Newspaper Clips

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Super regulator plan for higher education may be scrapped

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NEW DELHI

After putting on ice the much-hyped, low-cost tablet called Aakash, the human resource development (HRD) ministry is set to junk another plan to establish an autonomous "super regulator" for higher education, championed by Kapil Sibal when he was HRD minister.

There's little enthusiasm in the present dispensation to pursue the plan for the National Commission for Higher Education and Research (NCHER), said two government officials with knowledge of the situation. M.M. Pallam Raju took over as HRD minister in October last year after a cabinet reshuffle.

Sibal, who is minister for communications and information technology, as well as law, had pushed the plan for the creation of NCHER, meant to be an overarching body overseeing higher education that would subsume existing regulators such as the University Grants Commission (UGC), the All India Council for Tech-

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Super regulator plan for higher education may be scrapped

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nical Education (AICTE) and National Council of Teacher Education (NCTE).

"The ministry is unwilling to pursue the NCHER plan," said one of the two officials cited above. "There is no point scrapping functioning institutions like UGC, AICTE or NCTE."

Instead, there is a "need to strengthen them", said this official. Neither of the two officials wanted to be named.

Lack of political support has held up several education Bills in Parliament in the last three years. Some of the pending Bills include the Education Tribunal Bill, the Prohibition of Unfair Practices Bill, the National Accreditation Regulatory Authority for Higher Educational Institutions Bill, the Foreign Educational Institutions (Regulation of Entry and Operations) Bill, 2010.

The first official said the Higher Education Research Bill, which provides for setting up NCHER, is back in the HRD ministry after a parliamentary committee suggested that existing regulators not be scrapped. The Bill had sought to repeal the UGC Act, 1956; the AICTE Act, 1987; and the NCTE Act, 1993.

On 3 May, the standing committee said in a report that it strongly favours "continuance of the existence of these vital bodies for effective regulation of higher and technical education".

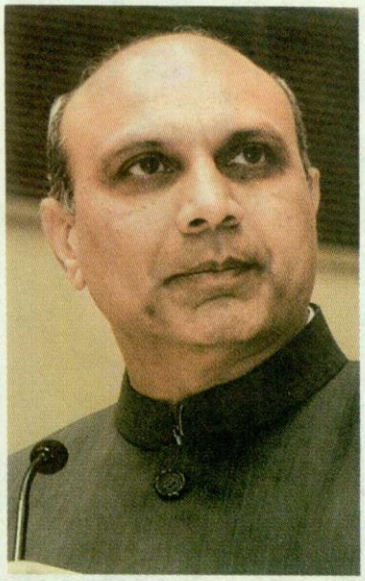
"We have to be practical about what can be achieved and what is tough," said the second official.

The ministry believes that since nearly a dozen Bills are pending in Parliament, there is no point in pursuing those which may not come through in the next two sessions of Parliament.

"In the current situation of key Bills pending in the Parliament, the ministry intends to pursue the reform through executive decisions," the second official added.

The decision to shelve NCHER marks the second reversal for the plans pushed by Sibal when he was HRD minister during 2009-2012. Aakash, the $35 tablet that was pitched as India's solution to bridge the divide between digital haves and have-nots, has been put in cold storage, with Pallam Raju telling reporters in March: "Let's not get obsessed with hardware... The overall (issue) is how we enable students. Let the students decide which device is useful,"

The HRD ministry put up a cabinet note on procuring five million more tablets in 2013, but the note has been returned to the ministry. The plan to float a fresh tender and have the device manufactured by some public sector companies has effectively been stalled, *Mint* reported on 23 March.



New direction: *Pallam Raju.*

"The ministry seems to have realized that Bills and educational policies prepared in haste are not going to achieve success," said H. Chaturvedi, alternate president of Education Promotion Society of India, a lobby group of education institutes.

"The former minister relied more on (a) few bureaucrats without having enough consultations and that's why the Bills are facing criticism from academicians and lawmakers," said Chaturvedi, who is also the director of Birla Institute of Management Technology in Greater Noida.

The existing regulatory system seems set to stay with some changes.

On the HRD ministry's direction, UGC has already issued a notice for mandatory accreditation of all institutions that have either completed six years of existence or have had two batches graduate from it. Previously accreditation was voluntary and less than 20% of the 33,000 colleges are accredited currently.

Unless an institution opts for accreditation, it won't get UGC grants, as per the new guideline.

Similarly, AICTE too will put in place a mechanism for mandatory accreditation of technical institutions. This has happened even as a Bill on mandatory accreditation of educational institutes was pending in Parliament.

Similarly, the HRD ministry is looking to issue an executive order to curb malpractices in educational institutions even as legislation on the subject is awaiting parliamentary approval.

Outside the ministry, there does exist support for status quo.

"There is a bad system in our country that when an old institution is not doing great, the solution is (to) create a new (one)," said Pritam Singh, a former director of the Indian Institute of Management-Lucknow. "I believe AICTE and UGC are good institutions; what is required is to make them enablers of quality education than just regulators."

HT Indore

IIT-I's convocation on Simrol campus

IT'S OFFICIAL Collector says new campus ready for function

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INDORE: Indian Institute of Technology, Indore (IIT-I) seems to have kept its promise to its first outgoing BTech batch by holding their convocation ceremony on Simrol campus.

IIT-I director Pradeep Mathur had earlier told HT: "We have promised our students that their convocation will be held in Simrol even if it has to be conducted in a tent. But we are hopeful that there will be some construction at least till that time to hold the ceremony."

Though the first batch could not get the feel of the campus as the land allotment got stuck in paperwork, the big day would at least be celebrated at the land sanctioned to the IIT-I.

> **We had to get security issues sorted and the district administration has ensured that**
> PRADEEP MATHUR
> IIT-I director

Talking to HT, district collector Akash Tripathi said, "The land allotted to the institute would be the venue. It has been sanitised properly and would be properly guarded." The collector had earlier visited the site to take a stock of the situation.

President Pranab Mukherjee has already accepted the invitation for the convocation ceremony that would be held on June 8. The collector said the construction of helipads was being done and as per the protocol there would be three helipads. "We have informed the President secretariat about the entire programme and they have approved everything right from the reception, dais and schedule," he added.

The director said, "We wanted Simrol to be the venue and this was decided from the very beginning. We just had to get the security issues sorted and the district administration has ensured that."

About 501 acres of land has been allotted to IIT-I at Simrol, nearly 25kms from the city. It is being operated from IET campus of Devi Ahilya Vishwavidyala and one building at PACL campus – both at a distance of nearly 20kms.

Hindustan Times ND 22/05/2013 P-6 Education

'Make long-term goals'

Catch 'em young: IIIT, Hyderabad, provides "the most unique opportunities for students to fulfil their research dreams even at the bachelor's level"

Students should acquire skills for a career that will last for at least 50 years

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Students entering college should think of their long-term goals: goals that go beyond what they do right after the bachelor's degree. They should acquire skills for a career that will last for at least 50 years. BTech or BE is going in the same way as MBBS. While the MBBS allows one to practice medicine, those without advanced specialisation have seriously diminished opportunities. One may get a seemingly high paid job with a bachelor's degree in engineering today, but one's future opportunities will depend on advanced skills and specialisation. This is true of the IT sector, where high-paying jobs may readily be available right after bachelors. These will soon — if not already — turn out to be the line-jobs in factories with limited scope for personal advancement, in spite of today's high pay. We are just scratching the surface of the IT or computing area in India. After the initial wave of outsourced jobs in software maintenance and development, more companies are setting up their R&D units in India. They need individuals with solid fundamentals and relevant specialisations. The most important skill will be the ability to find innovative solutions to unstructured problems by oneself.

We as a country help produce a lot of software and technology for the world. However, our own consumption of technology is very low. This has to — and will — change soon. Only start-up companies from among us can make it happen. Starting companies require a strong base and skills to innovate. Most successful companies are set up based on solid technological ideas. College entrants should think of acquiring R&D and innovation skills as well as a technology base that will serve them well as potential entrepreneurs a few years later, if not immediately after college.

IIIT, Hyderabad, was set up as a research university, with great emphasis on research even at the bachelor's level. This really sets us apart from comparable institutions in the country. We have large teams including students of doctoral, masters', and bachelors' programmes and faculty members working on different theoretical and practical problems. We have teams working on the processing of languages for translation, research, and comprehension of the written and spoken forms. We have teams working on building large interactive course content for enhancing education at the college and even school levels. We have teams that aim to develop inexpensive equipment as well as effective software for biomedical sensing and diagnosis. We also focus on the mobile phone as the platform for many of these solutions so that they can reach more people easily. We have an active incubation programme that is producing technology-based start-ups in healthy numbers. And we have ties with the local and national funding networks to make it all happen.

College entrants should think of acquiring R&D and innovation skills
-PJ Narayanan

Focusing on research and advanced development is a lot harder for an institution than focusing only on education. It needs more funding, more equipment, and more infrastructure. Above all, it requires highly driven faculty members and students. However, research is most rewarding for the individuals involved. As a young and vibrant institution, we have been working on creating the right atmosphere and people base to make it all happen. As a result, we are beginning to see our graduates and our technologies making a distinct impact in the country.

Students should focus on and work hard towards a career in innovation and research. We, at IIIT, Hyderabad, provide the most unique opportunities for students to fulfil their research dreams even at the bachelor's level. I want to end where I began: as college entrants, focus on the long-term prospects of what you do. Focus on short-term aspects like money or today's brand value of companies may not serve you as well in your careers as a focus on innovation-skills.

PJ Narayanan is director of the International Institute of Information Technology, Hyderabad

Hindustan Times ND 22/05/2013 P-1 HT Education

'START EARLY AND THINK LONG-TERM'

Experts talk about the critical role of R&D, why students need to get hands-on and face the challenges involved

The importance of research and development (R&D) to improve lives cannot be overemphasised. Across the country, students and faculty at many institutions, government as well as private, top ranked as well as not so well known, are driving innovative changes. And they are beginning early, from the bachelor's level itself. In this section of our anniversary edition, experts from different institutions write about the critical role of R&D work, why students need to get hands-on, and the challenges involved.

"Students who are motivated towards research are likely to be more employable or adaptable in the modern workplace," says Anish Mathuria, dean (R&D), Dhirubhai Ambani Institute of Information and Communication Technology, Gandhinagar. While studying, the focus does not just have to be on just taking a degree and jumping into the job arena to make a fast buck. Students need to think long-term, says PJ Narayanan, director, International Institute of Information Technology (IIIT), Hyderabad. Otherwise, once the initial euphoria resulting from short-term planning is over, it can really leave young professionals high and dry in a highly competitive, globalised economy.

Students "should acquire skills for a career that will last for at least 50 years," says Narayanan. So, students should acquire a specialist edge. "One may get a seemingly high paid job with a bachelor's degree in engineering today, but one's future opportunities will depend on advanced skills and specialisation. This is most true in the IT sector, where high-paying jobs may readily be available right after bachelors. These will soon — if not already — turn out to be the line-jobs in factories with limited scope for personal advancement, in spite of today's high pay."

Arya Kumar, chief of the entrepreneurship development and IPR Unit at BITS, Pilani, bats for innovation-driven entrepreneurship. He points out that the we need an R&D culture in academic institutions and research labs that "integrate" their pursuits with problems of agriculture and industry. "The research approach has to focus its efforts from the point of view of intellectual property creation which could get translated into improvement in productivity and efficiency in different sectors to create a global competitive advantage."

RS Kulkarni and MS Krupashankara, professors at the department of mechanical engineering in RV College of Engineering, Bangalore, write that students should be provided the resources and guidance to take their ideas to fruition. "The present structure of engineering curriculum does not provide the students with sufficient mental and physical space to dive deep into R&D activities and...to create new devices. The administrators of engineering education have to bring in radical changes to facilitate students to actively involve and pursue research."

N Yagnesh Sharma, associate director (development) and professor, department of mechanical and manufacturing engineering, Manipal Institute of Technology, makes you wonder what a generation of thinkers and innovators could do transform India. "But, how many of (India's nearly one million) engineering graduates are up for this task? The biggest challenge that India faces is not the lack of manpower that is productive but the lack of thinkers and innovators." He puts the onus on academia to bridge the gulf.

Hindustan Times ND 22/05/2013 P-2 HT Education

Here's how you can crack Paper 1 and 2

You must thoroughly revise the Class 12 syllabus and solve mock papers

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Paper 1

You would need to cover the full syllabus and get into revision mode by solving a lot of practice tests, say experts. "The emphasis is on what you have studied in school because the syllabus for Paper 1 of the new JEE is based on the Central Board of Secondary Education curriculum," says Anand Kumar, founder, Super 30.

The papers will test not only your knowledge, but your aptitude, accuracy and speed. So, to excel, you need a good command over subjects. "Regular practice of single-choice questions asked in previous examinations really helps. Make sure you understand what you are doing. Mere ticking of options may not be the right way. Attempting single-choice questions from previous years' IIT-JEE will also help you crack it," says Kumar.

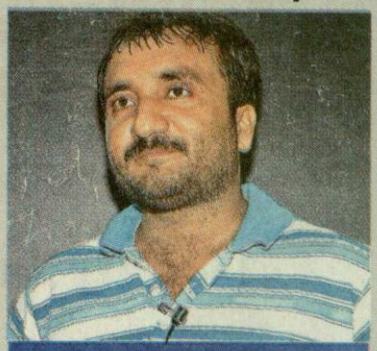
You must first try the ideal approach for solving a problem. Try conventional methods first. "If they don't work out, try to understand the problem again and find clues that can lead you to solution. Go through the concepts related to the problem once again and see how they can be applied to the problem in hand. Try to relate the problem to real-life situations. It will help you to analyse it better. Consult the solution, only when you have exhausted your limits," says Ramesh Batlish, FIITJEE head, Noida. Practice similar problems. Doing 100 quality and concept-based questions is more important than doing 1000 questions, which have not been selected carefully.

Devise your own shortcuts and ways to tackle particular kind of problems. Always exercise time pressure while solving JEE (Main) papers. In maths, use short methods for calculations, skip irrelevant steps to save time.

"Select your questions wisely. If you solve easy and average questions correctly, you can easily get through. You may attempt difficult ones to make merit," Batlish adds.

Identify the gaps and problem areas where you are wasting your maximum time. Try to analyse where you are making mistakes, which section you are doing best. Whatever mistakes you make in first paper try to remove in second. In this way you will be better prepared for the main exam. What most students do is that they revise whole of the syllabus but never attempt a mock and thus they always make mistakes in the main exam and lose track.

At the time of the exam, always attempt theoretical questions first and then questions which require calculation. It is advisable to avoid numerical questions in the first 10 or 15 minutes of the exam.



Attempting single-choice questions from previous years' IIT-JEE will help you crack JEE (Main). Focus on the Class 12 syllabus
-Anand Kumar, founder, Super 30

Paper 2

JEE (Main) Paper 2 is especially for those candidates who want to apply for BArch or BPlanning courses. The paper consists of three parts - mathematics, aptitude and drawing. The mathematics part is similar to Paper 1, therefore one need not do any extra preparation for this part of the paper.

Part 2 of the paper which is tricky and can be challenging. Some of the questions are related to counting the number of surfaces or triangles from a given 2D or 3D structure diagram. You need to keenly observe with a lot of patience to be able to solve them.

Practising projection drawing may help attempt questions pertaining to 3D diagrams where a structure is given and you are asked to guess the top view or front view of the structure.

You must also know about famous architects and some of their best creations. Some knowledge of building material and their properties is also helpful.

The last part of the paper is drawing. You will need to draw a picture out of the two to three optional subjects that will be mentioned in the paper. You should be good at perspective drawing to be able to crack this.