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'Quality education for all difficult to achieve by 2015'

Our Bureau

New Delhi, Nov. 9

The target of delivering inclusive and quality education for all by 2015 in the nine most populous countries may elude a number of developing countries.

At the ninth E-9 Ministerial Review Meeting on Friday, Shashi Tharoor, Minister of State for Human Resource Development, said, "Some countries may face greater challenges than others in meeting the goals by the 2015 target date, and that the quality problem is more acute in the developing world, in part due to the rapid expansion of access."

The E-9 Initiative, launched in 1993, aims to achieve 'Education for All' by 2015. The nine signatories — Bangladesh, Brazil, China, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Mexico, Nigeria and Pakistan — are home to over 60 per cent of the world's population, as also two-thirds of the world's illiterates and half of the out-of-school children.

Tharoor said developing a



Faced with challenges: Shashi Tharoor, Minister of State for Human Resource Development.

system of equitable quality education was an equally big challenge, not just for India, but across the world.

"Today, children and youth in low, middle-income and rich countries are not always learning what they are supposed to learn, nor acquiring the knowledge and skills that

equip them for the world of work and for active citizenship," he said.

India on Friday assumed the chair of the E-9 Secretariat from 2012-14.

RIGHT TO EDUCATION

The Government has no plans of relaxing the deadline for

implementation of Right to Education (RTE) Act.

HRD Minister M.M. Pallam Raju said on Thursday that some State Education Ministers had sought an extension of deadline and a review of RTE implementation would be done.

However, sources said the Ministry would not ease the deadline and keep up the pressure on States to accomplish the task before March 31.

NGOs and local agencies have noted that many States were far from achieving the targets set till March 2013 and some had met only about seven per cent of the prescribed norms.

According to findings of the Central Advisory Board of Education, over 12,000 new schools remain to be opened, while over 2,50,000 additional class rooms and a large number of toilets, drinking water facilities, and ramps are still under construction.

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Deccan Herald Nd 10-11-2012

Higher education needs push from inside, not outside

By Arvind Radhakrishnan

Recently the Union minister of state for higher education Shashi Tharoor stated that Indian universities were performing poorly and were falling well short of the benchmarks set for them. He made these comments at an international conference on higher education organised by the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI), where he released a book on the noted American educationist Philip G Altbach.

Tharoor made a few pertinent points. He mentioned that though there are many universities coming up in India, none of them have figured in the top 100 universities of the world. He also mentioned that the quality of the graduates being produced in the Indian system barely meets the requirement of Indian companies.

He was candid enough to admit that the national education policy has been abysmally out of touch with the current requirements. He touched upon the prospect of foreign universities entering

India, making it sound like a panacea to all the problems that we are befuddled with. This certainly cannot be a long term solution. It would amount to a mere abdication of seminal responsibilities. We need to ruminate on what can be done to improve our educational institutions, so that they would someday compete with the best in the world.

While the minister has been frank on these issues in a guileless manner, the moot question is what can be done about this shoddy state of affairs? Do we even know the extent of the canker that plagues our education system? One of the serious problems in India is the lack of actionable data on higher education. There are millions of students and numerous educational institutions and it is very difficult to gauge what is going on in these institutions.

Six-and-a-half decades after India gained independence, its higher education system has evolved from its early colonial moorings that was rooted in elitism to a much more inclusive and egalitarian setup. The requirements of an ebullient



democracy were enormous. This entailed a massification process which has seen an 85 fold increase in the number of students.

At the dawn of independence India had only 18 universities and 591 colleges with a total student enrollment of 200,000 students. By 2012, India now has 634 universities and 45,000 colleges with over 25 million students. While these numbers look majestic, one must strike a contrarian note. The Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER)

is a statistical measure used by the UN to give us a ratio of the number of students who are actually enrolled to the number of students who ought to be enrolled. India's GER is only 17 per cent, which is a very low figure considering the minimum requirements for sustainable national development.

Measure of progress

The key objectives in the national agenda since independence were - equity, access and relevance. While there has been a measure of progress in areas of equity and access, the issue of relevance continues to haunt us. The Radhakrishnan Commission (1950) had noted in its report that there was a mis-match between what is taught in our higher education institutions and the requirements of industry and society-at-large.

If one goes by the latest survey reports only about 15 per cent of liberal education graduates and 25 per cent of professional graduates are suitable for employment. There is a huge disconnect between courses being offered and the job market. Non-

relevance and low quality of education contribute to the high rate of unemployment and under-employment. A 2012 study by 'Universitas 21' of the top countries for higher education ranked India last amongst 48 nations surveyed.

We Indians pride ourselves on our huge pool of human resources. To an extent it is an advantage. However this 'demographic dividend' can quickly become a social nightmare, if the situation is not immediately remedied. The lack of funds is a major concern.

As early as 1966 the Kothari Commission suggested that 6 per cent of the GDP be allotted to education. It languishes at a mere 3.7 per cent today, while the highest figure ever achieved was 4.2 per cent in 2000-01. Public funding alone will not solve the problem. Private sector involvement is also needed. This can be achieved through increased Public-Private Partnership (PPP).

The 12th Plan (2012-17) has proposed several initiatives around six focus areas namely - expansion, equity, excellence, governance, funding, and implementation

and monitoring. It has planned expenditure of 1,107 billion rupees on higher education, which is 1.3 times higher than the 11th plan.

Funding alone cannot be a policy remedy, especially when it is bereft of actionable data which forms the basis for allocation of these funds. This lack of actionable data can be remedied if the government uses the Collection of Statistics Act (2008) wisely.

This legislation enables the government to collect data from private institutions and even industries. This act should be utilised to gather the required data from all the stakeholders of higher education in India.

This will give us a clear perception of the problems afflicting this area. GK Chesterton once said that 'Education is simply the soul of a society as it passes from one generation to the next.' The time for apportioning blame has long passed us. We cannot afford to flounder now, at least for the sake of posterity.

(The writer is a faculty member of the School of Law, Christ University)

HT Kolkata

'MASTERS' STROKE

First time: IIM-C to offer degree in management

Mou Chakraborty

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KOLKATA: Indian Institute of Management, Calcutta (IIM-C) will become the first B-school in the country to offer Masters In Management (MIM) degree in collaboration with CEMS, an elite club of 28 business schools from world over except USA.

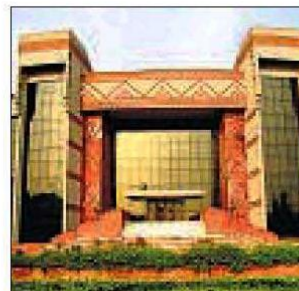
Students who start from the 2013 session, will be eligible for the course. Currently, IIM-C offers the Post-Graduate Diploma in Management (PGDM).

Being a CEMS (formerly the Community of European Management Schools and International Companies) member would mean that select IIM-C students will from next year get the coveted MIM degree which has been consistently rated as one of the five best global management degrees.

Although the human resource development ministry bars IIMs from offering postgraduate or master degrees, under the new arrangement, IIM-C students will be able to get both PGDM and MIM without flouting any government norms as well as without asking students to invest more academic years. While IIM-C will offer PGDM, CEMS in collaboration with the institute will offer MIM at the same time.

This dual degree course is sure to attract Common Admission Test (CAT) toppers to IIM-C over rivals IIM-Ahmedabad and IIM-Bangalore. However, not everyone who makes it to IIM-C will be able to study MIM. Out of a batch size of about 450 students, IIM-C will select about 27 students for the dual degree course based on their academic records.

On October 2, IIM-C became the first Indian member school



IN THE ELITE CLUB

LONDON SCHOOL OF Economics, HEC France, Essade Spain, HKUST Hong Kong and Richard Ivey from Canada are members of CEMS

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of CEMS. So far, CEMS had 27 member schools the world over. With IIM-C joining it, the institute has now become its 28th member school. The CEMS membership of IIM-C is due for the ratification vote at CEMS General Assembly in St. Gallen (Switzerland) on November 30.

Under the arrangement, the score of PGDM students selected for MIM will be accepted by CEMS. Similarly, IIM-C will accept the scores offered to their students by CEMS.

"IIM-C is the only institute in India to be a part of global alliance in Management Education with CEMS which is ranked as one of the top three business schools for the last five years. With this understanding, IIM-C students will have the opportunity to get MIM for CEMS," said Ashok Banerjee, dean, new initiative and external relations of IIM-C.

HT New Delhi

Ramanujan's 'genius' proven by mathematician

Asian News International

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LONDON: A US scientist has finally proved an unproven mathematical relation - discussed by Srinivasa Ramanujan with his mentor in one of his last letters.

Ramanujan often managed to leap from insight to insight without formally proving the logical steps in between.

Now proof has been found for a connection that he seemed to mysteriously intuit between two types of mathematical functions, New Scientist reported.

"His ideas as to what constituted a mathematical proof were of the most shadowy description," G. H. Hardy, Ramanujan's mentor and one of his few collaborators, had once said.

Ken Ono of Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia, who has previously unearthed hidden depths in Ramanujan's work, was prompted by Ramanujan's 125th birth anniversary, to look once more at his writings.

"I wanted to go back and prove something special," Ono said.

Ono settled on a discussion in the last known letter that Ramanujan wrote to Hardy,

RAMANUJAN OFTEN MANAGED TO LEAP FROM INSIGHT TO INSIGHT WITHOUT PROVING THE LOGICAL STEPS IN BETWEEN

concerning a type of function now called a modular form.

The functions looked unlike any other modular forms, but Ramanujan wrote that their outputs would be very similar to those of modular forms when computed for the roots of 1 like the square root -1.

It was only 10 years back that mathematicians formally defined this other set of functions, now known as mock modular forms.

But still no one could understand what he meant by saying that the two types of function produced similar outputs for roots of 1.

Now Ono and his colleagues have exactly calculated one of Ramanujan's mock modular forms for values very close to -1, and said the difference in the value of the two functions, ignoring the functions signs, is tiny when computed for -1, just like Ramanujan said.