

## **Newspaper Clips** **November 22-23, 2015**

**Nov. 22**

### **India Intl Science Fest at IIT- Delhi from Dec 4**

New Delhi, Nov 21:

<http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/news/science/indiaintl-science-fest-at-iit-delhi-fromdec-4/article7903958.ece>

The First India International Science Festival (IISF) is being organised at IIT Delhi from December 4 to 8.

IISF 2015 aims to involve and include commoners with a view to improving their scientific understanding, temperament and appreciation for various feats in science & technology by showcasing Indian achievements, an official release said.

Jointly organised by the Ministry of Science & Technology and Earth Sciences, and Technology Information, Forecasting & Assessment Council (TIFAC), in collaboration with Vijnana Bharati, an NGO, the event will showcase Indian contributions in the field of S&T over the years, provide a platform to young scientists for exchange of knowledge & ideas, among others.

About 3,000 young scientists from across the country are expected to participate in the festival, which includes a young scientists' conference, techno-industrial expo, a science film festival, industry-academia conclave, among others.

# Clouds of uncertainty loom over Jammu IIT

Temporary campus undecided, 2016-17 session in doubt

**VIKAS SHARMA**

TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE

The 2016-17 maiden session of Jammu IIT seems to have been further delayed as the site for the temporary campus of the premier technology institute has not been finalised.

With a few months left for starting the new academic session in other IITs across the country, the state government is yet to take a final decision on establishing a temporary campus.

A team from the Ministry of Human Resource Development (HRD) has already inspected sites for the purpose. However, sources said the state's Higher Education Department was facing the daunting task of ensuring commencement of the next academic session from makeshift accommodation and establishing hostels and quarters for students and faculty in a short span of time.

They said the site selection committee constituted by the HRD Ministry, before inspecting the site at Khanpur in Jagti for establishing the permanent campus, had visited the old university campus (old Government College of Engineering and Technology) to assess whether the institution was feasible as a temporary campus to start

“The permanent site for the Jammu IIT campus has been finalised in Nagrota. We have decided to start the maiden academic session by establishing a temporary campus near the permanent site so that there is no further delay.”

Sarita Chauhan, COMMISSIONER SECRETARY, HIGHER EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

the next academic session.

“The team had visited our college to take stock of infrastructure for setting up a temporary campus for the IIT. We have no information on the decision taken by the authorities,” said Prof Rita Bhagat, Principal, Government Degree College, Paloura. The college is running its academic affairs from the old university building.

Sources said in the recent meeting under the chairmanship of Deputy Chief Minister Nirmal Singh on setting up a temporary campus of the IIT, officers of the Higher Education Department had stated that there was an urgent need to construct hostels and quarters for students and faculty once the site for a temporary campus was selected.

When contacted, Sarita Chauhan, Commissioner Secretary, Higher Education Department, told The Tribune that efforts were on for establishing a temporary campus of the IIT to ensure that the academic session for 2016-17 could be started.

“The permanent site for the Jammu IIT campus has been finalised in Nagrota. We have decided to start the maiden academic session by establishing a temporary campus near the permanent site so that there is no further delay,” she said.

Union Finance Minister Arun Jaitley had announced the establishment of an IIT for Jammu province in July last year. The state government was directed to start the academic session for 2015-16 from a temporary campus, but it did not materialise due to the alleged delay in site selection.

An amount to the tune of Rs 500 crore was allotted by the Centre for setting up five new IITs. The other four states where the IITs were announced are Chhattisgarh, Goa, Andhra Pradesh and Kerala.

As per estimate, each of the IITs will entail an investment of roughly Rs 1,800 crore. The 16 existing IITs offer 10,000 BTech seats. The strength is likely to go up to 10,500 with the establishment of new IITs.

# IITian's app helps neighbours connect

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**New Delhi:** How about getting to know real time sitting in your office that your elderly mother is safely back inside after answering a doorbell to collect a courier? What if you need a doctor in the middle of the night in your neighbourhood for an emergency? And how about looking for a ladder to paint your house when an unfamiliar neighbour down the road calls you up and offers one? Or for that matter, getting to know that your neighbour a floor above can be your exercise buddy for Sunday.

This is now a possibility in NCR, thanks to NearGroup—India's first social network-

ing application for neighbourhood. The app, which was developed and launched by an IITian 20 days ago, already has 20,000 registered users.

And at present, it has connected 500 localities in Delhi, 300 in Gurgaon, 270 in Ghaziabad and 250 in Noida. This free mobile app available on Android and IOS works strictly within a neighbourhood and only genuine residents of a particular area can register via Facebook.

It allows only verified users to be part of a group of a locality. And thanks to the app, a group of like-minded people in east Delhi have got together to teach needy children.

Prashant Pitti, its founder and an alumnus of IIT, Mad-



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ras, said the idea is that, "Like-minded people can do a lot if they get together. We hardly come across such people despite living in the same

locality. How do we find someone with similar taste in such a situation?"

According to Pitti, who quit his job with an MNC in Chicago to launch a start-up in India, is now planning to extend the app to other cities too. He said the launch of the app is backed by a survey indicating that 72% of people in India face neighbourhood-related issues every month.

The app will also assist the users to solve women safety issues in their colony, carpool with nearby people, make local friends, seek childcare advice from parents nearby, meet similar professionals, and even borrow items like hammer or ladder among others. "To be part of a neighbourhood community, users need to

download the app and register themselves by selecting their location."

"User interest could be, for example, carpool, parenting, sports, yoga, running, gym, dance, painting, cooking, exam preparations, travelling, start-ups, work profile, and many others. Depending upon their selection, each user will become part of the groups. Users can communicate, discuss and meet the other members of the group," said Pitti.

"There is also a real time group chat facility and we will introduce a panic button. This can alert members of the group in case of any emergency immediately so that help can reach the individual," added Pitti.

# Grassley-Durbin law could kill Indian IT's model

Frank Islam

**T**he battle over H-1B and L-1 reignited on Capitol Hill earlier this month, when two influential senators and long-term critics of the two visa programs introduced a new bill in the US Senate, calling to end their "abuses and protect American and foreign workers from exploitation".

The 'H-1B and L-1 Visa Reforms Act of 2015', introduced by Senators Chuck Grassley — chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee — and Dick Durbin — the chamber's Democratic Whip — would ban companies from hiring H-1B employees if they already employ more than 50 people and more than half of their employees are foreign workers on H-1B and L-1 visas. The bill also requires "all employers who seek to hire H-1B visa holders to first make a good faith effort to recruit American workers", according to Durbin.

The apparent target of the new bill is the Indian information technology services industry, the biggest beneficiaries of the H-1B and L-1 visa programs. Since 2000, more than a million Indi-

ans may have come to the US for work on these two visas. According to one estimate, more than 459,000 Indians came to this country on H-1B from 2003 to 2011, which is nearly 48 per cent of all the visas granted under this category. In comparison, China, the second largest recipient of H-1B, sent fewer than 90,000 during the same period.

Indian firms such as TCS, Infosys and Wipro are the largest recipients of H-1B and L-1 visas. Obviously, if the bill becomes law, they will be the ones that will be affected the most. Many have pointed out that it will essentially kill their current business model, as more than half of the total revenues of some of these giants are generated from the US.

However, it is not sure, at this point, whether the Senate will pass the bill, which is not a new bill — it has been in circulation in one form or the other since



Frank Islam

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2007. A companion bill is yet to be introduced in the US House of Representatives. The last bill related to the H-1B and L-1 passed by the Senate — the 2013 immigration reform bill — was never taken up by the House of Representatives.

## Bill's passage not easy

It is not easy for a bill to be passed on a hot-button topic like this, especially since the visa programs also have fervent backers — mainly the US technology industry, led by the likes of Bill Gates and Mark Zuckerberg. Note that the position of Silicon Valley tech giants such as Google and Facebook on H-1B is not identical to that of TCS, Wipro, and Infosys. The former is interested in more freedom to hire foreign workers and in greater numbers.

If the current bill fails to muster enough support, it is unlikely that any of the elements from it will be incorporated into other laws. An executive ac-

tion on the issue is also not very likely.

Nonetheless, the H-1B and L-1 issue, which is also part of the larger immigration reform, is sure to be at the front and centre of the presidential politics. If recent history is any indication, the rhetoric against H-1B and outsourcing tends to go up during the presidential election cycles.

There is also no question that opponents of the two visa programs have been building a groundswell of support for at least plugging the loopholes in the system. The US arm of the influential trade association, Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE), was one of the first groups to come out in support of the bill.

## Disney, Edison had an impact

What triggered renewed calls for cracking down on the visa programs are highly publicised reports of Disney and Southern California Edison replacing hundreds of their long-term workers with H-1B workers from India. There were also reports that the tech workers that were laid off were forced to train their replacements in order to secure

"good attitude" severance pay. This resulted in the California State Assembly passing a resolution calling for investigating abuses of the H-1B visas in June.

Publicly, the Indian firms have not issued any statement on Grassley-Durbin bill. But privately, they have mounted lobbying efforts, in coordination with the Embassy of India, it is learned.

In fact, lately the Indian industry has been very proactive in engaging members of US Congress, touting their efforts to hire US employees and their overall contributions to the US economy. A report released by the CII and Grant Thornton in July revealed that India-based companies are responsible for creating 91,000 jobs and \$15 billion in investments across the US.

Various news reports indicate that many Indian tech companies are bracing for a future immigration reform law and some of them have already started the transition process to make themselves ready in the event of some of these measures becoming law.

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# Will the proposed US H-1B visa reforms hurt Indian IT?

Two bills tabled to reform the H-1B system have triggered angst over their potential to get trapped in US immigration policy fault lines

Furquan Moharkan

Of late, there has been a lot of buzz around the H-1B visa system in the US. This year saw two legislations being introduced in the US Congress which impacts it. In January, Senator Orrin Hatch tabled the 'Immigration Innovation Act', also known as the I-Square Act. The proposed legislation sought to increase the H-1B visa cap by 30,000 from the current 85,000 to 1,15,000. On November 10, Senators Chuck Grassley and Dick Durbin tabled the 'H-1B and L-1 Visa Reform Act', which proposed to limit the H-1B visas issued.

It is the latter bill, particularly its provision to prohibit companies from hiring H-1B employees if they employ more than 50, and if more than 50 per cent of their employees are H-1B and L-1 visa holders (known as the 50-50 provision), which has alarmed the information technology (IT) industry in India. According to a recent report in *The New York Times*, of the 20 companies that received the most H-1B visas in 2014, 13 were global outsourcing operations, many of which were Indian IT firms. The report said the top 20 companies took about 40 per cent of the visas available — about 32,000 — with TCS leading the table with 5,650 visas.

## Decided by lottery

The H-1B visa is a non-immigrant visa with an annual cap of 85,000. Of this, the first 20,000 are reserved for advanced US degree holders. Inevitably, demand exceeds supply for the remaining 65,000. This year, for instance, 233,000 applications were received by US Citizenship and Im-

migration Services (USCIS) in a week after the application window was opened on April 1. Since the applications were more, USCIS decided on them using a lottery on April 13.

With the US going into a presidential election year in 2016, immigration is a hot-button issue. Many outsourcing worry about either the Grassley-Durbin Bill getting adopted, or its provisions getting incorporated in other tough immigration legislations.

**Complaints against Indian IT range from flooding the US H-1B visa system with applications, to not paying market wages, and non-transfer of skills.**

The primary complaint against Indian IT companies is that they are flooding the H-1B system with applications to maximise their allocations, even though this is within the law. US immigration laws allow one person to file only one application, but the number of applications that a large corporation can send has no bars. *The New York Times* in its report pointed out that the top five outsourcing firms had prepared as many as 55,000 H-1B applications last year. TCS, the company that had prepared applications for at least 14,000 visas, won 5,650 of them, the newspaper said. Others have raised concerns about workers on H-1B visas not being paid market wages, and no transfer of skills taking place as intended by the law.

According to immigration ex-

pert Scott Fitzgerald, Partner at Fragomen Worldwide, US law provides sufficient safeguards to protect American workers. Nasscom, the industry body of Indian IT companies, denies visa abuse by Indian companies.

Ron Hira, professor of public policy at Howard University, Washington, DC, said while Indian IT companies are compliant with the program, "they have been underpaying the H-1B workers to replace the US worker". He added, "The illegality aspect kept aside, it is clear that they do it against the intents of the program."

Prof. Hira contends that outsourcing is leading to loss of US jobs. "It is not a myth. It is a truth. Lot of Disney workers were laid off recently because their jobs were outsourced. This is not just happening with Disney, but throughout the US economy."

He also dismissed the claim that H-1B workers are filling the skill gap prevailing in the US. "Well, you are seeing that American workers are training the outsourcing and H-1B recruits. So there is no dearth of skill, and this justification of skill gap seems to be quite bizarre," Prof. Hira said. But Nasscom cites "various sources and studies" to claim that the skills gap is a fact. Fitzgerald advises Indian IT firms to make sure that they have systems in place to show to the US government that they are completely compliant with the requirements of the H-1B visa programme.

He also recommends "training and redistribution of talent to provide the US workers with some of the skills that are absent in the US marketplace".

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Dainik Bhasker ND 23/11/2015 P-06

ई-यंत्रा लैब

आईआईटी मुंबई ने राजधानी के इंजीनियरिंग कॉलेज को बनाया नोडल सेंटर

# रोबोटिक्स एप्लीकेशन बनाना सीखेंगे छात्र

भास्कर न्यूज | भोपाल

राजधानी सहित प्रदेश भर के इंजीनियरिंग छात्र अब कृषि, प्रदूषण नियंत्रण, रक्षा व शहर के रखरखाव से संबंधित रोबोटिक एप्लीकेशन बनाना सीखेंगे। इस काम में आईआईटी मुंबई छात्रों के साथ ही शिक्षकों की भी मदद कर रहा है। इसकी शुरुआत भोपाल के कॉलेज से कर दी गई है।

रोबोटिक्स एजुकेशन को बढ़ाने के उद्देश्य से प्रदेश के इंजीनियरिंग कॉलेजों में ई-यंत्रा लैब स्थापित की जा रही। आईआईटी मुंबई ने भोपाल के इंजीनियरिंग कॉलेज एनआरआई ग्रुप ऑफ इंस्टिट्यूट्स को नोडल सेंटर के रूप में चुना है। करीब 500 रोबोटिक्स लैब देश भर में स्थापित की जा रही है। इन लैब्स के माध्यम से छात्रों को इंजीनियरिंग प्रोजेक्ट तैयार करने में मदद मिलेगी। इन लैब्स की स्थापना के बाद आईआईटी मुंबई अखिल भारतीय स्तर पर रोबोटिक्स प्रतियोगिता आयोजित करेगा। भोपाल में नोडल सेंटर बनने के बाद इस लैब को अन्य कॉलेजों में सेटअप करने के लिए विशेषज्ञों की टीम ने टीचर्स को प्रशिक्षित करना शुरू कर दिया है।



## कॉलेजों को दी जाएगी रोबोटिक किट

एनआरआई कॉलेज के प्राचार्य डॉ. जगदीश राठी के अनुसार इस लैब के लिए हर कॉलेज को एक रोबोटिक किट व उससे जुड़ी बाकी सामग्री दी जाएगी। इंजीनियरिंग छात्र इन प्रशिक्षित टीचर के मार्ग दर्शन से रिसर्च वर्क कर सकेंगे। क्षेत्रीय स्तर पर टीचर्स की रोबोटिक्स प्रतियोगिता आयोजित कराई जाएगी। यह प्रोजेक्ट मानव संसाधन विकास मंत्रालय के नेशनल मिशन ऑन एजुकेशन थ्रू इन्फॉर्मेशन एंड कम्युनिकेशन टेक्नोलॉजी के तहत देश के सभी इंजीनियरिंग कॉलेजों में प्रोजेक्ट वर्क की गुणवत्ता को बेहतर बनाने के लिए शुरू किया है।

## छात्रों को मिलेगा यह फायदा

■ इंजीनियरिंग, डिप्लोमा और विज्ञान स्नातक छात्रों के लिए हर साल ई-यंत्रा रोबोटिक्स प्रतियोगिता आयोजित की जाएगी। ■ इस प्रतियोगिता के विजेता को ई-यंत्रा समर इंटरशिप प्रोग्राम में हिस्सा लेने का अवसर मिलेगा। विजेता छात्र आईआईटी मुंबई में इंटरशिप कर सकेंगे।

## यह काम होंगे

- यह लैब कॉलेजों में सेटअप की जाएगी और शिक्षकों को प्रशिक्षित किया जाएगा।
- इस लैब के माध्यम से छात्रों के बीच ई-यंत्रा आइडिया प्रतियोगिता भी आयोजित की जाएगी।
- कॉलेज की लैब को इनोवेशन हब के रूप में विकसित किया जाएगा। यहां सभी तरह के सेमिनार व वर्कशाप होंगी।

## शिक्षकों को इस तरह तैयार किया जाएगा

- शिक्षकों को प्रशिक्षित किया जाएगा ताकि वे इस लैब में आने वाली किसी भी तकनीकी गड़बड़ी को ठीक कर सकें।
- शिक्षकों को प्रैक्टिकल प्रयोग भी करना होगा ताकि वे बेहतर तरीके से छात्रों का सीखा सकें।