

Newspaper Clips

October 1, 2013

HT, Mumbai

IIT-B STARTS CENTRE FOR URBAN STUDIES

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MUMBAI: A new centre for Urban Science and Engineering (C-USE), inaugurated at the Indian Institute of Technology Bombay (IIT-B) by chief minister Prithviraj Chavan, will focus on interdisciplinary research, teaching and skilled manpower development to improve urban quality of life.

The centre will soon start a PhD programme in urban science and, in consultation with urban experts around the world, is also working towards developing a postgraduate programme. The courses will cover urban domains such as transportation, land use, urban design, water, food, public health, urban informatics and governance.

“The objective is to look at the challenges faced by urban cities of India and the developing world in a holistic manner, and focus on integrating science and technology with social science and planning to provide solutions to those challenges,” said Devang Khakkar, director, IIT-B.

While IIT-B had set up a Centre for Urban Science and Progress (CUSP) in New York in May 2012, which works on global solutions to urban challenges, C-USE focuses on urban challenges specific to Indian cities.

HT, New Delhi

UPA to spend ₹3 lakh crore on education in 12th five year plan

POLL MEASURE This educational reform plan is a way to beat the latest claims by Narendra Modi on the governance of the government

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NEW DELHI: To beat BJP's Prime Ministerial candidate Narendra Modi claims on governance, the UPA government will soon unveil its major educational reform plan worth ₹3,00,000 crore.

The country's top advisory body the Planning Commission has approved major increase to

existing educational programmes of the UPA government and has also given go ahead to launch the Rs 99,000 crore National Mission on Higher Education, called Uchchatar Siksha Abhiyan.

Under the plan, the Central funding for higher education institutions would be increased to 90% and it would also include private institutions who meet the new accreditation norms. The fund-

ing to the institutions would be through the state higher education council, which would be mandated to ensure autonomy of state universities and push for examination reforms.

The Centre will also provide money to convert some of the state universities into world class centers for research and will introduce the concept of converting colleges into cluster universities. "Some

of the existing colleges would be converted into model colleges," a senior government official said.

The overall aim of the Abhiyan is to increase the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in higher education from present 18% to 30% by 2020. To achieve the target, the government will have to set-up quality higher education institutions, an important cornerstone of the mission.

The biggest fillip, the government aims to give is to school education whose budget for the 12th five year has been more than doubled to ₹1,93,000 crore. The majority of the money would be utilised to improve school infrastructure and improve quality of school education based on outcomes.

The government aims to improve attendance and reduce dropout rates at the elementary

level to below 10 per cent and to increase Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) at the secondary level to over 90 per cent and at the Senior Secondary level to over 65 per cent.

The education plan emphasizes on improving learning outcomes that are measured, monitored and reported independently at all levels of school education with a special focus on ensuring that all children master reading.

Publication: The Times Of India Delhi; Date: Oct 1, 2013; Section: Times Nation; Page: 13;

Economic gap widens in IITs

11.6% Students' Kin Earn Less Than ₹1L

Hemali Chhapia | TNN

Mumbai: Students making it to India's best public engineering colleges this session might have more to tackle than study pressure. Making for a sharp economic divide on campus, two large cohorts of students in the class of 2017 in the IITs are from the upper middle classes and from the lower income groups.

This year, one out of every five students (over 20%) who qualified disclosed that the annual family income is over Rs 8 lakh. Two years ago, data released by the colleges revealed that about 9.3% of the qualified candidates had an annual family income of over Rs 10 lakh.

Equally stunning is the jump of students with family income of less than Rs 1 lakh: from just 1.5% two years ago to 11.6%. Another 12.7% IITians this year is from the Rs 1-2 lakh per year family income bracket. "This is not verifiable data. But there is a section of students that is very well off and another slice of really poor students who are getting into the IITs. There is a big economic divide on campus," said Gautam Barua, former IIT-Guwahati director.

A key factor in the steep rise of students from economically weaker sections is the bigger and better coaching

NUMBER GAME

- > 1 in 5 students or 20% candidates disclosed an annual family income of Rs 8 lakh and above
- > Another large chunk of candidates (12%) have annual family income of Rs 1 L or less
- > But a worrisome trend shows the largest number of questions left unanswered in this year's IIT-JEE is from mathematics and the highest overall score fell 4% from 96% to 92.2% this year

support that they are getting. The first that comes to mind is Patna's Super-30 that for some years now has been picking poor meritorious students and successfully coaching them.

Now, several coaching centres in other cities are offering free seats to bright students who can bag a rank, like P Sai Sandeep Reddy (JEE-2013 topper) who did not have the funds to translate his dream to reality. Hostels rooms at IITs are often a picture a contradiction. Small rooms with basic furniture — a cot, cupboard and a desk — soon get packed with gadgets. Students who come from families with an annual income of less than Rs 4 lakh can avail of the government's merit-cum-means scholarships.

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