

Newspaper Clips

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IITs are glorified engineering colleges, varsities more important: UGC chairman

Navjeevan Gopal Posted online: Sat Oct 12 2013, 05:15 hrs

Amritsar : The University Grants Commission chairman Dr Ved Prakash today said that the Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) were no more than "glorified engineering colleges".

Addressing a meeting of principals of affiliated colleges of Guru Nanak Dev University, Deans of various faculty and heads of various departments in Amritsar, Prakash while emphasising upon the importance of universities, said he was miffed at not receiving any research proposals for Singh-Obama initiative from the universities and the same had to be awarded to an IIT.

Prakash said since universities were not coming forward so the initiative had to be awarded to IIT ("IIT ko majboori mein dena pada") for execution in the wake of country's "prestige". "IIT. Kya hai IIT. (What are IITs?). Glorified engineering colleges. University aur IIT mein zameen aasman ka antar hai (University and IITs are poles apart)," Prakash said.

After his address, in response to a question on the comparison, Prakash said that Universities were far more important than IITs. Universities had a higher intake of students, he added. On reports that UGC may lose funding powers amid UPA government having cleared the Rs 22,000 crore Rashtriya Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA) to revive and strengthen India's higher education sector, Prakash evaded a direct reply and said, "It is not an issue. The idea is that universities should get the funds."

The HRD ministry is reportedly working on a plan to gradually divest the apex higher education regulator — University Grants Commission (UGC) — of funding powers.

He was all praise for RUSA and said Punjab stood to gain hugely from it. "I am sure you are going to pick up a major chunk," he said .

The UGC chairman also impressed upon the need to focus on first generation learners, pointing out that they should not only be embraced by the faculty but also guided to choose their streams. Such students should not be told just to join the Arts stream. Instead, they should be encouraged to join other streams also depending upon their talent. He drove home his point about first generation learners by saying that such students hailing from poor families needed to be encouraged as they feared asking questions, searched seats on the back benches and avoided eye contact.

HT Amritsar

UGC chief speaks on higher education plan

AMRITSAR: Chairman, University Grants Commission (UGC), Ved Prakash, who was at Guru Nanak Dev University (GNDU) here on Friday, while addressing a meeting of principals of the GNDU-affiliated colleges, deans and departmental heads of the varsity, gave a detailed note of Rashtriya Uchcharat Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA), a centrally sponsored scheme, which ensures state-level planning and increase of funds for the state institutions, within a span of

two planning periods with prime attention on higher educational institutions of the country.

He said this scheme would cater to the needs of 316 state-run public universities and affiliated colleges in the country.

A sum of ₹25,000 crore has been made available under RUSA for various schemes that recognised higher learning institutions take up.

He said the focal point of RUSA is to lay greater emphasis on planning and system of

SAYS FOCAL POINT OF RUSA IS TO LAY GREATER EMPHASIS ON PLANNING AND SYSTEM OF MONITORING

monitoring at the state level while facilitating institutional base and endorsing reforms in higher education system.

He was hopeful that these steps would advance autonomy in state universities and improve

its governance.

“This scheme will revamp the examination system of the higher institutions by introducing long needed reforms. It will promote quality research and innovative ideas in various disciplines,” added Prakash.

“It will ensure apolitical decision-making, strategic funding for the state universities and will resolve academic and affiliation issues besides ensuring autonomy and governance in state universities,” he added. **HTC**

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e-paper

Peace Nobel for chemical arms watchdog

OPCW Is Currently Overseeing The Destruction Of Syria's Stockpile

Kounteya Sinha | TNN

Stockholm: The Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), the international body currently overseeing the destruction of Syria's chemical arsenal, won the 2013 Nobel Peace Prize on Friday.

The OPCW has been working since 1997 to convince countries to give up chemical weapons, besides checking and confirming the destruction of existing arsenals.

It has conducted more than 53,000 inspections in 86 countries till now.

“Our aim is to rid the world of chemical weapons, which is a great challenge,” said Ahmet Uzumcu, the organization's director-general. “We've the necessary knowledge and expertise to do so. Around 80% of chemical weapons stockpile has been destroyed while the rest will be in another few years.”

NOBLE MISSION

► Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) headed by Ahmet Uzumcu, awarded the 2013 Nobel Peace Prize for its efforts to stop chemical warfare

► An independent global body set up in 1997 to implement the Chemical Weapons Convention

► Based in The Hague, it has 189 member states

► It is currently involved in destroying Syria's stockpiles of chemical weapons

► It's the first time OPCW has worked in a conflict zone



► Carries out inspections of destruction procedures

► Autonomous organization with working relationship with United Nations

► These nations agreed to work together to create a world free of chemical weapons

► Evaluates nations' declarations to verify convention being adhered to

► OPCW 500 employees, 2010 budget was €75m (\$102m, £63m)

► OPCW says India has completed destruction of its declared chemical weapons

Thorbjorn Jagland, chairman of the Norwegian Nobel Committee, said the OPCW's nomination was made before April 1 and “came into the picture before the impasse in Syria”. “Syria has highlighted

the terrible role of these weapons,” he said. “OPCW is not a new candidate but has been nominated several times before. We have been looking at OPCW for a long time, even its historical relevance. The prize

should put pressure on countries that haven't ratified the chemical weapons convention — Israel, Egypt, North Korea, Burma, Angola and South Sudan — to do so for a chemical weapons free world.”

Pakistani teenager Malala Yousafzai, who last year survived a Taliban assassination attempt because of her support for girls' education, had been considered the favourite to win the prize this year.

Norwegian public broadcaster NRK, which has a strong track record of leaking the names of Nobel peace winners, reported the OPCW's victory more than an hour before the official announcement.

The OPCW has been monitoring activities in the chemical industry to reduce the risk of commercial chemicals being misused, providing assistance and protection to member countries if they are attacked or threatened with attack by chemical weapons, and promoting international cooperation for the peaceful uses of chemistry. It says 100% of the declared chemical arms stockpiles have been verified.

For the full report, log on to www.timesofindia.com

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Dr M C Misra is new AIIMS chief

Durgesh Nandan Jha | TNN

New Delhi: India's premier medical college and hospital, All India Institute of Medical Sciences, got a new director on Friday with the appointment of Dr M C Misra. Till now, Misra was the head of the institute's trauma centre.

Dr Misra (61) is known as a leading surgeon and is also credited with developing the AIIMS Trauma centre into a model of care for emergency services in the country.



Dr M C Misra

Speaking to TOI soon after taking over as the AIIMS director, Misra said, "My aim will be to make AIIMS more patient-friendly. Computerization of patient records, capacity building to ease admissions and reducing the waiting time for surgeries and procedures will be the priority."

The new director also plans to enter into partnerships with engineering institutes like IIT Delhi to develop low-cost healthcare devices. "We already have a 'Stanford India Bio-design' project going on in which three top universities of the world—Stanford, IIT and AIIMS—are collaborating to develop low-cost stents. In the future, we will have more such partnerships," he added.

Dr Misra joined AIIMS in the 1980's and became the head of the surgery department 13 years later in 1993. He took over as the AIIMS Trauma Centre chief in 2006. At least 10 prominent doctors, from AIIMS as well as overseas, were in line for the director's post but Misra was always a frontrunner. The former director of AIIMS, Dr R C Deka, retired on September 30.

Four other candidates in the fray who were shortlisted by the search-cum-selection committee, were Dr Y K Gupta who heads the pharmacology department, Dr V K Paul who heads the paediatrics department, Dr Balram Airon who heads cardio-thoracic and vascular surgery, and Dr S K Acharya who heads the gastroenterology department.



NASA admits mistake in banning Chinese student -- but likely too late to help

By Jeremy A. Kaplan

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Misapplication of a federal law meant to stem the theft of American technological know-how has likely made it impossible for several Chinese scientists to attend a NASA astronomy conference -- a ban criticized by Chinese officials and the law's author.

One of those banned is Yale University post-doctoral student Ji Wang, who had planned to present data from the now-defunct Kepler spacecraft at the event. NASA head Charlie Bolden admitted the agency had made a mistake on Thursday, a change of heart likely too late to help, said Alan P. Boss, a member of the Carnegie Institution for Science and co-chair of the conference.

"The efforts of NASA's Ames Research Center to ensure that our Chinese astronomer colleagues will be able to attend the Second Kepler Science Conference have been halted by the fact these approvals must be entered into a computer system at NASA HQ in Washington DC," Boss told FoxNews.com.

"Because of the ongoing federal government shutdown, there is no one at NASA HQ who can complete the approval process."

"The ability of scientists to attend an open scientific meeting about the spectacular results produced by NASA's Kepler Space Telescope is another likely fatality of the failure of the U.S. Congress to enact a federal budget for FY2014," Boss added.

In a Thursday e-mail to NASA staff seen by FoxNews.com, space agency chief Charlie Bolden blamed "mid-level managers" and said his office was looking to correct the mistake.

"In performing the due diligence they believed appropriate following a period of significant concern and scrutiny from Congress about our foreign access to NASA facilities, meetings and websites, [they] acted without consulting NASA HQ," Bolden wrote.

"Upon learning of this exclusion, I directed that we review the requests for attendance from scientists of Chinese origin and determine if we can recontact them immediately upon the reopening of the government to allow them to reapply."

The ban had been widely denounced by both Chinese officials and scientists, who initially labeled it "deplorable."

The issue arose when an employee of the Ames Research Center where the Kepler Science Conference II is to be held sent an e-mail citing a 2013 restriction spearheaded by Rep. Frank Wolf, R-Va. It prevents the agency from hosting any Chinese nationals, and was drafted as a response to national security concerns -- concerns described to FoxNews.com in conversations with a whistle-blower earlier this year.

But it shouldn't extend to students and ordinary scientists, Wolf said.

"It places no restrictions on activities involving individual Chinese nationals unless those nationals are acting as official representatives of the Chinese government," reads an Oct. 8 letter Wolf wrote to NASA chief Charlie Bolden and supplied to FoxNews.com.

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Speaking Wednesday in Beijing, Chinese foreign ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying called the ban "discriminatory." She said China believed that academic or scientific research activities "should not be politicized."

A strongly worded letter from the committee organizing the event agreed.

"We find the consequences of this law deplorable and strongly object to banning our Chinese colleagues, or colleagues from any

nation, from participation in KSC2 at NASA/Ames. Had we been aware of this possibility at the onset of planning KSC2, alternate venues to NASA/Ames would have been pursued," the letter reads.

Wolf said the ban was a misinterpretation of the rules: NASA had conflated the temporary restriction and a larger, 2011 congressional provision that primarily restricts bilateral meetings and activities with the Communist Chinese government.

"The email from NASA Ames mischaracterizes the law and is inaccurate."

Yet Wolf told Bolden he remains concerned about leaks of highly sensitive information from Ames and elsewhere in NASA.

"There is good reason Congress is concerned about providing the Communist Chinese government with additional opportunities to work with the U.S. on space given their continued cyberattacks, espionage campaigns and development of space weapons to use against the U.S.," Wolf wrote.