Newspaper Clips

May 17, 2011

Hindustan Times ND 17/05/2011
P-15

Did staff help IIT students in cheating?

PROBE Team to check if staff helped students at a Bathinda centre cheat

Charu Sudan Kasturi
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NEW DELHI: The Indian Institutes of Technology (IIT) are probing whether administrators or faculty from among them within the premier engineering schools facilitated mass cheating in the IIT Joint Entrance Examination last month at a Bathinda test centre.

The Joint Admission Board of the IITs has set up a two-member panel to investigate the role of IIT representatives assigned to oversee the conduct of the examination at the centre.

But preliminary findings suggest that the cheating may not only be limited to the Bathinda centre, the Giani Zail Singh College of Engineering and Technology (GZSIET).

An initial three-member probe by an IIT Roorkee team has established that invigilators and other officials at the GZSIET helped select students in one examination hall cheat, and gave them extra time to answer the question papers.

But the decision by the JAB — the highest admissions related body of the IITs — to set up the new two-member probe committee comes after the initial complainant raised fresh concerns.

INITIAL PROBE SAYS INVIGILATORS GAVE STUDENTS EXTRA TIME TO ANSWER THE QUESTION PAPERS

The complainant, Vipin Gupta, who first raised the alarm over cheating at the Bathinda centre, has in a letter to the JAB chairman — IIT Kanpur director Sanjay Dhande questioned how all the cheating beneficiaries were conveniently seated in the same room.

The seating arrangement is based on roll numbers assigned by the IITs, and any rigging of the seating raises questions of larger complicity of senior IIT administrators.

Gupta has also alleged that the daughter of the IIT Roorkee observer at the centre studies at the GZSIET.

He has also alleged that the girl identified as one of the beneficiaries of the cheating is the daughter of a staffer at the GZSIET, who may have been in a position to influence the IIT observer since his daughter allegedly studied there.

The IITs have already decided to temporarily withhold the results of all 30 students who appeared for the IIT-JEE in that room.

TRIBUNE ND 17 MAY 2011 P1

Mass copying: IITs blacklist Bathinda engg college

Bar principal, erring professors of premier institute from future academic collaborations

ADITI TANDON/TNS

NEW DELHI, MAY 16

In a major embarrassment to Punjab, the Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) today blacklisted a premiere engineering college in Bathinda and debarred its principal and two teachers from all future academic collaborations after finding them guilty of aiding mass copying during the Joint Entrance Exam (JEE) held at the institute on April 10 this year.

Giani Zail Singh College of Engineering and Technology, Dabwali Road, Bathinda, will henceforth be blacklisted for conducting any examination pertaining to the IIT system.

Further, the IITs have permanently debarred college principal Balwinder Singh Sidhu, Mukesh Grover and Preet Inder Kaur, the invigilators on duty at room number S-0 where mass copying took place on April 10.

The decision follows the report of a fact-finding committee set up by the IITs after complaints that the invigilators had blatantly assisted certain students (roll numbers mentioned in the report) with answers, allowing them extra time after the exam.

The committee was constituted on the complaint of Kotkapura resident Vipin Gupta, whose daughter Vatsa Gupta, also a JEE candidate, witnessed Grover helping a woman candidate (later found to be the daughter of the college clerk) and several other students. Oddly, they had consecutive roll numbers that enabled them to sit in a "friendly" room. The other invigilator on duty, Preet Inder Kaur, allegedly looked the other way.

Chairman, Joint Admission Board, JEE 2011, Sanjay Dhande, who is Director, IIT Kanpur, said: "After a detailed analysis of facts brought out by the committee, the complaints of providing unfair help by one of the invigilators in presence of the other in room number S-0 of the centre to some candidates in general and one Heenu Bansal in particular as well as of allowing extra time to some candidates stand proved.

"It also appears that the other officials may have some complicity in the matter. A single person could not have the freedom to help

Continued on page 11

The college stands barred from conducting:

- The all-India Graduate Aptitude Test in Engineering (GATE)
- The Joint Admission Test (JAM) to select students for MSc
- Joint Management Entrance Test (JMET) for admission to MBA
- The all-India Common Entrance Examination for Design (CEED)

Mass copying in JEE...

From page 1

certain candidates." While barring the institute and its teachers and principals today, the IITs formed a new committee to investigate the role of other institute representatives involved in the conduct of JEE-2011. Complainants have sought an inquiry into the nexus between IIT observers and the institute authorities.

Meanwhile, the college stands barred from conducting the all-India Graduate Aptitude Test in Engineeringheld jointly by the Indian Institute of Science and seven IITs; Joint Admission Test for MSc and post-BSc programmes; Joint Management Entrance Test for admission to MBAs in IITs and the all-India Common Entrance Examination for Design.

Asian Age ND
17/05/2011
P-5

Full marks for wrong question: IIT

Kanpur, May. 16: Admitting mistakes in the IIT-JEE maths paper, the IIT administration on Tuesday said that all aspirants will get full marks for the two questions in which errors were reported.

The decision was taken on the report submitted by a committee, constituted by the IIT administration to probe into the mistakes in the maths paper, IIT Kanpur director Sanjay Govind Dhande said.

Prof. Dhande asserted that students will not suffer due to any administrative snag.

When asked how much marks the two questions carried, he said he was not aware of the marking scheme. *—PTI*

Financial Chronicle ND
17/05/2011 P-10

Full mark for wrong JEE question

Admitting mistakes in the IIT-JEE maths paper, the IIT administration Monday said that all aspirants will get full marks for the two questions in which errors were reported.

Hindustan Times ND 17/05/2011

P-9

'Full marks for wrong questions in IIT exam'

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The decision was taken on the basis of the report submitted by a committee constituted by the IIT administration to probe the mistakes in the maths paper, said IIT Kanpur Director Sanjay Govind Dhande.

Prof. Dhande asserted that students will not suffer due to an administrative snag. Asked how many marks the two questions carried, he said he was not aware of the marking scheme.

Candidates who did not attempt those questions will also get marks as the questions did not carry any negative marking, Prof. Dhande said.

IIT-Kanpur had constituted a committee after three IIT-JEE aspirants lodged complaints alleging errors in two maths questions. The committee found that out of the two mistakes, one was a printing error while in the other the sentence was wrongly framed, Prof. Dhande said. The JEE results will come out on the scheduled date of May 25, he added.

Meanwhile, the JEE model answer sheet was also uploaded on the IIT-Kanpur website. - PTI

Hindu ND 17/05/2011 P-5

Career Options for Engineering Graduates

After engineering degree there are several career options for engineers like Indian Engineering Services, Master Degree (through GATE), Public Sector Enterprises (like NTPC, ONGC, IOCL, BPCL, HPCL, BARC, DRDO etc), Civil Services, State Engineering Services, MBA, Banking Sector, Defense Services, higher study abroad through GRE and GMAT.

For Central Government jobs through Engineering Services Examination a candidate is required to have good technical knowledge, general awareness and a sound personality. The best part of the services is that a candidate enjoys good job satisfaction and career growth due to use of technical knowledge and management skills both.

Through Engineering Services a candidate will get job in most reputed government departments like Indian Railways, Military Engineering Services, Central Engineering Services, Telecommunication Department, Central Water Services etc. Engineering Services Examination is a combined examination for engineering graduates conducted by UPSC every year in the month of May/June.

MADE EASY, a coaching institute having its centres at Delhi, Noida, Hyderabad & Bhopal offers career guidance through Classroom and Postal Coaching Programmes. MADE EASY Group is lead by its Managing Director Mr. B. Singh, who himself has qualified Engineering Services Examinations 3 times and has wide experience in providing guidance to engineering graduates.

MADE EASY also offers courses for GATE, Public Sector Examinations and other competitive examinations for engineers. Every year thousands of engineering graduates take career guidance from MADE EASY and get selected in above departments.

In Engineering Services 2010 examinations MADE EASY students secured more than half of the seats (every second selection in IES 2010 is from MADE EASY) including toppers. Details are available at www.madeeasy.in

In GATE 2011 examination also MADE EASY Students have secured top ranks and many of them have fair chances for getting admissions in most prestigious institutions like IISc and IITs in M.Tech.

B. SINGH (EX. IES)
CMD, MADE EASY GROUP

Hindustan Times ND 17/05/2011 P-5

FROM THE HIGH COURT

Semester system in the interest of students, says HC

LAST CHANCE Asks teachers to stop protests immediately, get back to classes

Harish V Nair
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NEW DELHI: The Delhi High Court (HC) on Monday gave teachers of the Delhi University the last chance to withdraw protests and conduct classes in semester mode immediately.

But agitating teachers also got some relief, as the court — for the time being — refrained from initiating contempt of court proceedings against them.

The agitating teachers had not kept their promise of desisting from protests till the court took a final stand on the validity of the varsity's ordinance for implementation of the system in the science and arts streams.

Significantly, the court reiterated that, "We cannot, at present, ignore the stand of the university that the semester system is in the interest of students." A bench of chief justice Dipak Misra and justice Sanjiv Khanna said, "We may repeat that teachers are expected to be role models for students. They are required to respect the orders of the court and cannot be a law unto themselves."

■ Delhi University teachers have been protesting against the implementation of the semester system. HT FILE PHOTO

The bench further observed, "At present, we are not inclined to proceed for contempt, but we command that all teachers of DU should cooperate in all aspects and teach in the semester mode and not proceed on the path of deviation, which would, in the slightest manner, bring them in the net of violators of the orders of the Court."

The bench said, "We hope and trust that the teaching community — which is expected to be a disciplined one — shall not compel this court to take any stringent action, owing to their conduct or action in future. They should await the verdict of this court," said the Bench.

Lawyer Prashant Bhushan, appearing on behalf of the protesting teachers, said the system had been brought in "without following the due process of law and there wasn't even a proper debate before its implementation." The court also warned the teachers that they "shall not even harbour the notion of peaceful protest by teaching outside the classrooms or in tents."

AGITATING TEACHERS GOT SOME RELIEF FROM THE COURT, THOUGH, AS IT REFRAINED FROM INITIATING CONTEMPT ACTION AGAINST THEM

Meanwhile, the university said that the implementation of the semester system had never been stayed by the court. It added that the teachers had defied the earlier directions not to organise protests, till the court pronounced its final verdict and therefore it amounted to clear contempt of court.

Indian Express, ND 17-May-11 P-17

In Asia, e-learning clicks

Open universities have long been part of Asia's higher education landscape, but the number has been growing rapidly in recent years

LIZ GOOCH
KUALA LUMPUR

ON the island of Fuvahmulak in the Maldives, a cluster of islands in the Indian Ocean, Abdulla Rasheed Ahmed's options for acquiring a doctoral degree were somewhat limited. The nearest university is an hour's flight from his home. And in any case, it doesn't offer a doctorate in education, the programme Abdulla, a school principal, wanted to pursue.

Having already taken time off to complete his bachelor's and master's degrees in Malaysia, Abdulla was reluctant to take more time away from his job or family, so he enrolled in Asia e University, an institution in Kuala Lumpur that offers online courses. "Studying online is very suitable for working people," Abdulla said. "You can study anytime, anywhere, regardless of your location."

Some universities have long specialised in such distance education, but now more homegrown Asian institutions are seeking to tap the demand for higher education in underserved areas. And as Internet connectivity spreads, more students like Abdulla are realising that their education options are no longer bound by geographical constraints—or even by the older model of distance learning, in which students received bundles of course materials in the mail.

"It has really taken the 'distance' out of distance education," said Wong Tat Meng, president of the Asian Association of Open Universities, who is vice chancellor of Wawasan Open University in Malaysia.

Universities around the world have jumped on the e-learning bandwagon to varying degrees, from posting course materials online to making participation in online discussion forums an assessable course component.

Yet some education experts say such programmes are not a panacea in removing barriers to a university education. Poor Internet service in many parts of Asia, particularly rural areas, remains a problem, leaving many students unreachable. In addition, online universities, they say, face many challenges, from competing with the more established campus-based universities to building a credible reputation in an environment saturated with schools of questionable qualifications.

Open universities, or institutions that specialise in distance education, have long been part of Asia's higher education landscape, but the number has grown rapidly in recent years, especially in China and India, according to Wong.

He said the Internet had led to a "quantum leap" for distance education providers, particularly in places with good broadband infrastructure like South Korea, Japan, Hong Kong and Singapore. South Korea, Wong said, was the most advanced Asian country in terms of e-learning, with a number of universities delivering courses entirely online. He said China, which is home to 68 online colleges, is rapidly becoming a major player.

Wong believes that demand for higher education in South Korea and China, coupled with the fact that these countries have high-speed broadband in major cities, was driving the increase in online providers.

"Many working adults simply do not have the time to attend face-to-face lectures delivered in conventional universities," he said. "Also, governments simply cannot build sufficient brick-and-mortar universities fast enough to meet the huge demand for knowledge workers needed to drive the knowledge economy."

It is this demand for education that Asia e University is seeking to meet. The university was established in 2008 under the Asia Cooperation Dialogue, a grouping of 31 countries, with the aim of giving more students the opportunity to complete higher education. The Malaysian government finances the university's headquarters in Kuala Lumpur, while public and private partners finance the operations in the various countries where its courses are offered.

"Our focus is to provide access," said Ansary Ahmed, the university's president and chief executive. "There are still many countries in Asia where the participation rates of the population going to university is still low."

The university expects the online-only path to become increasingly popular, but with students found in places as diverse as Indonesia, Cambodia, Bahrain, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, Ansary said the extent to which students completed their studies online was often determined by broadband access and their proficiency in English.

One advantage of online courses, Ansary said, is that there are no restrictions on the number of students who can enroll.

One of the challenges facing universities that provide online courses is proving that their courses are credible.

While institutions like Asia e University and Wawasan Open University are approved by the Malaysian Qualifications Agency, Ansary said it could be more difficult to convince people of the quality of online education in countries that lacked rigorous quality assurance mechanisms.

G. Dhanarajan, an education consultant with the Asian Development Bank and honorary director of the Institute for Research and Innovation at Wawasan Open University, said acceptance of online learning was greater for professional development courses, like information technology or accounting, than for degree qualifications.

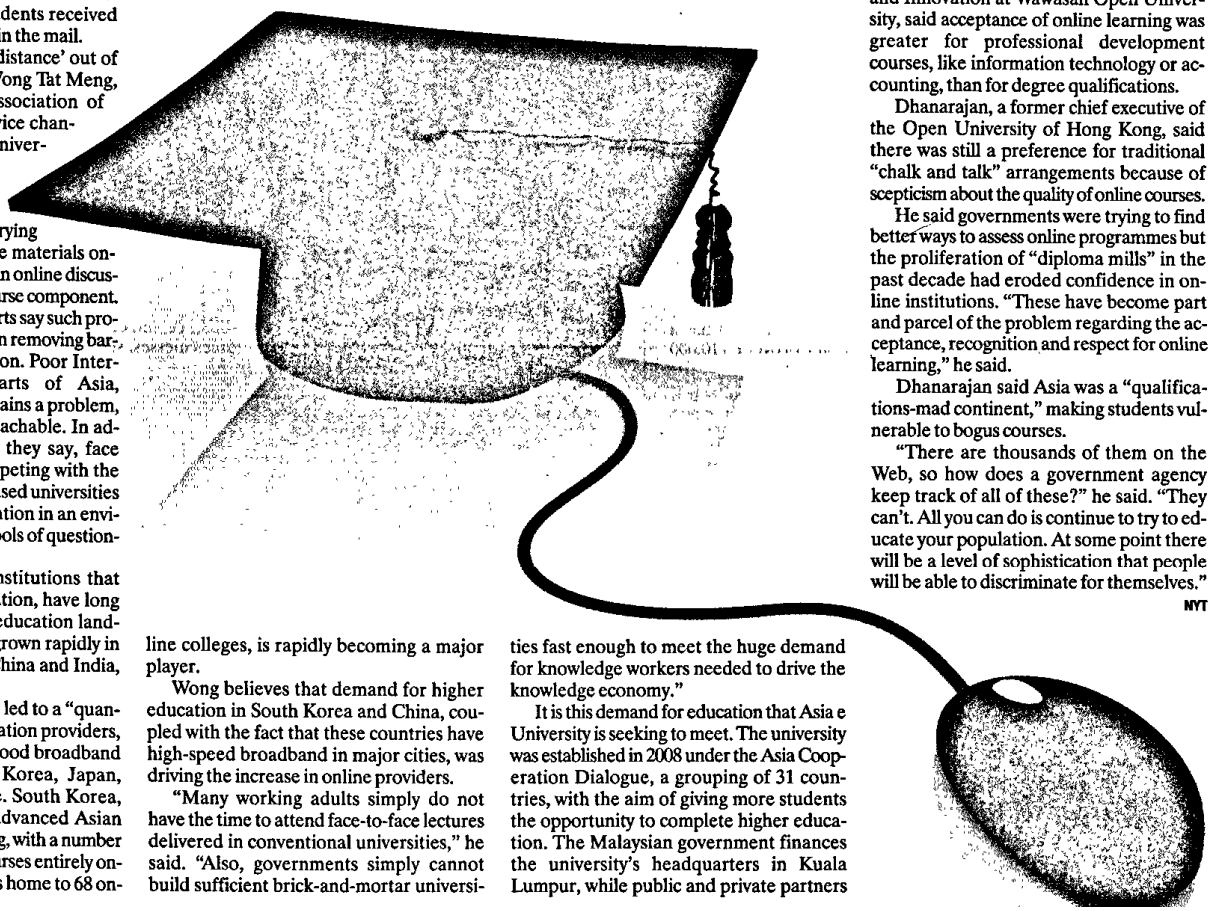
Dhanarajan, a former chief executive of the Open University of Hong Kong, said there was still a preference for traditional "chalk and talk" arrangements because of scepticism about the quality of online courses.

He said governments were trying to find better ways to assess online programmes but the proliferation of "diploma mills" in the past decade had eroded confidence in online institutions. "These have become part and parcel of the problem regarding the acceptance, recognition and respect for online learning," he said.

Dhanarajan said Asia was a "qualifications-mad continent," making students vulnerable to bogus courses.

"There are thousands of them on the Web, so how does a government agency keep track of all of these?" he said. "They can't. All you can do is continue to try to educate your population. At some point there will be a level of sophistication that people will be able to discriminate for themselves."

NYT



Financial Chronicle ND 17/05/2011 P-10

Authors, lawyers at ISB for 1-yr degree

Class of '12 has scuba divers, fashion designers

TRUSHNA UDGIRKAR
Hyderabad

Pallavi

For a few years now, Indian School of Business has been attracting eclectic talents for its flagship one-year management programme. This year has been no different.

The list of students who chose management to leapfrog in their career includes authors, lawyers, fashion designers, architects, doctors and even scuba divers.

Billiards enthusiast Ravinder Pal Singh, who authored the book 'I too had a love story', is now at ISB to hone his management skills.

Similarly T-shirt maker Nikhil Acharya, whose movie 'Untitled' won accolades at the Australian youth summit, is also part of the class of 2012, which completed its orientation recently. In all, ISB has 579 students.

The students are now gearing up for the academic crunching, which at the end of the course can help them fetch top-notch positions in their companies. A large chunk of students are from the IT and ITeS industries, comprising around 18 per cent of the class. Staff of banks and financial institutions accounts for 14 per cent, FMCG & retail sector professionals 6 per cent and government and public sector employees constitute 3 per cent of the total strength. As many as eight per cent students happen to be self-employed.

Rest of the class comprises professionals from telecom, energy, hospitality, healthcare, manufacturing and advertising sectors.

"The school ensures that diversity in the class is maintained in terms of industry, gender, age and work experience. While we cannot engineer diversity at the time of applications, we reach out to undergraduates accordingly prior to two or three years ahead. This helps seed the diversity comfortably," said Vinod Menon, director for admissions at Indian School of Business.

Interestingly, this year women comprise 29 per cent of the classroom, slightly higher than what it was last year. Also, there are 31 international students, nine of them from the USA. With an average work experience of five years, the class comprises 362 engineers.

The Hyderabad-based business school, which will begin admissions at its new campus in Mohali in 2013, would now focus on international students too. The school had earlier joined hands with Asian business schools such as CEIBS (China), NTU (Singapore) and HKUST (Hong Kong) to jointly market in other countries to attract students.

Typically, the CTC (cost-to-company) of a student goes up by 2.3 to 2.4 times after the placements at the end of the academic session, the business school claimed.

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Hindu ND 17/05/2011 P-11

'Education is a necessary but not a sufficient basis for social mobility'

Interview with **Craig Jeffrey**, an Oxford academic.

Has wider access to education increased social mobility in India? How much does the class still matter in India even though the constitution guarantees equality of opportunities to all? And what does the future hold for those who don't come from the "right" class or have the "right" connections?

Oxford academic **Craig Jeffrey**, *who spent several years in India and has written a book* Timepass: Youth, Class, and the Politics of Waiting in India *(Stanford University Press, California) examining the lives of middle class Indian youth, answers these and a host of other questions in a conversation with* **Hasan Suroor**.

The title of the book is a take on what he describes as "a prevailing culture of boredom" in Indian cities where young graduates "regard themselves as 'timepass youth,' just waiting for something to happen."

A fellow and tutor in Geography at St. John's College, Dr. Jeffrey speaks fluent Hindi and Urdu.

In Britain there's a debate going on about class and mobility and studies have shown that formal education has not necessarily led to mobility and that class still matters. What does your search say about India?

I argue that education is a necessary but not a sufficient basis for social mobility. Large numbers of young people acquire high school diplomas or degrees in India but not all of these youth can obtain the secure, salaried jobs that they have been led to expect. Education provides a sense of entitlement but not always the problem-solving skills that allow young people to start businesses. This is particularly a problem in north India, where education is widely available but opportunities for social mobility rather rare. People have in a sense "discovered" education at almost the precise moment at which formal schooling has ceased to be a passport to success.

Class is crucial. If you are from the right class, there is always a good "fallback job" available when you leave education. If you are from a poorer background, you are much less likely to be able to turn your university degree into a good job.

As a western academic from one of the world's most famous universities and being used to an academic culture which is very different from what obtains in India, what struck you as the most unusual feature or features of Indian academic environment?

Indian higher education suffers from a lack of continuous assessment and active learning. Teachers and students tend to focus on examinations and curricular review tends to be slow. These aspects of India's mainstream educational scene reflect colonialism. As Krishna Kumar (well-known educationist) has pointed out, the British introduced subjects and curricula that were alien to the Indian milieu, and teachers and students responded in part through adopting strategies of rote memorisation and by concentrating on exam success.

CRAIG JEFFREY: *"Class is crucial. If you are from the right class, there is always a good 'fallback job' available when you leave education."* — PHOTO: LEE ATHERTON

But it is important not to put the U.K., or Oxford, on a pedestal. We are facing our own problems: cuts in budgets, the bureaucratisation of the university, and pressure for academics to demonstrate how their research will contribute to the national economy. Reading the recent work of Pratap Bhanu Mehta and Devesh Kapur on Indian higher education alongside commentaries on higher education in the U.K. is to become aware of some striking similarities between the two countries.

Some of the problems you raise in your book such as the often dubious teaching practices and what you describe as a "sense of ennui and disillusionment" among university students are a result of the massification of higher education in India in the 1970s. The insistence on a university degree was a clever political trick intended to keep the youth out of a tight job market for as long as possible. This led to a dumbing down of higher education and most universities ended up simply as factories to produce degree holders with no regard for academic excellence. Is Britain in danger of repeating the same mistake by encouraging everyone to go to university in the name of egalitarianism?

Some American scholars have argued that higher education serves to "cool out" the young. Students enter college imagining that they are going to become the President of the USA and leave accepting that they will acquire a low-paid clerical job in the retail sector. Colleges actually teach them to lower their ambitions. The same thing seems to be happening in India among some of the young men with whom I worked. Through acquiring a string of degrees, they slowly come to accept that their education is not going to provide a portal to riches or fame, and they ultimately return to a family farm or engage in low-paid white-collar work in the informal economy – "fallback jobs." This is also happening in higher education in the U.K.

In your book you focus on a specific class of students from north-west U.P. but many of the issues that you identify with them – the notion of "timepass," collusion between self-appointed student leaders and government and university officials and the phenomenon of student "fixers" – are a common feature of Indian campus life. Why did you choose the Jats for your research?

In the mid-1990s I came to India to study the Green Revolution, and academics in Delhi advised me to work with the Jats in western Uttar Pradesh. I settled on Meerut district as a base and started to conduct research on how rich Jat farmers were investing the profits they had obtained from the Green Revolution. I quickly became more interested in how rich Jat farmers were investing in their families, especially via education. Many rich farmers were channelling huge sums of money into obtaining private education for their children in urban schools. When I wanted to study urban unemployment in 2004-2005, it seemed obvious to return to Meerut. I was able to interview some of the Jat schoolboys I had met in 1996, who were now college youth in Meerut, often doing "timepass." Understandably many of their parents perceived this timepass in highly negative terms – as the lack of a "return" on their investment.

On the basis of your research, how socially mobile does Indian society appear to you?

I am afraid I'm rather pessimistic about social mobility, both in terms of gender and caste/class. Wealthy Jats continue to outcompete poorer Jats, Dalits and women in the competition for prestigious educational qualifications, good jobs, and local political power. One interesting development, however, is the rise of Dalit youth who act as intermediaries for the poor and cultural brokers, politicising rural populations.

I have also seen that in universities young men often come together across religious and caste boundaries to develop youth cultures and protest about corruption and educational commercialisation. On street corners in Meerut I often saw higher castes and low castes, Hindus and Muslims, sharing snacks and cigarettes. This is hardly "mobility," but it does suggest that youth are sometimes willing to challenge received ideas about caste and religion. "Timepass" is not just about hopelessness. Waiting may be the seedbed in which new cultural and political projects take root.

E-Degrees Come of Age in Asia

Some universities have long specialised in distance education. But now more home-grown Asian institutions are seeking to tap demand for higher education in underserved areas

LIZ GOOCH
KUALA LUMPUR

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"Studying online is very suitable for working people," Abdulla said in a telephone interview. "You can study at anytime, anywhere, regardless of your location."

Some universities have long specialised in such distance education, but now more homegrown Asian institutions are seeking to tap the demand for higher education in underserved areas. And as Internet connectivity spreads, more students like Mr. Abdulla are realising that their education options are no longer bound by geographical constraints — or even by the older model of distance learning, in which students received bundles of course materials in the mail.

"It has really taken the 'distance' out of distance education," said Wong Tat Meng, president of the Asian Association of Open Universities, who is vice chancellor of Wawasan Open University in Malaysia. Universities around the world have jumped on the e-learning bandwagon to varying degrees, from posting course materials online to making participation in online discussion forums an assessable course component.

Many working adults simply do not have the time to attend face-to-face lectures delivered in conventional universities. Also, governments simply cannot build sufficient brick-and-mortar universities fast enough to meet the huge for knowledge workers needed to drive the knowledge economy.

WONG TATMENG
Presedent, Asian Association of Open Universities

Yet some education experts say such programs are not a panacea in removing barriers to a university education. Poor Internet service in many parts of Asia, particularly rural areas, remains a problem, leaving many students unreachable. In addition, online universities, they say, face many challenges, from competing with the more established campus-based universities to building a credible reputation in an environment saturated with schools of questionable qualifications. Open universities, or institutions that specialise in distance education, have long been part of Asia's higher education landscape, but the number has grown rapidly in recent years, especially in China and India, according to Wong. He said the Internet had led to a "quantum leap" for distance education providers, particularly in places with good broadband infrastructure like South Korea, Japan, Hong Kong and Singapore.

South Korea, Wong said, was the most advanced Asian country in terms of e-learning, with a number of universities delivering courses entirely online.

He said China, which is home to 68 online colleges, is rapidly becoming a major player. Wong believes that demand for higher education in South Korea and China, coupled with the fact that these countries have high-speed broadband in major cities, was driving the increase in online providers.

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The Malaysian government finances the university's headquarters in Kuala Lumpur, while public and private partners finance the operations in the various countries where its courses are offered. Its motto is "by Asians for Asians." "Our focus is to provide access," said Ansary Ahmed, the university's president and chief executive. "There are still many countries in Asia where the participation rates of the population going to university is still low."

Some students, like some of those in India and the Malaysian states of Sabah and Sarawak on the island of Borneo, already study entirely online, but most of the university's 5,000 students are enrolled in blend of online learning and face-to-face sessions at learning centers in the students' home countries.

The university expects the online-only path to become increasingly popular, but with students found in places as diverse as Indonesia, Cambodia, Bahrain, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, Mr. Ansary said the extent to which students completed their studies online was often determined by broadband access and their proficiency in English.

"Wherever we have a language problem, there's less online and more blended," he said. The university has developed its own courses but is increasingly working with universities around the world. It recently began offering a joint MBA program with the International Business School of Scandinavia in Denmark. One advantage of online courses, Ansary said, is that there are no restrictions on the number of students who can enroll. One of the challenges facing universities that provide online courses is proving that their courses are credible. While institutions like Asia e University and Wawasan Open University are approved by the Malaysian Qualifications Agency, Ansary said it could be more difficult to convince people of the quality of online education in countries that lacked rigorous quality assurance mechanisms.

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"These have become part and parcel of the problem regarding the acceptance, recognition and respect for online learning," he said. Dhanarajan said Asia was a "qualifications-mad continent," making students vulnerable to bogus courses.

New York Times News Service

ECONOMIC TIMES ND 17-May-11 P4

Programmable & Pretty Personal Robot Is Here

An open-source effort, you can make her do anything by simply writing an app for her

Are You Being Served?

Luna's Features

Computer Processor: Dual Core Atom 2 GHz
Graphics: nVidia 94000M
Storage capacity: 8 GB Flash, expandable to 32 GB
Wireless: WI-FI (802.11g), optional Bluetooth via Luna Expansion Port (LXP)
Cellular comm.: Optional 3G or 4G via Luna Expansion Port (LXP)
Operating system: LunaOS (includes Poky Linux, ROS, and other packages)

INPUT/OUTPUT

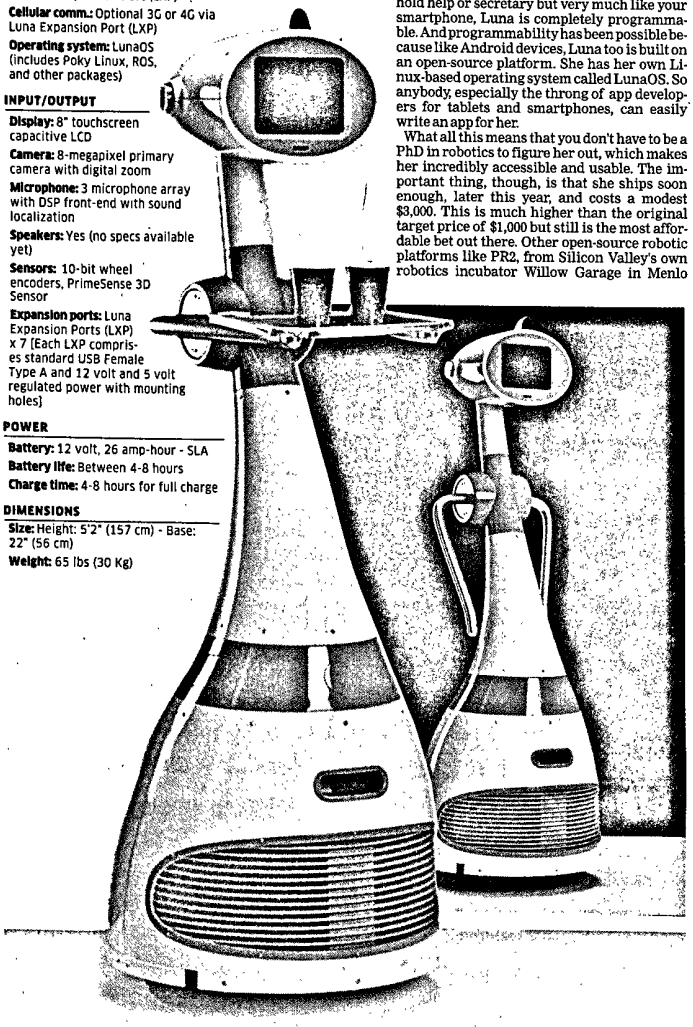
Display: 8" touchscreen capacitive LCD
Camera: 8-megapixel primary camera with digital zoom
Microphone: 3 microphone array with DSP front-end with sound localization
Speakers: Yes (no specs available yet)
Sensors: 10-bit wheel encoders, PrimeSense 3D Sensor
Expansion ports: Luna Expansion Ports (LXP) x 7 (Each LXP comprises standard USB Female Type A and 12 volt and 5 volt regulated power with mounting holes)

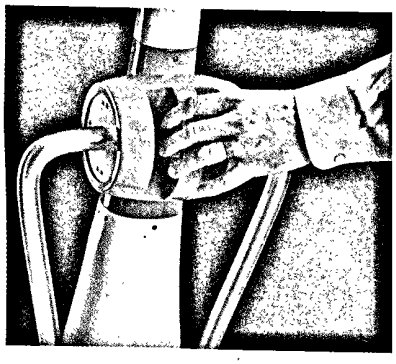
POWER

Battery: 12 volt, 26 amp-hour - SLA
Battery life: Between 4-8 hours
Charge time: 4-8 hours for full charge

DIMENSIONS

Size: Height: 5'2" (157 cm) - Base: 22" (56 cm)
Weight: 65 lbs (30 Kg)





With Luna, we want to tell people that if you know how to make apps, we have a beautiful, a standards-based and open system that is very affordable. And by letting people focus on app-making and not robot-making, we can finally have a personal robotics industry. Though other robots can be 'programmed' to do a song and dance for entertainment purposes, none of them can solve any real world problems

FRED NIKGOHAR
Luna's Creator

RITUPARNA CHATTERJEE
SAN FRANCISCO

A few days back, the robotics community at Silicon Valley got a glimpse of a pretty, and personal, robot called Luna. For those of us who have been dreaming of a robot that will relieve us of all kinds of dull household chores, it is time for you to meet her as well.

This 5'2" tall humanoid can do pretty much any task around the house – if you simply can write an app for her to do so. Unlike your household help or secretary but very much like your smartphone, Luna is completely programmable. And programmability has been possible because like Android devices, Luna too is built on an open-source platform. She has her own Linux-based operating system called LunaOS. So anybody, especially the throng of app developers for tablets and smartphones, can easily write an app for her.

What all this means that you don't have to be a PhD in robotics to figure her out, which makes her incredibly accessible and usable. The important thing, though, is that she ships soon enough, later this year, and costs a modest $3,000. This is much higher than the original target price of $1,000 but still is the most affordable bet out there. Other open-source robotic platforms like PR2, from Silicon Valley's own robotics incubator Willow Garage in Menlo Park, cost a whopping $400,000. This hefty tag defeats the whole point of open source robotics, which is supposed to encourage hobbyists and developers to contribute.

Robotics can grow rapidly only if it is open source – just as the Android platform grew exponentially for smartphones and app development primarily because it is based on an open source platform. "The accessible tag and elepresence capabilities are likely to get consumer attention. The open source coding is just the icing on the cake," says Larry Fisher, Research Director at NextGen Research, ABI Research's wing on upcoming technologies.

MARKET DYNAMICS

No wonder that people are saying that Luna could revolutionise personal robotics in the same way Android-based phones and iPhones kick-started the smartphone market. Personal robotics has not picked up as much as industrial, military and medical robotics. This explains why a rumour that Apple or Google was developing Luna has been floating around since the RoboGames conference last month. Now we know that it is being developed by neither technology giant but by an unheard of Southern California start-up called RoboDynamics.

"With Luna, we want to tell people that if you know how to make apps, we have a beautiful, a standards-based and open system that is very affordable. And by letting people focus on app-making and not robot-making, we can finally have a personal robotics industry," says Fred Nikgohar, Luna's creator and CEO of RoboDynamics. Much of the personal robots in today's market are limited to toys like Pleo, hobby kits like PR2 and vacuum cleaners like iRobot's Roomba.

"Though these can be 'programmed' to do a song and dance for entertainment purposes, none of them can solve any real world problems. And even then, one has to be a robotics expert to do so," says Nikgohar. ABI Research estimates that the personal robot market will grow to over $19 billion in 2017, led primarily by telepresence and security robots – complete with high-quality cameras, microphones, sensors and processors which allow these robots to serve as interactive substitutes for humans.

WHAT CAN LUNA DO?

Luna can carry a trayfull of drinks for your guests. But telepresence is one of her most obvious functions. So if you're on a business trip, you could use Luna to interact with your family at home. Or a family could use the robot to check in with an elderly family member or a loved one in a more real way than a telephone might allow you too. A business person could remotely review activities and inventory in distant factories, warehouses without needing to make expensive and cumbersome business trips.

"My boss in London could use it to peek over my shoulder and see what I'm working on here in the US," says Fisher. That sounds an awful lot like QB, a telepresence robot by Valley startup Anybots. A bit of a Silicon Valley celebrity, QB walks around offices and lets you peek wherever you wish to, have conferences and conversations. Experts have hailed it as the future of work. At $15,000, it might cost more but has endured tough tests by the likes of NASA is completely ready and already out there in the market. Anybots' maker Trevor Blackwell declined to comment.

THE FUTURE

Nikgohar meanwhile dreams that within a decade every home will have a personal robot. But this depends on just how durable his robot is, how much computing power it has, how good its Wi-Fi, bluetooth and 3G/4G connections are, how reliable its sensors are and how accurate its navigation skills are.

"I think it will sell better when they offer cleaning attachments," says Fisher. But unlike an industrial or a military robot, what is most important for a home robot is the quality of human interaction, something personal robotics is yet to master. As for Luna, we still don't yet know how friendly she is either. "Key to success will be understanding human-robot interaction," says Ronald C. Arkin, a robotics professor at Georgia Tech and a roboticist with the IEEE technological standards society. Sony had consulted Arkin for its AIBO project. Now discontinued, AIBO was one of the earliest personal robots, made precisely for human-bot interactions.

Like Luna, the bot pet puppy from Sony could walk around. But it also picked up bits of English and Spanish while learning stuff from the environment. "AIBO was less expensive in its day and had pretty solid user adoptions," says Arkin.

Times of India ND
17-May-11 P-19

'Master switch' for obesity found, raises hope for diabetes cure

London: Scientists have found that a gene linked to diabetes and cholesterol is a "master switch" that controls other genes found in fat in the body, and say it should help in the search for treatments for obesity-related diseases.

In a study published in the journal Nature Genetics, the British researchers said that since fat plays an important role in peoples' susceptibility to metabolic diseases like obesity, heart disease and diabetes, the regulating gene could be target for drugs to treat such illnesses.

"This is the first major study that shows how small changes in a master regulator gene can cause a cascade of other metabolic effects in other genes," said Tim Spector of King's College London, who led the study.

Spector's team analyzed 20,000 genes in fat samples taken from under the skin of 800 female twin volunteers. They found a link between a gene called KLF14 and the levels of many other genes found in fat tissue, showing that KLF14 acts as a master switch to control these genes. REUTERS

Times of India ND 17-May-11 P-19

A simple blood test to tell how long you will live

It Measures Structures on Chromosome Tips Called Telomeres, Which Indicate Speed Of Aging

Steve Connor

A blood test that can show how fast someone is aging — and offers the tantalising possibility of estimating how long they have left to live — is to go on sale to the general public in UK later this year.

The controversial test measures vital structures on the tips of a person's chromosomes, called telomeres, which scientists believe are one of the most important and accurate indicators of the speed at which a person is aging.

Scientists behind the £435 test said it will tell whether a person is biologically aging, as measured by the length of their telomeres, and is older or younger than their actual chronological age, as measured by years since birth.

The scientists, however, do not yet believe they can narrow down the prediction to calculate the exact number of months and years a person has yet to live. They do not yet believe the information could be used to calculate the exact number of years a person has left to live, but several studies have indicated that individuals with shorter-than-normal telomeres are likely to die younger than those with longer telomeres.

© FURGOLLE/BSIP/Corbis

BANE OR BOON?

Medical researchers believe that telomere testing will become widespread within the next five or 10 years, but there are already some scientists who question its value and whether there should be stronger ethical controls over its wider use.

In addition to concerns about how people will react to a test for how old they really are, some scientists are worried that telomere testing may be hijacked by unscrupulous organisations trying to peddle unproven anti-aging remedies and other fake elixirs of life.

The results of the tests might also be of interest to companies offering life-insurance policies or medical cover that depend on a person's lifetime risk of falling ill or dying prematurely.

However, there is a growing body of respectable scientific opinion that says testing the length of a person's telomeres could provide vital insights into the risk of dying prematurely from a range of age-related disorders, from cardiovascular disease to Alzheimer's and cancer.

"We know that people who are born with shorter telomeres than normal also have a shorter lifespan," said Maria Blasco of the Spanish National Cancer Research Centre in Madrid, who is the inventor of the new commercial telomere test. "But we don't know whether longer telomeres are going to give you a longer lifespan. That's not really known in humans."

"What is new about this test is that it is very precise. We can detect very small differences in telomere length and it is a very simple and fast technique where many samples can be analysed at the same time. Most importantly, we are able to determine the presence of dangerous telomeres — those that are very short."

Blasco's company, Life Length, is in talks with companies across Europe to market the test and collect blood samples for analysis. THE INDEPENDENT

Times of India ND 17-May-11 P-12

Indian kids beat global science geeks

Manas Gupta | TNN

Los Angeles: A 16-year-old boy from Chennai bagged the first prize in chemistry at the Intel International Science and Engineering Fair (ISEF), the world's largest international pre-college science competition.

Raghavendra Ramachandran, from Chennai's St. John's International School, won over $9,000 in prize money for his research in the field of drug synthesis.

Some other winners from India included brother-sister duo of Hetal and Ankur Vaishnav from Rajkot, who received the second prize in the environmental-science category for developing a novel and economic way of recycling rexine waste material. Manosij Ghosh from South Point School in Kolkata also got a second prize (mathematical sciences) for his work on integer partitions and sequences.

The global fair, which included over 1,500 students from 65 countries had around nine Indian students participating, most of whom won some award or prize money for their science exhibits. Apart from these, the fair saw many NRI and PIO finalists, many of whom went on to win in their respective categories. Raghavendra, who was ecstatic after his win, told TOI he had missed an entire year of school to focus on his research. The fair was organized by Intel and the Society for Science and the public.

(The correspondent was in LA at the invitation of Intel)

Asteroids to be named after winners

Students who won first and second prize at the Intel ISEF competition, will not only get a windfall in prize money but also have an asteroid named after them. This was announced by Jenifer Evans from MIT's Lincoln Lab at the concluding function of the science fair in LA. TNN

Times of India ND 17-May-11 P-12

New MCI panel faces acid test in revamping med edu

Kounteya Sinha | TNN

New Delhi: The new five-member governing body of the Medical Council of India (MCI) will meet for the first time on Wednesday.

The earlier board's tenure ended on May 15. The biggest challenge for the new board, headed by noted cardiologist Dr K K Talwar is to implement the Common Entrance Test (CET) for undergraduate students and the new medical curriculum. Some members of the former board fear that the move could get thwarted.

"We have submitted all the documents to the ministry, including the revised undergraduate curriculum, CET, post-graduate regulations, codes on medical ethics, accreditation and the concept of Indian Medical Graduate. At least some of them should see the light of day," an ex-member said.

The member added, "A lot of work went into developing India's new medical curriculum and syllabi. About 250 people worked on it, and we had as many as seven working groups."

> "We have submitted all documents to the health ministry, including the revised UG curriculum, CET, codes on medical ethics. At least some of them should see the light of day"
>
> Ex-member | MCI

TOI was the first to report that the ministry would change all the MCI members. Last Friday, the ministry named Dr Talwar as the new chairman of the all-powerful board of governors. Other members include Prof K S Sharma from Tata Memorial Hospital, Prof Harbhajan Singh Rassam from Max Hospital and Dr Rajiv Chintaman Yeravdekar from Symbiosis International University. Dr Talwar told TOI, "I need some time to decide about our main issues."

Sources said the ministry was upset with the Sarin-led governing board's pace of work. It had supposedly failed to increase the number of post-graduate medical seats to the "desired level" in this academic session. "We were surprised that not a single member from the previous board was retained," said an MCI official.

Union health minister Ghulam Nabi Azad was also upset with the earlier board for its unilateral announcement of introduction of the controversial CET. The MCI and the ministry were at odds over the notification, which was later deemed invalid. The notification had sought a single entrance test for MBBS and MD courses offered by all 271 medical colleges in the country, including those under private management. The move had put the ministry under pressure from several states.

The 77-year-old MCI was dissolved after the CBI arrested former MCI president Dr Ketan Desai on April 22, 2010, for accepting a bribe of Rs 2 crore in lieu of recognizing a Punjab medical college.

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AIIMS faculty seeks end to contract jobs

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: A section of the faculty at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) has written to the institute director, Dr R C Deka, asking him to stop the process of contract appointments. Advertisements for contractual appointments in the neurosurgery and ENT department were issued on Friday and interviews were supposed to be held on May 20 for different posts.

"Selection process for regular appointments is already under way, so there should be no hurry for contractual appointments. The obvious motive is to unfairly place the contract appointees in an advantageous position for regular selections," states the letter written to the director by Progress Medicos and Scientists Forum (PMSF). According to the PMSF spokesperson, a senior faculty member of the institute, contract appointments provide no career security for the person and are a sure-fire way of killing institutes for benefiting the private sector.

"It also does not provide future orientation to the people appointed. Those in-charge makes these appointments according to their whims and fancies making the contract appointees susceptible to exploitation, which leads to professional dissatisfaction," he said.

Sources said a similar advertisement for recruitment of doctors in ENT and oncology department was issued in August last year but was withdrawn after it led to protests. Several departments, including neurosurgery, general surgery and urology are facing a shortage of faculty. "The number of patients we treat has increased steadily over the years, but the number of faculty members has declined. We have six vacant posts in neurology," said a faculty member.

Times of India ND 17-May-11 P-9

Sems: All work and no play

DU Semester Count: 16 Weeks Of Teaching In Four Months

Manash Pratim Gohain & Neha Pushkarna | TNN

New Delhi: Colleges are no longer going to be just about having fun, bunking classes, organising fests and going on trips. Once semesters set in from the new session, academics is likely to take precedence over everything else that characterizes college life.

Sixteen weeks of teaching before exams in four months — with internal assessment, discussions, projects, practicals all packed within that time — is surely going to increase the pressure of work and studies on teachers and students. Probably that is one of the visions of the university. But the science students who joined last year and have already been through two semesters felt that all they did in college so far was prepare for the exams.

Delhi University (DU) managed to introduce semesters in only 13 science courses in the 2010-11 academic session because of the anti-semester movement by the teachers. This year, the university intends to introduce semesters to all other streams, including arts, social sciences, mathematical science and commerce. Hence, over 50,000 students will be admitted to various undergraduate courses across DU colleges and live the semester life lived by their science counterparts last year.

So what has been year like for these first-year science students? "Hectic. I took admission to Miranda House as a choice, but we hardly got any time to enjoy the college life or get involved in any co-curricular activities and field trips," said Shruti Gupta, a first-year zoology (honours) student.

And students are of the opinion that sports have no place in the semester system. Mayank Choudhary, a first-year student of BSc (programme), St Stephen's College who is also a basketball player, said: "It is impossible for a sportsperson to survive a semester system because there is no time to make up for the loss undergone while representing the college in tournament. It is not a matter of attendance, but the loss of study cannot be compensated in a semester system without failing the exams."

Many of them took admissions in their favourite colleges for reasons other than academics, but they never got a chance to explore these avenues as the schedule was too tight to even breathe easy.

According to Ananta Joshi, a student of BSc (programme) with computer science, St Stephen's, who had come with 95% marks in Class XII, her dreams, aspirations and morale got shattered. "There was no time for understanding anything in the subject, let alone go into any depth. We simply collected photocopied notes from seniors and tried to memorise them. There was no time to even get to know students of other classes, leave alone think about participating in extra-curricular activities. Our Math teacher fell ill in the second semester, and five different teachers tried to take her classes, but we just could not absorb anything."

But the university is in no mood to relent, especially when the aim is to make the colleges academically strong and internationally acceptable. Those who are positive about the change insist that semesters will add to the quality of education in the university only if students and teachers agree to be on their toes all year round.

P C Jain, principal of Shri Ram College of Commerce, said: "With semesters coming in, our focus will definitely shift. Teachers will know they have to complete the syllabus in 16 weeks. Nobody can just rest for first four months and then get serious about taking classes."

He added: "The intensity of teaching is definitely going to increase now and the lecture system is likely to die. The style of teaching will become student-oriented."

SEMESTER CALENDAR

Semesters introduced in 13 undergraduate science courses in 2010-11. Same to be implemented in other streams like commerce, social sciences and mathematical sciences this academic session. Over 50,000 students will then appear for exams twice every year. Each semester will have 16 weeks of classes and 3 weeks of examination

Semester I	Semester II
Session | July 21 to Dec first week	**Session** | January first week to May third week
Mid-semester break | First to second week of October	**Classes start** | January 3
Dispersal of classes | November third week	**Dispersal of classes** | Mid-April
Preparatory leave and exams | November third week to December second week	**Preparatory leave and exams** | Mid-April to May third week
Declaration of results | December second week to January second week	**Declaration of results** | May third week to June third week
Winter break | December second week to January first week	**Summer break** | May third week to July third week