and less of India. This will weaken the monsoons,” said Prof. Bala.

On the other hand, monsoons will strengthen in the Southern Hemisphere, leading to immense impact on regional economies.

Unlike most studies that focus on emission on greenhouse gases, the IISc. study calculates the impact of surface characteristics (that is, deforestation that modifies reflection of sunlight by the landscape and plant transpiration) on climate.

What the study says

The three-dimensional climate model used by the researchers simulated atmospheric circulation, land surface processes (photosynthesis and transpiration), surface-ocean warming and ice melt. The team experimented with wide deforestation in the tropical, temperate and high-latitude areas to point out effects on global temperatures and rainfall (*see graphic*) leading to the conclusion that deforestation in Russia and Canada is more catastrophic for India.

With the change in land use — from verdant forests to crop land — affecting climate in a “significant” way, Prof. Bala says there is need for an integrated approach to deal with deforestation.

“It isn’t just about carbon dioxide. Afforestation programmes must be in focus too,” he said.

Financial Express ND 06/03/2015 P-5

Senior managers paid 11.7 times more than lower level staff: Study

New Delhi, March 5: Reflecting an increasing pay disparity in India during last six years, senior managers have been paid 11.7 times more than their lower level workers, according to a Hay Group study.

According to global management consultancy, Hay Group, since 2008 the pay gap between lower level employees and senior managers in India has widened from a figure of 7.7 in 2008 to 11.7 in 2014.

Globally, the pay gap between lower level workers (comprising skilled manual, clerical, supervisor or graduate entry jobs) and senior managers (heads of departments or equivalent) is also now on the rise.

Whereas within the BRIC nations, the gap has grown substantially in India and China, but there is only a marginal increase in Brazil and the gap has decreased in Russia.

"The pay gap growth can also be linked to an intense talent war and increased competition for the few selected jobs available. This keeps the pay limited to a certain bracket," Hay Group India Country Manager, Productised Services Amer Haleem said.



Since 2008, the pay gap between lower level employees and senior managers in India has widened from a figure of 7.7 in 2008 to 11.7 in 2014. Globally, the pay gap between lower level workers and senior managers (heads of departments or equivalents) is also on the rise

Pay disparity between lower level employees and senior managers increased in every region worldwide, since the start of the global recession. However it is not purely a post-recession issue. This is a trend that has been building for the past 30 years, through economic boom.

The study also elaborated that managers with skills such as emotional intelligence, creative thinking and advanced judgement are in high demand and short supply. They are increasingly being asked to take on more responsibilities and more complex work.

"Organisations need to be

transparent with employees and communicate why reward policies are in place. They should also invest in their training and development programmes to upskill their workforces to meet the future demands of their businesses," Hay Group consultant Ben Frost suggested.

PTI

IIT Guwahati students launch Zaffingo.com, one-of-a-kind yearbook making website

<http://yourstory.com/2015/03/zaffingo-com/>

If you're graduating from college, you might have felt the urge to preserve the memories that you've made during your memorable stay. Launched this Valentine, Zaffingo.com is India's first yearbook making website. Started by a group of students from IIT Guwahati, Zaffingo caters to yearbook creation and printing and simplifies the task of data collection to a huge extent through its easy-to-use online portal.

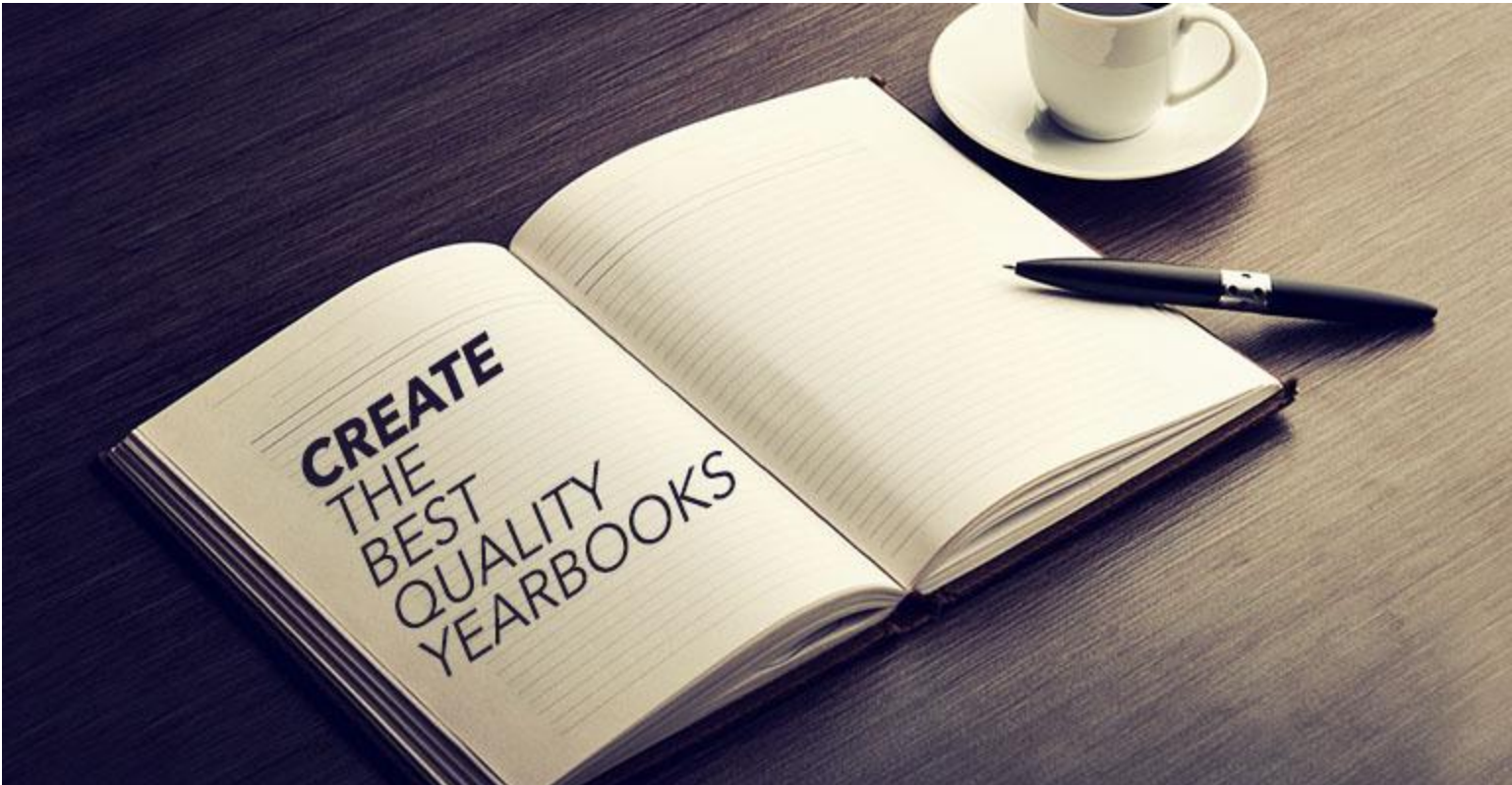


Image credit "[Shutterstock](#)"

The website allows you to invite people, write testimonials, create and vote for polls, real-time editing and a lot more to make the entire process of yearbook making not only easy but also fun. In its first few weeks itself, Zaffingo has managed to get a nation-wide reach with the help of its creative social media campaigns.



Shikhar Saxena, Co-Founder & CEO of Zaffingo, says, “A yearbook is not just a book. It is something that stays with you forever. It gives you once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to preserve all the memories that you’ve made in your college days. We at Zaffingo aim to create a strong yearbook-making culture in the country with the help of our powerful technology and user-friendly interface. We had realized that the process of yearbook-making in India is hassling and tedious, with data-collection being a huge challenge for most colleges, including our own. We wanted to create something that could not only make this process simple, but also fun and memorable. It took us months to brainstorm and come up with something that serves as a one-stop solution for all colleges and schools across the country.”

Zaffingo is a self-funded venture and is currently in its beta stage. Apart from colleges and schools, it is open to taking orders from teams of college festivals, clubs and even companies to create what is called a ‘Teambook’. At the end of the book-making process, people can either choose to buy a hard-copy or a soft-copy, or even both, as per their requirements.



The founding team

Zaffingo has been founded by two pre-final year undergraduates from IIT Guwahati, Tathagat Lokhande and Shikhar Saxena. Shikhar had earlier been a part of Wishpicker.com, the startup that was acquired by Snapdeal recently. He, along with Tathagat had realized the need for an online yearbook making portal and wanted to create something that could be used by all colleges and schools across the country. They were soon joined by two kick-ass designers from IIT Guwahati itself, Charmie Kapoor and Chinmay Anand. Since their launch, they've managed to grab a lot of eyeballs with a lot of positive feedback coming their way.