

Newspaper Clips

Oct. 28, 2015

IIT-Delhi deans protest HRD meddling, threaten to quit

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/IIT-Delhi-deans-protest-HRD-meddling-threaten-to-quit/articleshow/49560764.cms>

NEW DELHI: The IIT-Delhi senate has rebuffed the HRD ministry's communication to the institute asking it to reconsider its decision cancelling the admission of a part-time Phd student in humanities who was found to have concealed facts regarding her work experience.

[Three out of six deans at the IIT threatened to resign protesting against the ministry's "interference" in academic matters.](#) The deans felt that the petition, filed on behalf of the applicant Aleesha Tangri by her father Rajeev Tangri, should have been referred by the secretary, higher education, to the IIT director instead of the senate which is responsible for maintaining academic standards.

Earlier, the Prime Minister's Office had transferred Rajeev Tangri's petition to the HRD ministry for suitable action.

But the ministry in its letter dated September 24 asked IIT to put the matter before its Board of Governors for "suitable verification/redressal."

PHD STUDENT AT CENTRE OF ROW

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ IIT-Delhi cancels admission of Aleesha Tangri, a part-time PhD student, saying she had concealed facts about her work experience ➤ Aleesha claimed she had worked with a consultancy firm from Sept 2009 although she was studying as well ➤ PhD admission requires 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> full-time work experience; Aleesha said she worked in her dad's firm after classes ➤ Aleesha's father Rajeev Tangri petitions PMO which sends it to HRD ministry ➤ Ministry asks IIT to put the petition up for 'suitable verification/redressal' by board of governors
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The opinion at the Senate meeting is understood to have been divided but ultimately by a majority decided to not revise the cancellation of Aleesha Tangri's admission. Calling the reference an outright interference by the HRD ministry in academic matters, many in the Senate said the decision to cancel the admission was taken after due process.

Some others felt that since IIT had not been specific about the nature of work experience, she should be given a

chance. But the majority opinion was that work experience cannot be concurrent with a full-time academic degree as seemed to be case with regard to the applicant.

On scrutiny of Aleesha's documents it was found that she had submitted her work experience certificate dated December 2, 2014 mentioning that she had been working with one M/S Masstek Consultants Pvt. Ltd as HRD consultant since September, 2009.

But her records showed that she was a full-time student of Jesus & Mary College pursuing B.A in Sociology from 2009 to 2012. She then joined JNU from 2012 to 2014. IIT said, "There appears an apparent contradiction in particular when the experience certificate does not mention her employment status as full-time or part-time amounts to concealment of facts; since fulfillment of admission requirement is full-time working experience."

When Aleesha was issued a show cause notice she replied that she worked in her father's company after college hours. In fact, her father also pointed this out in his petition to the PMO. In his petition, the father had also alleged that Aleesha was being harassed by her supervisor.

Getting things right about suicides in IITs

<http://www.thehindu.com/webexclusives/getting-things-right-about-suicides-in-iits/article7810515.ece>

Innovative steps are the need of the hour, not a fault-finding outcry without any empirical backing, says the writer.

Two suicides in a month at IIT Madras is an unspeakable loss not just to the families of the deceased students but also to the society at large. As a student then, and an alumnus now, these incidents have always disturbed me a lot, and I believe that it is a cause of concern to everyone both inside and outside the institute.

I write this article in response to Arya Prakash's '[What has gone wrong with IIT-Madras?](#)' published on *The Hindu* Web Exclusives (23 October, 2015). I would like to express my disagreement with the author's arguments not only on the grounds that the analysis is unsubstantiated, but also on the concern that such a misconceived approach to the problem would lead us nowhere close to the solution.

The recent suicides must be seen as a part of growing trend among all the elite institutes in the country, particularly the IITs. Various social, psychological, and systemic problems must form the context of our discussion. The author dwells upon the system of grading which needs an informed and comprehensive debate. One needs to question whether it leads to a sense of 'relative deprivation' despite having high intellectual quotient as Malcolm Gladwell puts it. At the same time, whether absolute grading is any better for the students in terms of ameliorating them from academic pressure and the sense of relative deprivation, needs a thorough examination. This should point us towards an imperative need of reviewing our grading system so that quick and slow learners have a fair chance to excel, and the system is not causative of erosion of confidence.

Instead of making a case for the review of grading system, the author simply puts the blame on the relative grading system as the cause of 'a sense alienation' among students. This is too reductionist, for loneliness and alienation are simply not a function of academic performance, they can as well stem from various psychological, social and personal problems. The author perpetuates the orthodox approach to associate every problem faced by the student to academic pressure alone. This is counter-productive to address the problem because some students experience loneliness and a sense of alienation despite having a good academic track record.

On the issue of the academic pressure faced by the backward caste students, a recent on-campus survey by Insight, IIT Bombay shows that students from SC/STs and OBCs end up experiencing more academic pressure

than the general category students. Unfortunately, no study has been conducted so far to examine if there is any correlation between suicides and social backgrounds of the students. While this remains a point of concern, one should also acknowledge the efforts being made by the administration to change the situation. IIT Madras offers a basic English course, and recently a 'Life Skills Course' was introduced which is first-of-its-kind to enable students manage themselves better. Also, apart from class-room learning, students have access to almost all the courses on the NPTEL platform, which provides an opportunity for going through the lectures as many number of times as needed. Almost all the IITs have professional counselling services in one form or the other. Perhaps, the Professors should also be sensitised to ensure that learning experience in classroom is inclusive and responsive to needs of all students. Such innovative steps are the need of the hour, not a fault-finding outcry without any empirical backing.

The author alleges that MiTR (Guidance and Counselling Unit) of IIT Madras has been counterproductive by turning into a spy agency without any lack of respect for the principle of confidentiality. The Lead Core of MiTR with whom I've spoken completely refutes this allegation. Similar counselling services are offered in other IITs too, and they have made a positive impact in many students' life. The danger of an outright and unsubstantiated allegation on such services is that it prevents the students from approaching these organisations when they are desperately in need of help. In an article titled 'Depression - An Elephant in the Room' of Insight, IIT Bombay, the counselling coordinator laments on the perception of a 'stigma' associated with seeking counsel. Allegations of these sort only compound that stigma with an added sense of fear. These counselling services must be further strengthened by inducting professional psychiatrists who can render full-time services on campus. Moreover, involving students who have recovered from depression in the counselling services would make the process more effective.

On the issue of attendance criteria, how logical is it to argue that asking a student to attend classes is putting excessive academic pressure on him or her? The attendance policy of IIT Madras is guided by the idea that being a residential institute, the potential of classroom learning experience must be fully tapped. Exemptions to this criteria are available on medical grounds, even if one falls short of 85% attendance. All that a student needs to do is to produce a medical certificate which the on-campus hospital provides. I think by saying that the "students are thrown out of campus", the author has exaggerated the issue unnecessarily. The stringent rule of asking a student to vacate the hostel applies only when one fails to secure minimum attendance in more than two courses in a semester. Moreover, a thorough background check is done on the student before taking such a decision. Clearly, the criteria and the process tell us that the spirit of the rule is not to pressurise the students but to set a deterrent against absenteeism.

As pointed out at the outset, this phenomena of suicides in elite institutions is a great loss for both families and society. Only a correct diagnosis can help us find a correct treatment for the problem. Being residential campuses, premier institutes like IITs should ensure that the campus ecosystem has the capacity to positively shape individuals' personal and social life without confining their focus to easing academic pressure. Neither a fault-finding exercise demanding some 'radical change' without any constructive solutions, nor the treatment of such cases as personal problems which have nothing to do with the administration are justified. One needs to be pro-active and constantly engage in dialogue with all the stakeholders to ensure that the most transformative phase in an individual's life doesn't lead to a tragic end.

Business Standard ND 28/10/2015 P-18

Zuckerberg to pitch for Free Basics at IIT meet

KARAN CHOUDHURY
New Delhi, 27 October

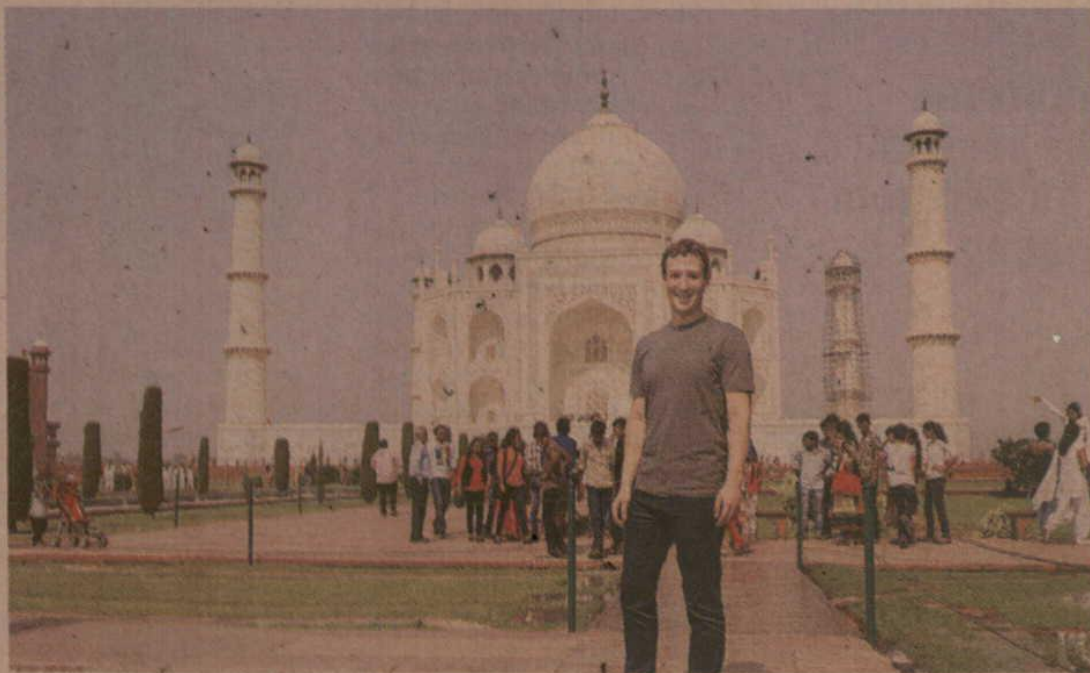
Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg will pitch Free Basics (previously known as Internet.org) his vision of internet for all, during a discussion with the students and faculty of the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Delhi on Wednesday, sources said.

"From what we have seen, students seem to be excited about Internet.org. They want to know more and understand Zuckerberg's vision of it," said a person involved with the event.

IIT Delhi as well as the organisers have been tight-lipped about the event. Zuckerberg's team, in India for the past 15 days, has kept most of his three-day itinerary under wraps.

Sources said the question-and-answer session with Zuckerberg at Dogra Hall in the IIT Delhi campus would be attended by 1,300 people of which 900 would be students.

"This will be about students, budding programmers and faculty," he said. "We cannot accommodate everyone in the hall. The event will be streamed live and we are encouraging people to watch it," he added.



Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg visited the Taj Mahal on Tuesday, before his appointments in Delhi

SOURCE: COMPANY

Zuckerberg is expected to speak for 15 minutes and spend the next hour answering questions from the audience.

Sources said Zuckerberg would likely meet Prime Minister Narendra Modi after the event. He will meet Finance Minister Arun Jaitley a day later. Minister for Information Technology and Telecommunications Ravi Shankar Prasad is unlikely to

meet Zuckerberg.

"The minister will be in Patna on October 28 for the elections. If he manages to return to Delhi early, he might meet Zuckerberg," said an official in the information technology ministry. More than 75 policemen will secure the perimeter of the IIT campus and the hall during Zuckerberg's event. Though Zuckerberg travels with his own security, police comman-

dos will also provide him cover. The Facebook founder will have a police pilot vehicle while traveling and added police security at his hotel.

Organisers have told people attending the IIT event to travel light. They have been asked not to bring big backpacks, laptops, tablets, cameras and recorders. "Only mobile phones will be allowed," said a person closely involved with the event.

IITians eager to welcome Facebook CEO

NEW DELHI: IITians are ready with their questions for the Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg, who will be holding his Townhall Q&A session at the IIT-Delhi campus here on Wednesday.

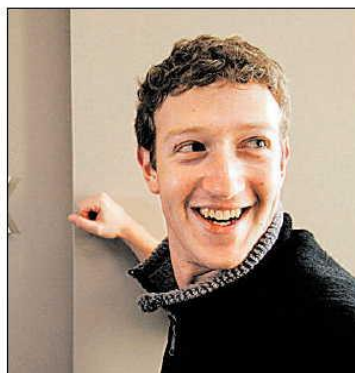
Over 900 students, along with 100 faculty members, will be attending the one-and-a-half-hour long session with Zuckerberg, according to the IIT administration.

Deepanshu Singh, a student of Mechanical Engineering, said he would ask Zuckerberg about his initiatives to strengthen social connections in the "real world". He argued that because of the Facebook phe-

nomena, friendships are becoming increasingly tenuous.

His classmate Zaheer Hassan suggested Zuckerberg should introduce an alert system to check overuse of Facebook. "Whenever someone uses FB for more than two hours, he should get some sort of a gentle reminder or notification that he has had enough of it," Hassan said.

Akshit Trehan, another IIT student, said he would ask the CEO about Oculus VR, a virtual reality startup now owned by Facebook. "Facebook is promoting Oculus in a big way. I am really excited to know what he has to say about artificial in-



Mark Zuckerberg

telligence," he adds.

Even though there is excitement surrounding his visit, some students are upset that they wouldn't be able to attend the session live. "We are sad-

dened that we couldn't register for the event. I don't have anything to question him," Pooja, a student, said. "We got a notification from the college saying that students can register for the event online. But this was during our mid-summer break, so many of us couldn't register," she adds.

About 3,600 students had registered for the event and participants for the Q&A session were selected based on draw of lots. For those who can't attend the session, the institute has made provisions for live streaming and have also put up a giant screen.

DH News Service

Hindu ND 28.10.2015 P-14

IITs asked to partner industries for funding research projects

SMRITI KAK RAMACHANDRAN

NEW DELHI: The Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) can soon start applying for government money to fund research, but there's a caveat; the research has to have "clearly defined outcome" and 25 per cent of the expenses have to be borne by an industry partner.

The Union Ministry for Human Resource and Development has earmarked Rs.250 crore per annum for fostering "very high quality" research in the IITs under the 'Uchatar Avishkar Yojna', which will have industry partners with the institutions of excellence.

While the government says the move is to give research relevant to the industry and the campaign to 'Make in India' a leg up, the proposal has been received with scepticism in the academic and research circles, given the implications of allowing private players to collaborate with institutions that have been set

up with public money.

A source in the Ministry told *The Hindu* that a large part of the mandate for the IITs was to train very high quality manpower and produce outcomes that are relevant for the design and manufacturing industry.

"We want the IITs to help in the Make in India campaign, by investing in research and link innovation to the industry to make the latter competitive in the global markets," said an official. The Rs.250-crore purse will be used to fund several projects for up to Rs.5 crore, provided they meet the standards stipulated.

"The proposals will have to specify the time-frame, the outcome and the benefits that the industry stands to gain from the research to be eligible for the funds. We are looking at Rs.1,500 crore over the next three years to give manufacturing a boost," the official explained.

Disagreeing with the gov-

ernment's view that involving private players will make the industry competitive, Dunu Roy, an IIT alumnus and director of the non-government organisation Hazard Centre, said the move would act contrary to the claims.

"This proposal will shift the focus from fundamental research to applied research; thereby not allowing the scope of research to expand. To be competitive, equal weightage has to be given to fundamental research, which forms the basis of applied research. Second, with the private companies partnering in research, there will be the issues of intellectual property rights," Mr. Roy said.

An official of an IIT not wishing to be quoted, said that while there was a yawning gap between the industry and the academia, there was a need to guard against privatisation of public institutions. The scheme will initially be limited to the IITs.

Hindustan Times ND 28/10/2015 P-07

Jamia may admit students of engineering through JEE

HT Correspondent

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NEW DELHI: Jamia Millia Islamia is planning to admit students for its engineering courses through the Joint Entrance Examination (JEE), which is conducted by the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE).

The institute is likely to do away with its entrance exam system.

"We have initiated the process for it and have approached the concerned authorities. There are certain procedures that need to be followed, hopefully we will be able to admit the students through JEE exam from the next academic session," Jamia vice-chancellor Talat Ahmad said.

JEE is used as a selection

examination for all central government-funded technical schools, including the National Institutes of Technology (NITs) and the Indian Institutes of Information Technology (IIITs). Students opting for the IITs need to clear the JEE-Advanced exam also.

The V-C said this step will help the university, which has faced cases of paper leak recently, deal better with chances of paper leak. "The recognition of courses offered by Jamia will improve significantly since the students will be admitted through JEE," he said.

Jamia will be celebrating its 95th Foundation Day on October 29. The foundation-day celebrations will be inaugurated by Union Minister of State Jitendra Singh.

Jamia is planning to introduce a Global Jamia Alumni Network (GJAN), an online interactive platform for the alumni to connect with each other, during the three-day foundation day celebrations. "The network will enable the institution to co-opt distinguished alumni on various statutory bodies to strengthen interface with industry," Ahmad said.

Talking about Jamia's plan to come up with a medical college-cum-hospital, Ahmad said he is waiting for the land dispute to be resolved.

The vice-chancellor also said that Jamia is planning to open a Sanskrit department, expand the APJ Abdul Kalam Scholarships and introduce Mass Online Open Courses.

Hindustan Times ND 28/10/2015 P-07

Outgoing VC Dinesh Singh says he made DU 'innovative'

BIDDING ADIEU Singh, whose tenure comes to an end today, says he could not implement several initiatives as the FYUP controversy took up lot of his time

Heena Kausar

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NEW DELHI: Upon the completion of his what some would describe as 'tumultuous' tenure at Delhi University, vice-chancellor Dinesh Singh has no regrets.

Singh completes his tenure at the university on Wednesday. He said that there were certain initiatives that he could have taken but was not able to do so.

"I wanted to start pedagogical changes in the way education is imparted which is limited to blackboard and textbooks. I wanted to connect education with the real world and FYUP was a step in that direction. But unfortunately things did not work out," he told HT in an exclusive interview a day before his term ends on October 28.

But the VC, who faced many brickbats for implementing FYUP, said he was extremely proud of the system. "It was a big initiative. Perhaps its' time will come in future. I am very proud of it," he said.

Singh said he wanted to introduce a system of tech-based education which would have allowed thousands of students to get certificate from DU while accessing classroom lectures online. "Lakhs of students graduate each year but we can't admit them all. After having studied online students could approach us for certification. We could have



■ Vice chancellor Dinesh Singh (centre) says that he launched incubation centres which has helped undergraduate students set up their start-up ventures.

SAUMYA KHANDLWAL/HT PHOTO

devised a plan for certification process," Singh said.

Bringing in a system which would have allowed transfer of credit for actively taking part in extra-curricular activities to academic subjects, was one of the initiatives which Singh said he wanted to implement.

"There should be a system which would allow students, who actively take part in NSS, NCC and sports, to get credit in their academic subject. I wanted to implement that in DU but could not. If you are a history student but are part of any sports then

you should get credits for that in academics also," said Singh.

Singh said that he could not implement these initiatives as most of his time in the last couple of years was spent in managing FYUP and its rollback.

Singh counted the establishment of Cluster Innovation Center (CIC) and a culture of innovation in DU colleges as one of his biggest achievements.

"I created a culture of innovation in the university. We have established incubation centres which has helped undergraduate students in launching start-ups.

Colleges have acquired patents, written research papers and launched start-ups. At CIC there is a batch of students who all have start-ups and they don't want to take up jobs," he said.

Singh, who studied at St Stephen's College, will demit office after courting controversy over FYUP. He faced allegations of academic and administrative irregularities towards the end of his tenure by teaching community. He is also the only VC in the 93-year-old history of DU to be issued a show-cause notice by the HRD ministry.

DELHI PLANNING BASED ON AESTHETICS, NOT SAFETY: EXPERTS

Soumya Pillai

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NOIDA: The tremors felt in the Capital on Monday have come as a major jolt of realisation for residents and authorities, raising serious safety concerns for high-rises and unauthorised colonies alike. According to experts, in case of a severe earthquake of similar intensity, around 80% of the buildings will crumble.

"Talks had happened after the tremors felt in Delhi in May (with its epicentre in Nepal). However, this was merely lip service. There have been plans to retrofit the existing buildings to be able to withstand quakes but nothing was done," said Sudheer Kalyan, structural engineer and visiting professor at IIT Delhi.

Kalyan also said that the focus of the architecture in the city is based on aesthetics and not on structural safety.

According to a study conducted by IIT in 2010, over 25 lakh buildings in the Delhi and National Capital Region (NCR) need to be retrofitted under the new buildings code. The city attempted to retrofit its old buildings few years back but the Commonwealth Games in 2010 saw officials and resources diverted to more pressing work.

Five 'lifeline buildings' were identified in the Capital for retrofitting. However, out of these, the work on only government school, Ludlow Castle and Guru Teg Bahadur Hospital could be completed.

"Retrofits are nothing but shock absorbents for the building walls. Even rich neighbourhoods do not invest in them. A onetime investment can save you from a bigger damage," Kalyan said.

According to experts retrofitting is costly. A medium-sized home, with one floor, a crawl space area relatively free from obstructions will cost anywhere between ₹240,000 to ₹420,000, while for a multi-floored residential colony the cost will go up to ₹600,000 to ₹1,000,000.

"The soil around the Yamuna river bed up to 20 meter depth is sandy which behaves like water during quakes. Most of the high-rises in east and northeast Delhi have their foundations resting on this sandy soil," Aaditya Kapur, disaster management expert and president of the NGO Safety and Society.

Should UGC chairman appoint director of NAAC?

Jeevan Prakash Sharma

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If it comes to conflict of interest, then the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) and appointment of its director can also be questioned. NAAC is an autonomous body established by the University Grants Commission (UGC), but its director is appointed by the UGC chairman.

"In Western countries, assessment and accreditation bodies are completely independent and removed from the control of any such body which gives financial assistance to educational institutions. However, in India, we have NAAC under UGC. How can there be a fairness in the assessment of institutes," asks VN Rajasekharan Pillai, former director, NAAC.

According to Prof MM Ansari, member UGC, "UGC chairman Ved Prakash constituted a committee under a UGC member, and the present NAAC director was appointed on its recommendation. The said member is chairman of the executive council, NAAC, and the UGC chairman is chairman of the general council of NAAC. One can easily see how these important officials are connected. How can one then say that the appointments are fair and that there is no conflict of interest where such appointments are concerned? Unfortunately, other members of UGC are bypassed and the HRD ministry is a silent spectator. NAAC, therefore, cannot function autonomously, which is why even after 20 years of its establishment, less than 15% higher education institutions have been accredited so far."

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NAAC IS UNDER UGC**

UTILIZING INFRASTRUCTURE

Govt calls on universities to help implement Skill India mission

By PRASHANT K. NANDA
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NEW DELHI

The government has decided to rope in universities across the country to help implement Prime Minister Narendra Modi's skill development mission. So far, only schools have been part of the mission.

The University Grants Commission (UGC) asked over 700 universities and 35,000 colleges to join the mission. The aim is to put to use the infrastructure of these institutions beyond formal education. To begin with, universities have been asked to implement the Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY), which aims to train 2.4 million youths in 2015-16, launched by Modi on 15 July. "You are requested to kindly ensure that this scheme is implemented with quality outcomes in your

university and in the colleges affiliated with your university," UGC said in a circular dated 12 October, a copy of which has been reviewed by *Mint*. It has asked universities to furnish a plan for the same by 30 October.

The centre's renewed push stems from a fear that the ₹1,500 crore initiative might meet the same fate as that of the Standard Training and Assessment and Reward (STAR) scheme unveiled by the previous government and implemented by the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC). PMKVY, too, is being implemented by NSDC.

Earlier this month, NSDC chief executive Dilip Chenoy and chief operating officer Atul Bhatnagar resigned following the skills ministry's apparent displeasure over skill development outcomes, *Mint* reported on 14 October.

A government report has

found fault with the STAR scheme on several counts, *Mint* reported in April. STAR offered school dropouts financial incentives to acquire new skills, but the report said that "of those who got their results, only 24% have received certificates and less than 18% have received monetary rewards. This is despite the fact that 80% candidates reported having bank accounts, and 91.3% stated they had Aadhaar numbers."

"Universities have a huge network in terms of infrastructure and access to youngsters and their role will help in training, counselling youth in the locality. These universities and colleges enjoy local credibility. Hence, such a move will be beneficial for all. Besides, the huge infrastructure will be an added advantage as government need not build any fresh infrastructure for such activities and look

to optimize existing facilities," a government official said on condition of anonymity. Besides helping the Skill India mission, it will also help the human resource development ministry, under which UGC functions, reach its own skill development targets, the official said.

The HRD ministry in the past couple of years has failed to meet its skill development targets. In 2014-15, the higher education department achieved just 24.67% of its skill training targets, and in 2013-14, it had a meagre success rate of 17%, according to official data.

UGC's directive, however, has not gone down well with academics. A professor at Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, said on condition of anonymity that UGC should focus on quality higher education and research instead of dabbling in "areas beyond its core strength".



Deadline set: A file photo of Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. The UGC has asked universities to furnish a plan to implement the Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana by 30 October.