Newspaper Clips
October 16, 2010

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Baby born from embryo frozen two decades ago

No stopping medical progress

■ TIMES VIEW ■

With the advances made in fertility treatment and techniques such as in vitro fertilisation (IVF) over the past few decades, news of a 42-year-old woman giving birth now to a baby boy, adopted as an embryo from another couple 20 years ago, doesn't come as a great surprise. Given that prior to this, an embryo had already been frozen successfully for 13 years, this is merely the next step. With laws adjusting to these scientific breakthroughs – in Britain, for instance, embryos are allowed to be frozen for up to 55 years – such situations are going to become increasingly common.

Consider the benefits of such a procedure. It would make the choice between a career and raising a family – far more fraught for women than for men given that it is more difficult for the former to conceive after a certain age – redundant. A woman could simply opt to have her own embryo frozen until she is financially and professionally in a position to have a child, resolving the bind between career and children. Inter-generational embryo donation also becomes a distinct possibility. This would provide a way around genetic problems that might make a girl likely to be infertile when she grows up as well as assure the future mother of genetic ties to her child. There has already been an instance of a woman freezing her eggs for her daughter to use when she becomes an adult.

Such advances are bound to have some effect on family and social dynamics down the line – older mothers, for one – but so be it. Social patterns have always been in flux. The nuclear families that form the dominant unit in large parts of the world today would have been unthinkable for most of human history. There is no stopping medical and social evolution.

Revoltingly unnatural concept

■ COUNTERVIEW ■

Jay Kumar

Scientists have announced that a baby boy was born recently to a 42-year-old woman from an embryo frozen 20 years ago. Not surprisingly, the idea of frozen embryos has found instant takers. Its votaries defend it on the ground that it will allow greater freedom to career-oriented women to decide about their pregnancy.

However, there cannot be a more bankrupt idea where the joy of motherhood is postponed for the sake of a career. That's especially the case when medical science shows that greater complications can be associated with late motherhood. Moreover, a society which privileges career over parenthood cannot prosper. Let's not disturb a healthy natural process such as birth. A positive childbirth is not only spiritually more fulfilling, but can also strengthen the mother-child bond. Also, the difference between consuming a medicine and a meal ought to be maintained. In vitro fertilisation and embryo transfer were designed as medical procedures to give infertile couples a chance to establish a pregnancy. What should have been an elective therapy to be used in extraordinary situations is now becoming a norm.

Furthermore, there are ethical questions surrounding the future of leftover embryos. They are living beings that are not implanted but are frozen. How do we dispose of such human lives, which now run into millions in advanced countries like the UK and US? Even worse, the inter-generational donation will complicate and spoil family relations. For instance, how do we cope up with situations when an infertile daughter uses the eggs of her mother to give birth to her own half brother or sister? How would we answer a daughter who questions why she was left frozen as an embryo for decades? It is difficult to evade such ethical and religious questions. Society must make laws regulating this domain.

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Breaks to restore willpower a waste of time: Study

London: Working hard at the office? You don't need any "refreshment break" to restore your willpower, says a new study.

Scientists have long assumed that willpower is a very limited resource, and when it's drained, the only way to restore it is by recharging our bodies with rest, food or even some distraction. But, now psychologists at Stanford university have challenged this theory, saying weak will-power is all in your head, after they found a person's mindset and personal beliefs about willpower determine how long and how well they will be able to work on a tough mental exercise.

"If you think of willpower as something that's biologically limited, you're more likely to be tired when you perform a difficult task. But if you think of willpower as something that's not easily depleted, you can go on and on," the Daily Mail quoted lead author Veronika Job as saying. For the study, the researchers designed a series of four experiments to test and manipulate Stanford students' beliefs about willpower.

After a tiring task, those who believed or were led to believe that willpower is a limited resource performed worse on standard concentration tests than those who thought of willpower as something they had more control over. They also found that leading up to final exam week, students who bought into the limited resource theory ate junk food 24% more often than those who believed they had more control in resisting temptation. The limited resource believers procrastinated 35% more than other group. PTI

'Bad job can take a toll on mental health'

If you want to have good mental health, it's not enough to just have a job, you should have a job that satisfies you, says a new study. Researchers at the Australian National University, led by Liana Leach, have found that people in poor quality jobs that are insecure or have high levels of strain share the same level of mental health with the unemployed. According to the study, employment isn't always linked to better mental health – in fact people who move from unemployment into poor quality jobs are much more likely to be depressed than those who were still unemployed. PTI

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'Cancer not natural, but a man-made malady'

London: Cancer may not depend on natural factors, as British scientists claim it is largely a man-made disease caused by lifestyle factors like diet and pollution.

A team at Manchester University investigated ancient Egyptian remains, looking for signs of cancer, and diagnosed the disease in an Egyptian mummy for the first time — but it says finding just one case after examining hundreds of mummies proves cancer was then extremely rare.

The scientists also found very few references to the symptoms of cancer in ancient literature; there has been a huge increase in cancer cases since the Industrial Revolution, the Daily Express reported.

Professor Rosalie David, at the university's faculty of life sciences, said: "In industrialised societies cancer is second only to cardiovascular disease as a cause of death. But in ancient times it was extremely rare.

"There is nothing in the natural environment that can cause cancer. So it has to be a man-made disease, down to pollution and changes to our diet and lifestyle." PTI

Times of India ND 16/10/2010

Medical university faculty hiring influenced by TN govt

Selection Process Interfered With To Deny Meritorious A Chance

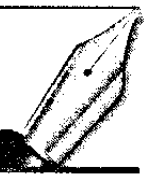
Pushpa Narayan | TNN

Chennai: Political interference at the highest level influenced the selection of teaching and administrative staff at the Tamil Nadu Dr MGR Medical University over a three-year period from November 2006 to November 2009, according to data accessed under the Right to Information (RTI) Act. The MGR University is Tamil Nadu's premier medical university to which all government medical colleges and at least seven private colleges are affiliated.

Documents obtained by TOI indicate the role of the Raj Bhavan and office of the state health minister, MRK Panneerselvam, in influencing the selection process in favour of certain applicants, thereby denying meritorious candidates a chance. The governor, Surjit Singh Barnala, is the chancellor of the university and the health minister is its pro-chancellor. The selection committee was chaired by then vice-chancellor K Meer Mustafa Hussain. Details of resumes, reports on committee meetings and appointment orders in at least three cases indicate the manner in which norms were flouted. The university had on August 4, 2008, received an application from a candidate, M Shanthi on which a signed note written in green ink reads, "Recommended and forwarded by Hon'ble Minister MRK Panneerselvam, minister for health and family welfare."

A month later, Shanthi was appointed UGC coordinator. Strangely, her appointment letter was not sent to her but instead despatched to the health minister's office and was duly acknowledged and received by the minister's assistant, Shanmugam. The acknowledgment copy is attached to the university's files relating to Shanti's appointment. In another instance, the university received an application from a candidate, Dr K S Uma, for the post of reader in the department of siddha on November 21, 2008. A signed note on the resume in green ink reads, "Telephonic message from Raj Bhavan to consider this candidate Dr K S Uma for the post of reader in Siddha." On January 19, the selection committee chaired by then vice chancellor Dr K Meer Mustafa Hussain went on to appoint Dr Uma to the post.

YOUR RIGHT TO KNOW



In another instance, on August 21, 2007, the university selection committee had recommended a candidate, Dr Rajalakshmi, as a lecturer for the department of siddha. Though the recommendation was accepted by the governing council on Sept 21, 2007, the selection committee went on to modify its own decision some time later and shifted Dr Rajalakshmi to a "wait list".

Another candidate Dr E Manigantan was then recommended for the post. The university later created another post for a lecturer and appointed Dr Rajalakshmi without advertising for it. On being confronted with the evidence, university officials defended all the appointments saying the candidates were chosen on merit. "The appointments were made based on standard procedures," said a senior university official.

A FOR ABILITY, C FOR CONFIDENCE

Just 6 Hours Of Your Week Can Make Millions Employable

Divya A | TNN

Anindya Chattopadhyaya

ON YOUR MARK: Students provide feedback to their teacher on the last day of the pilot project

New Delhi: Henna has a new work language and will soon be looking for her dream job. She hopes to use her newly acquired English language skills to work in the services sector and become part of India's new economy.

Henna was one of the lucky few who were chosen to take part in the Teach India 2010 pilot project that ended here on Wednesday. The initiative, "The ABC of Jobs", is meant to make young people more employable by teaching them how to speak English.

The programme, which The Times Group devised in collaboration with the British Council, will teach spoken English to young, ambitious boys and girls in the Capital's urban slums.

The two-month pilot project trained roughly 1,000 pupils from Giri Nagar, Sangam Vihar, Madangir and other

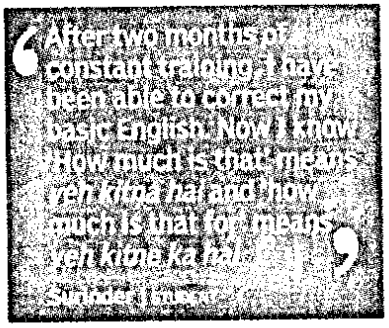
TEACH INDIA

poor parts of the city. Most students, who learnt how to speak English fluently, said they wanted to work in the services sector.

Most young learners belonged to households that earned less than Rs 8,000 a month. Most said their parents were barely literate. All of them confessed to being ambitions and wanting to improve their prospects, say, as front-office executives or even as tourist guides.

The pilot project appeared to show that it is possible – in the span of just a few weeks – to teach young people to speak English fluently. The students said they felt empowered and confident. Surinder, 18, from Sangam Vihar, is in his first year of college. He said he always aimed "to work in a call centre but was always unsure of my English as I spoke it. But after two months of constant training at Kalyanam centre (a partner NGO), I have been able to correct my basic English. Now I know 'How much is that' means *yeh kitna hai* and 'how much is that for' means *yeh kitne ka hai*."

Arvind, 19, is from Giri Nagar and his father runs a small flour mill in the slum area. He says: "After the first month of my training, I got a job as customer service assistant at the nearby Satyam Cineplex. But I didn't leave



it there. Now, I am trying to brush up my spoken English so that I can help customers better and eventually get a promotion."

Students said that the best thing about the course was the role-play, which offered virtually real-time experience of their dream job — anyone could "be" anything, tourist guide, customer care executive or hotel reservation agent.

Rustam, course coordinator from the British Council, said he was "pleasantly surprised" that the students "talked to me in English for more than one hour today, without any hiccups or hesitation. It is way ahead where we started."

Nina Jolly, trustee at Adharshila, a partner NGO based in Giri Nagar, says that at the end of the two-month training, most students appeared to have got the hang of speaking English. But she admitted that a few still remain tense about tenses and pronunciation. "But they have gained a lot of confidence, and those who are not studying, are already applying for jobs and ready to face the interviews," she said.

Jolly stresses that the programme can only be as successful as its volunteers are enthusiastic. "Volunteers will need to spare six hours a week, two hours on alternate days, for 12 weeks."

The course, which starts on November 10, will take people who clear a screening test, said Sanjiv Kaura, CEO of the Times Group's Corporate Social Responsibility division. "We feel bad when we have to turn down students, but in order to be kind, you have to be strict sometimes," he said.

www.teachindia.itimes.com

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Tsunamis create waves 300km above Earth too

Tsunamis which often cause huge destruction on land also make a surprising impression even 300km high above the Earth, scientists say. According to researchers, tsunamis generate mysterious "atmospheric gravity waves" and their better understanding would help gather better data on the potentially devastating ocean-based waves and improve tsunami warning networks. "The tsunami very effectively generates atmospheric gravity waves, and because they're fast, those waves can effectively travel to the upper atmosphere," said Michael Hickey, an associate dean at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University in Florida. Hickey has teamed up with experts who are using GPS to observe these waves in ionosphere, an area in the atmosphere which lies between 80 and 500 km above the Earth.

Evil virus will meet its doom: Scientists are poised to eliminate rinderpest, a deadly viral disease that has devastated cattle herds for centuries, the UN Food and Agriculture Organization said. "It would be the first time in history that humankind has succeeded in wiping out an animal disease in the wild, and only the second time, after smallpox in 1980, that a disease has been eliminated thanks to human efforts," the FAO said.

Solar plane set for world tour: The team that built the first solar-powered plane is planning a round-the-world flight within two years, with a stopover in China, a media report said. With a 63.4-metre wingspan and an average flying speed of 70 kmph, Solar Impulse is a revolutionary aircraft that can accomplish night and long-distance flights powered only by solar and wind energy.

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With eDNA, PCs can heal themselves

Melbourne: A group of researchers at Technical University is working on developing a computer that can heal itself, the idea inspired from the popular sci-fi thriller 'Terminator'.

"Until now, this has been the stuff of pure science fiction, and what made the robots in the Terminator films so robust and fantastical on the big screen. Now it's no longer science fiction," News.com.au quoted the team as saying.

It's called 'eDNA' and it's inspired by biology. The theory being followed by researchers is that a computer should be made up of lots of cells, or 'eCells', and should be able to decide how to assign different jobs to each one. Then, if one cell fails, another one can take over its job.

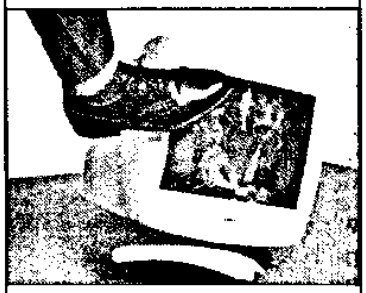
"In this way, an organism develops from the computer's cells, and it is this that makes the computer — almost — immortal," said Jan Madsen.

The system can't actually physically repair dead cells, just reassign their jobs to new ones. But, in theory, if it had enough spares it could tolerate quite a bit of damage before it died. Anyone who's still creeped out by the idea should take comfort in the fact that eDNA's first test will be to find life, not destroy it.

Nasa has asked a member of the research team to implement the theory in a piece of equipment designed to look for extraterrestrial life.

Michael Reibel Boesen, who is currently working at the space agency's Jet Propulsion Lab in California said, "It's a boyhood dream come true. My mission is to convince Nasa that eDNA can make a satellite and the information it gathers and transmits back to Earth faster and more reliable." ANI

LIVING COMP



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'Designer' babies born after screening DNA for defects

Paris: Three healthy babies have been born in a pilot study of a technique to screen eggs across the full range of chromosomes, looking for defects that boost the risk of miscarriage, doctors said on Friday.

Twin girls were born in Germany in June, while a boy was born in Italy in September, the European Society of Human Reproduction and Embryology (ESHRE) said. "All babies and their mothers are doing very well in terms of weight and overall developmental performance," said Cristina Magli, an embryologist at the SISMER Centre in Bologna which took part in the trial.

It is the first controlled trial of a technique called microarray comparative genomic hybridisation (CGH), which aims at boosting success in assisted reproduction. The first birth using CGH occurred in Britain last year: a baby called Oliver, who was born to a 41-year-old woman who had had 13 failed attempts at in-vitro fertilisation (IVF).

It is the first controlled trial of a technique called microarray comparative genomic hybridisation, which aims at boosting success in assisted reproduction

Human cells have 46 chromosomes, with 23 inherited from each parent. Before an egg is fertilized, it ejects half of its full set of chromosomes to make room for the 23 coming from the sperm. These discarded chromosomes, held in a structure called the "polar body," are a mirror image of those remaining in the egg.

CGH examines this cast-off genetic material. If there are too few or too many chromosomes, doctors know that the egg is not suitable for use. CGH screening has several advantages. Firstly, it tests all 23 pairs of chromosomes in a cell, rather than a limited number, as other methods do, ESHRE said.

In addition, the cell tested is taken from the egg at fertilisation, rather than from a developing embryo. The technique could be a boon in countries which outlaw embryo analysis. AFP

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Tata Group gifts Harvard $50 million

Ahead Of Obama's Visit, Business House Makes A Point About India's US Link

Chidanand Rajghatta | TNN

Washington: The Tata Group has announced a $50-million (Rs 220-crore) gift to Harvard Business School, the largest donation from an international donor in the school's history.

Besides cementing an already significant relationship between India and the world's premier business school, the grant also sends out a strong message of Indian academic and economic involvement in the US ahead of the India visit of President Obama, who is also a Harvard (law school) alumnus.

The gift, disclosed in Boston on Thursday by chairman Ratan Tata, will fund a new academic and residential building on the HBS campus for participants in the school's broad portfolio of Executive Education programs. The school hopes to break ground for the building, which will be named Tata Hall, next spring.

Ratan Tata attended the school's Advanced Management Program — one of three comprehensive leadership programs offered by HBS Executive Education — in 1975. He received the school's highest honour, the Alumni Achievement Award, in 1995.

On top of this, Harvard Business School's current (and 10th) Dean is Rajasthan-born Nitin Nohria. Clearly, the gift is not without some political undertones, coming on the eve of the India visit of President Obama, who has lately railed about the flight of American jobs to India.

BACK TO SCHOOL

Boston's Democratic Mayor Thomas Menino, who joined Tata and Nohria for the announcement on the HBS campus, said the Indian company's generosity would have both a local and global impact. "Mr Tata's gift will create jobs right here in Boston, and the executives who study at HBS will go out into the world as ambassadors of our truly world-class city."

In fact, President Obama himself is expected to stay at the Tata Group's flagship property, the Taj Hotel, site of the deadly 26/11 terrorist strike by Pakistani gunmen, during his visit to Mumbai next month, also as a gesture of solidarity with the Indian group which lost several employees in the attack.

Ahead of the presidential visit, Larry Summers, one of his key economic advisers, who is also a past president of Harvard University, is already in Mumbai.

All these factors appeared to have played a role in the big Tata gift, although there has been criticism in some quarters regarding Indian business lavishing grants on US schools that are already wealthy beyond compare.

▶**Harvard has world's largest endowment, P 28**

Harvard has world's largest endowment

▶**Continued from P 27**

Harvard University has an endowment of over $25 billion, the world's largest, and HBS endowments alone top $2 billion. Last week, the Mahindra Group announced a $10-million gift to support Harvard's Humanities Center. But the hoary university, which has many distinguished Indian alumni, including two cabinet ministers (P Chidambaram and Kapil Sibal), and several business leaders (Rahul Bajaj, Y C Deveshwar, besides Tata and Mahindra, among them), evidently has a special place in Indian hearts and minds.

"The Harvard Business School is the pre-eminent place to be exposed to the world's best thinking on management and leadership, and we are pleased that this gift will support the school's educational mission to mold the next generation of global business leaders," Ratan Tata said, explaining the gift.

Harvard Business School Dean Nitin Nohria expressed deep appreciation for Tata Group's "extraordinary generosity" saying, "This is a historic gift from a renowned organization revered for its significant economic, civic, and philanthropic impact." Nohria, who is an alumnus of IIT Mumbai, reminded Americans that Tata Group is widely respected for integrity and innovation, not just in India — where it produced both the first indigenous car and the $2,000 Tata Nano automobile — but in a variety of business lines across several continents, from cars to hotels and from tea to IT. Tatas own three premier hotel properties in US in New York (The Pierre), Boston (Ritz) and San Francisco (Campton). Together with its IT operations, its enterprises have created thousands of jobs in hit US, a fact that is seldom recognized in America.

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■ Montek Singh Ahluwalia

PRANAB SNUBS MONTEK OVER ₹500 CR GRANT FOR IIT-KGP

ht SPECIAL

Charu Sudan Kasturi
■ charu.kasturi@hindustantimes.com

NEW DELHI: Pranab Mukherjee's finance ministry has overruled the Planning Commission's rejection of a proposed ₹500 crore special grant to Indian Institute of Technology, Kharagpur, in the latest snub for an embattled plan panel.

The finance ministry has asked the human resource development (HRD) ministry to formally submit a proposal for the grant, despite the Planning Commission rejecting the proposal outright, top government sources told *HT*.

"It is an uncommon situation for the finance ministry to give its in-principle nod for such large plans when the Planning Commission has objected," a source said.

Snubs and differences with other government arms, however, have not been uncommon for the plan panel and its deputy chairman Montek Singh Ahluwalia in recent weeks.

Roads and Surface Transport Minister Kamal Nath had some weeks ago dubbed the Planning Commission a group of "armchair" analysts and slammed them for stalling projects. Nath had made the comments at a public forum with Ahluwalia seated on the dais.

In recent weeks, the Planning Commission has also faced fire from several other central ministries for allegedly blocking projects.

The panel under Ahluwalia had cited shortage of funds to award the special grant sought by IIT Kharagpur to celebrate its diamond jubilee in 2011 by building new infrastructure and introducing new facilities for teachers and students.

The grant is critical to the IIT's vision of upgrading facilities to enable it to compete with the best engineering schools across the globe, sources said.

Hindustan Times ND 16/10/2010

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FUNDING STUDIES

Ratan Tata gifts $50mn to Harvard

HT Correspondent

■ letters@hindustantimes.com

MUMBAI: In one of the biggest corporate contributions by an Indian business house to education, Tata Group chairman Ratan Tata donated $50 million (₹220 crore) to the prestigious Harvard Business School to fund a new building that will support a broad range of executive education programmes.

The school acknowledged that the fund was the "largest international donation in its 102-year history."

The Tata chairman was a student of Advanced Management Program at Harvard in 1975.

"It is a privilege and pleasure to give back to Harvard a little bit of what it gave to me," said Tata. "We are pleased this gift will support the school's educational mission to mould the next generation of global business leaders."

His contribution comes in a year during which Indian-born Nitin Nohria took charge as dean of Harvard and also led a donation-seeking trip to India. With the latest act of charity, Tata will get his surname embossed on an academic and residential building that is scheduled to be completed for the fall of 2013 and named 'Tata Hall'.

The contribution surpasses $10 million donated by Mahindra group vice-chairman Anand Mahindra to Harvard for its Humanities Center made a few days ago.

■ Tata: Harvard alumnus

Hindustan Times ND 16/10/2010 p-8

AICTE deals with Microsoft, Autodesk

NEW DELHI: Software giants Microsoft and Autodesk on Friday signed agreements with the All India Council for Technical Education to provide free access to some of their most popular education products to students, teachers and colleges. Autodesk has offered 32 products that help simulate engineering, design and architecture challenges and find solutions. Microsoft offered a six-product pack.

Financial Express ND 16-Oct-10 p-8

Meritocracy vs aristocracy

Before tinkering with the IIT/IIM admission test, remember only bright kids get in, not just rich ones

The most important decision a child in India makes is to choose his/her parents wisely. Having parents who speak English, live in a city, work in the organised sector, went to college, and kept you healthy gives you an opening balance that pretty much ensures a good life. But while this kind of an opening balance gets you many things, it cannot get you an undergraduate education at the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) or a post-graduate education at the Indian Institute of Management (IIM). Despite the mild dilution in standards because of reservations, the only way to get into either of these institutions is to do well at the brutal speed tests called JEE (for IIT) and CAT (for IIM's).

Of late, there has been an increased criticism of these two exams as simplistic speed tests that have undesirable and unintended consequences, like the start of IIT entrance exam coaching in Class 5 and 96% of students admitted to IIM Ahmedabad this year being engineers. Critics argue that a strong performance on the JEE or CAT does not indicate knowledge, it demonstrates high exam-taking abilities. They suggest that the admission criteria for IIM and IIT must capture the complexity of multiple intelligences and the diversity of human motivations. They are right.

But before we change the admission criteria of these institutions, we must be mindful of the huge upside of the current structure. The current admission criteria ensure that they are the ultimate meritocracy where your financial, social, geographic and parental opening balance is less relevant than the strength of your back and the persistence in your heart. Very few children of rich parents plan for an undergraduate education at IIT and very few scions of family businesses plan for an MBA at IIM. Most head overseas. They head overseas not only because they can, but because the broader admission criteria of elite overseas colleges play to the gifts of privilege. An admission evaluation that values debating, interview skills, weighty recommendations, carefully crafted essays, musical abilities, astronomy, languages, fencing, horse riding, world travel and volunteer work is biased in favour of children from homes than can make these available. This is not an argument against a stable and gifted childhood—I had one—but simply the recognition that the IIT and IIM admission criteria are not biased in favour of privilege.

MANISH SABHARWAL

It's ironic how the Indian school system wants to be like the US and the US system wants to be like India

The US is only now coming to terms with this; only 34% of youth in the bottom quintile of family income distribution enrol in colleges, whereas 79% of those from the top quintile do. The dense networks of elite joining undergraduate Ivy League institutions were strongly demonstrated in the explosive adoption of Facebook, which started off at Harvard but took off like a rocket at the Ivy Leagues. David Kirkpatrick, author of the fantastic book *The Facebook effect*, says the Ivy League was the ideal place to launch because that's where the real-world social network of users at Harvard could be found—friends from the same elite high schools. So while the quality and experience of higher education system in the US is unique—I speak from personal experience—there is no doubt that the deck at elite institutions is unintentionally biased in the favour of a certain child from a certain family. This cannot be said of IITs and IIMs where the deck is biased in favour of a certain kind of child but from any family above abject poverty.

Demands to tweak these tests echo a broader global movement that wants to get rid of exams, lower stress on students and eliminate rote learning so that we develop creative children who can think. In 2002, Japan implemented Yutori—meaning comfort or breathing space—to "make schools less like academic factories and more like organic free range farms". A third of the curriculum was replaced by open periods, which teachers were supposed to use for horizon expanding activities such as trips to nature reserves and old people's homes. The old evaluation system, in which each pupil was ranked from top performer down, was scrapped in favour of a less humiliating one for low achievers based on absolute scores. But evidence suggests that Japanese pupils are performing less well on internationalised standardised tests and ambitious parents are sending their children to more evening cramming classes negating the "breathing room" created by the yutori reforms. The *FT* reports that a whole industry of authors and consultants has sprung up to advise executives on dealing with the "yutori man and woman". Over-praised and overprotected from competition at school, this species is said to be lazy and prone to throw fits when criticised. The education ministry if now planning a partial roll-back of these reforms.

Creativity, hard work and discipline are not mutually exclusive. These days the Indian school system wants to be like the US, and the US system wants to be like India. The truth lies somewhere in between. Our school system needs to create space without destroying the healthy pressure that is inherent in any performance or learning. So let's tweak how and what we teach in schools but leave the 'ovarian lottery blind' entrance exams of IIT's and IIM's untouched.

The author is Chairman, Teamlease Services

Economic Times ND 16/10/2010

FACULTY SHORTAGE

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IIMs mull outsourcing for hirings

Urmi A Goswami
NEW DELHI

THE expansion of the IIM network has added to faculty shortages facing these institutes. A committee comprising IIM directors and chairmen has suggested innovative measures that includes hiring practising managers and outstanding research scholars and use of faculty resources from IIM system and universities to meet the shortage.

The faculty crunch is more in practice-oriented study areas such as finance, organisation behaviour, rather than in disciplines like economics, statistics and sociology. Earlier this year, there were as many as 90 vacancies in the seven older IIMs.

A committee headed by IIM Calcutta chairman Ajit Balakrishnan has made a set of suggestions to meet the gap. The committee has suggested that IIMs hire 'practice-oriented' faculty. This would mean that IIMs will not insist on PhDs for their faculty. Practising managers could be taken on as visiting faculty. At the same time, it has been suggested that they be encouraged to take advanced courses in research methodology, which should be followed by publishing papers in peer reviewed journals. After a "reasonable" success in publishing papers, they can be confirmed as full time faculty members.

INNOVATIVE STEPS

The Balakrishnan Committee has suggested the idea of incentivising the cross-IIM use of faculty resources and from across the university system

Another way to bridge the faculty gap that has been suggested is to invite outstanding research scholars from foreign universities on a three-year contractual assignment. This, the committee, hopes will help not just add to faculty strength but also raise the level of research at the institutes. Citing the example of the Institute of Advanced Study at Princeton, which was a research backwater till Einstein took up residence, the committee said that not only is the stature of the institute raised but the inclusion of outstanding scholars will help shape an insightful research agenda for IIMs.

The Balakrishnan Committee has suggested the idea of incentivising the cross-IIM use of faculty resources and from across the university system. In the way of incentives, teaching assignments in other institutes should be treated at par with consulting assignments. This would help particularly newly-established IIMs, where faculty shortage is acute. Older IIMs have not been keen to loan their faculty to the newly-established institutes such as IIMs at Tiruchirapalli, Ranchi, Raipur and Rohtak.

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INDIAN SCIENCE IS DIVORCED FROM PEOPLE

Our problems require application of both science and technology. But our scientists are busy solving problems of the developed world. How long shall we allow science to be dogged by mediocrity?

B.G. SIDHARTH

Shortly after India's independence our population was just around 400 million and the water table twice what it is today. Sixty years down the line, from the fresh water point of view, we are in a precarious position indeed. India has faced and is facing other problems as well.

In the early sixties the country was facing an acute food shortage. We had to be rescued by the US PL 480 plan. Power, Employment, Health including Environmental Pollution and so on have also been chronic problems.

The food crisis of the sixties was solved by the Green Revolution, but it is threatening to come back again, given the fact that the population has more than doubled from that time. The point is that these mega problems that a country with our mega population faces can only be solved with suitable application of science and technology. This requires an innovative community of scientists and engineers.

Unfortunately while the number of scientists and engineers in the country has grown by leaps and bounds, the quality of science has actually plunged. There have hardly been any breakthroughs in the account books of Indian science and technology. Can we blame this on inadequate funding ? The answer in my opinion is, No. We can certainly have more funding, but this too would only go to further increase the mediocrity of Indian science.

If Nobel prizes are an index of scientific excellence of a country, then India has drawn a total blank-the last science laureate from the country, working in the country was Sir C.V. Raman and in British India. He worked with no funding and against all odds. Or, we could have a more modest index of scientific progress: Breakthroughs in science and technology. Even here we have drawn a blank.

Indian scientific research does not count for much in the world

Let us take finally an even more modest index, what in the scientific world is referred to as the citation index, which measures the impact of the scientific work. Here Indian science has actually gone down hill over the past few decades.

The problem is that the university system, which is the feeder of the country's laboratories and higher institutes of research, has all but collapsed. Almost all the ills of the country could be traced to politicians and bureaucrats but the steep decline of Indian science and technology has been the handiwork of the Indian scientific community itself.

To analyse a little further, after independence the best talent in the country took to degrees and courses which ensured jobs, like Civil Engineering, Medicine and Law. Hardly any bright people took to scientific or technological research, or even research in medicine and life sciences.

This brain drain into what may loosely be called the industry, left the academia getting more and more depleted. Few worthy young men took to teaching or research, as these were meagrely paid jobs if at all jobs were available. This resulted in two very negative consequences. The first was that the quality of teaching in higher education plunged, leaving students groping on their own. The second was that what is sometimes called the Peter principle startedoperating. That is, mediocrity bred mediocrity and repelled quality or excellence. True there are exceptions, as always, but these do not prove the rule.

No doubt the Government was pouring funds into science and technology, but in a clueless manner. C.V. Raman derisively called this the Nehru Bhatnagar Effect. Dr. S.S. Bhatnagar, the eminent and well intentioned scientist, would approach Nehru for funds and the even more well intentioned Nehru would practically give him blank cheques. Much of this money went into building impressive brick and mortar institutions, rather than concentrating on ways and means to develop suitable human resources of excellence.

It is said that years ago Mrs. Indira Gandhi asked the eminent Indian American scientist, Dr. C.K.N. Patel, the then Executive Director of AT&T Bell Laboratories, what could be done to improve the Indian scientific research institutions. His reply silenced her into silent inaction. He suggested that all the research laboratories in India should be closed down and reopened six months later with a new set of scientists with a new agenda. That has been a major criticism of Indian science-it has not been people or society oriented in trying to tackle the fundamental problems of the country. V.S. Naipaul lamented that Indian scientists were working on problems that would get them a nod from Western institutions, rather than looking at the country or be on their own.

Some years ago Nobel Laureate Prof. Roald Hoffmann had this to say while delivering the B.M. Birla Memorial Lecture: "If I were to meet your Prime Minister, I would tell him, ask your researcher to concentrate on problems like Malaria. Let them join hands with their counterparts in a country like Columbia to solve this common problem". He went on to lament that a Malaria vaccine could be found in the US in practically no time but they would not do it for the wrong reasons. Malaria is a poor man's disease and there is no money in it.

The question is, after all this investment in science over the decades, are there any positives? Well, we might boast of the second largest scientific community in the world, which, however mediocre, can nevertheless provide support services for a vast country like India. This includes engineers for maintaining technical equipment like power plant or roads or bridges or dams, or doctors for health care, even in remote areas. Our scientists may not be able to come out with new inventions or medicines or cures, but they are capable of using existing technologies for maintenance of humans and equipment and keep afloat software outsourcing jobs. That is something positive, because many developing countries lack even that.

There is another positive too. The lack lustre and dreadful system of higher education and research in the country has driven some bright people to the developed world to pursue higher studies and research. Over the years, India has managed by default to build a bank of scientific and technical talent abroad. We could today rope them in but that is not easy. What these very bright scientists need is not so much money, but a proper environment.

Nobel Laureate Prof. Norman Ramsey once told me that rather than material incentive, it is peer pressure that drives excellence in research. Such an environment unfortunately has been destroyed by the mediocrities of our science. In other words we need to call back the brightest scientists and engineers and give them a free hand without any interference whatsoever from the Indian system. Then results will start tumbling out slowly. The question is, can we do it?

(The writer is Director, B.M. Birla Science Centre, Hyderabad)

Abandon silos in higher education

Let IITs and IIMs become full, multi-disciplinary universities. And give them complete autonomy

JAITHIRTH RAO

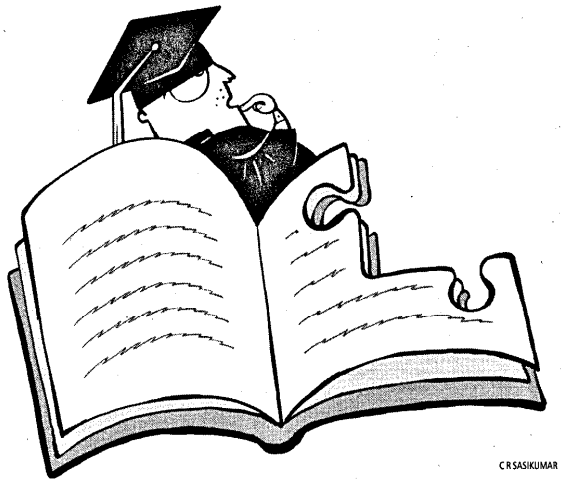
THE British started the universities of Bombay, Calcutta and Madras in 1861 (the charter documents had been drafted by Dalhousie as early as 1855) as bodies which would conduct examinations and award degrees. They did not envisage that these universities would be places where research would be encouraged and "new knowledge" created. They assumed that "new knowledge" would be created at Oxford, Cambridge and Edinburgh.

Despite this, research did creep in. Ashutosh Mukherjee offered the Palit professorship of physics to Raman (who did not have a PhD and who was working in the government as a deputy accountant-general!). When Radhakrishnan was appointed vice-chancellor of Andhra University (located in a hick town called Waltair), he had the audacity to invite Niels Bohr to come and head the physics department. Niels Bohr wrote back courteously that he was busy; he sent one of his brightest students as the first head of the physics department at Waltair.

Ashutosh and Radhakrishnan were rare. Most Indian universities remained examination and degree factories. When J.N. Tata wanted to endow an advanced institution focused on science (he felt there were too many lawyers and not enough scientists produced by British Indian universities), he chose to locate the Indian Institute of Science in Bangalore, outside the stultifying atmosphere of British India. The syllabus-examination-degree focus of Indian universities was accompanied by a "silo" strategy. Institutions were not developed as multi-disciplinary bodies operating in proximity. Roorkee was devoted exclusively to engineering — no place for economics or social sciences. Although part of Madras University, Guindy had a separate campus far away, devoted only to engineering. GS Medical College (better known as KEM Hospital) was far from, and had very little to do with, Bombay University. Again, no scope for inter-disciplinary work.

After independence, Nehru, realising that state politicians were bound to take over existing universities, tried to create "islands of excellence" through IITs and IIMs. Unfortunately, we adopted the "silo" model again. IITs would teach engineering, ISI would teach statistics, IIMs would teach management, AIIMS would teach medicine, FTII would teach film and so on. Our specialisation approach went to ridiculous levels — we have an Institute of Foreign Trade and an Institute of Infrastructure Management!

The problem with silos as distinct from inter-disciplinary universities is that "research" and "new knowledge creation" happens precisely in inter-disciplinary areas. Adam Smith was an economist and a professor of moral philosophy; the Delhi School of Economics would find it difficult to slot him in. (Amartya Sen holds professorships in both philosophy and economics at Harvard.) To attract a good physics professor, you need to assure her that sufficient PhD students will be available. In IITs, with the focus on engineering, physics PhD students are difficult to find. Good economics professors may avoid IIMs, as economics PhD students may not come to IIMs.



CR SASIKUMAR

CSIR laboratories are silos twice over. They are laboratories focused on research. For research to take place, you need PhD students, Master's students to do the grunt work and undergraduates providing the base. Otherwise top researchers are simply not that productive. Recently some CSIR labs have started giving PhDs. The IITs, IIMs, ISIs, FTIIs and CSIR labs should consider the option of becoming full-fledged universities. They have brands, resources, land (scarce in post-Singur India). If Carnegie and MIT, which started as engineering colleges, can have great literature and music departments, why not these?

Autonomy is important. The medieval European universities of Bologna, Heidelberg, St Andrews and so on were given autonomy by charter. They were run by "fellows" without interference by crown or state. They developed robust intellectual traditions. Victor Hugo captures the eclectic traits of the Sorbonne in *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*. Oxford theologians stood up to Mary Tudor. During the English Civil War, Oxford supported Charles I and the Cavaliers; Cambridge supported Cromwell and the Roundheads.

Autonomy, scope for dissent, the pursuit of excellence undisturbed by the state — these are prerequisites for research and knowledge creation. This autonomy was never disturbed even when the state provided funding. If the king or queen gave money, the fellows would happily name the institution King's College or Queens' College. That was about all. The sovereign had no role in running it. In America, the independence of universities was fiercely protected. When the state of New Hampshire wanted to take over Dartmouth, the college fought and prevailed.

Bombay, Calcutta and Madras Universities were established subject to government control. This increased after independence with the formation of the UGC and with governments politicising appointments. In West Bengal, for thirty years now, all teaching posts are reserved for those in favour with the Party. Higher education there has pretty much collapsed. During the permit-licence raj, Indian businesses looked for foreign collaborators. Less than ten years after liberalisation, the Tatas produced the Indica; in less than fifteen years the Mahindras produced the Scorpio; and in less than twenty years the Tatas are producing the Nano. In higher education we have had no Narasimha Rao-led liberalisation. We are dependent on foreigners to create new knowledge.

Our best academics in diverse fields are creating knowledge abroad. Ironically, the best professors of Indian history (Dipesh Chakrabarty, Sanjay Subrahmanyam), Telugu literature (Velcherlu Narayana Rao) are not teaching in India. I am told that last year the US produced more Sanskrit PhDs than India. We seem to believe in outsourcing knowledge creation to America and Britain.

After ten years, our growth rate will start falling unless we become a country that produces original research, focuses on discoveries, inventions, innovations and creativity. I am not persuaded that the private sector will fill this gap. Even in countries where private universities flourish, the ecosystem includes a vibrant public university system. Unless by a supreme act of historic political sagacity Sibal and Manmohan Singh move fast to encourage IITs, IIMs, CSIR labs and so on to become full-fledged multi-disciplinary universities, unless they guarantee them large annual grants, unless they give them autonomy where the governors become self-perpetuating autonomous groups like company boards, India's future is pretty dismal.

jerry.rao@expressindia.com

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IIMs can open off-campus centres

Aarti Dhar

NEW DELHI: Granting more autonomy to the Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs), the Centre has allowed these elite institutions to open off-campus centres within and outside the country.

The IIM Boards can also create posts within the framework of Memorandum of Association.

This was announced by Union Human Resource Development Minister Kapil Sibal at a meeting with the chairpersons and directors of IIMs here on Wednesday to discuss the future vision of the IIMs and the necessary steps taken to achieve these.

The IIM Boards will also have the powers to acquire and dispose of property, not fully or partially funded by the Ministry of Human Resource Development, powers to approve their budget and manage the funds generated by the institutions.

However, pointing out that autonomy should be made accountable, Mr. Sibal suggested that the faculty, the director and the IIM Boards prepare annual action plans and define key performance indicators at each level besides ensuring transparency.

Committee reports

Considering the reports of the three committees constituted in the last meeting at Bangalore on various issues, Wednesday's meeting agreed to reduce the number of Board members to 14 (from the existing maximum of 26). This was one of the recommendations made by R.C. Bhargava, chairman of IIM, Ranchi, at a committee on Governance Structure for IIMs chaired by him. It also discussed and approved the composition and selection of the Boards with adequate membership to IIM Society, the government, the faculty and the alumni.

The meeting agreed that the IIM societies should have long-term members who take continuous interest in the running of IIMs.

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Keep minister, MPs out of AIIMS governance: IIM

Aarti Dhar

- **Involve bigger faculty teams in institute body**
- **Research must be given weightage for promotion**

NEW DELHI: Recommending major changes in the governance system to make the All India Institute of Medical Sciences here a world-class institution, the Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad, has said there should be no political interference in the functioning and management of the AIIMS. It has also suggested opening up the AIIMS to international faculty.

Ideally, the Union Health Minister should not be the chairperson of the AIIMS – the highest decision-making body – and president of the Governing Body, the IIM said in a presentation earlier this week.

The Ministry asked the IIM to draw up a governance plan to make the AIIMS more efficient and restore its glory.

Too centralised

Describing decision-making at the AIIMS as too centralised, the IIM recommend that larger faculty teams be involved by including faculty representatives in the Institute Body as well as in faculty recruitment and selection. Three of them may be included in the Body, in the place of MPs, with a fixed three-year tenure.

Officials everywhere

At present, it is loaded with government officials and three MPs, and the AIIMS itself has very little representation. The presence of the Minister as chairperson influences decisions and the MPs are often used by faculty to push their case.

Suggesting that the three standing committees of the Institute Body on academic and hospital affairs and selection be scrapped, the IIM says there should be only two standing committees on finance and estate. Internal committees can be formed for academic and hospital affairs.

Pointing out that nearly 75 per cent of the faculty's time is spent on clinical services in clinical departments, leaving them inadequate time for research, the IIM-A has said research publications should be given weightage for promotion. The publications should be sent to at least two external experts for comments. Based on their total contribution and years of experience, faculty members should be promoted. The Governing Body will have to approve all faculty promotions.

Evaluation panel

For this, there should be a Faculty Development and Evaluation Committee (FDEC) comprising nine reputed researchers and teachers of the AIIMS, in addition to the Director and the Dean. Each faculty member would be expected to submit an annual plan to FDEC, listing commitments to teaching, research, publication and clinical services. It will review the plan at the beginning of the year and suggest changes, if needed.

As for the appointment of the Director, the IIM has suggested a global search with a consultative process both within and outside the AIIMS with a provision for self-nominations also. There should be a transparent process to suggest a panel of three members from which the government could select one.

To improve faculty, the provision for emeritus faculty should be activated, and a recruitment drive from the top medical colleges of the world initiated, besides active implementation of provision for leave without pay for one year after every three years of service but not more than two years at a time to allow the faculty to pursue their interests.

Aaj Samaj ND 16/10/2010 P-4

आईआईटी के छात्र तैयार कर रहे उपग्रह

एजेंसी, नई दिल्ली

मुम्बई स्थित भारतीय प्रौद्योगिकी संस्थान के छात्र अपने कौशल और प्रौद्योगिकी क्षमता का परिचय देते हुए एक लघु उपग्रह 'प्रथम' तैयार कर रहे है, जिसे अगले वर्ष के पूर्वार्द्ध में इसरो की मदद से अंतरिक्ष में भेजा जाएगा।

आईआईटी बी के एयरोस्पेस इंजीनियरिंग विभाग के प्रमुख प्रो. पीएम मजूमदार ने बताया कि यह उपग्रह पूर्ण रूप से संस्थान के छात्रों का प्रयास है और इसे भारतीय अंतरिक्ष अनुसंधान संगठन (इसरो) की मदद से पीएसएलवी के जरिए प्रक्षेपित किया जाएगा। आईआईटी मुम्बई के छात्र इस दिशा में महत्वपूर्ण पहल करते हुए उपग्रह के डिजाइन को अंतिम रूप देने में लगे हुए हैं। इस सिलसिले में कुछ दिन पहले संस्थान के एयरोस्पेस इंजीनियरिंग विभाग में 'सेटेलाइट ट्रैकिंग ग्राउंड स्टेशन' स्थापित किया गया है जो उपग्रह पर निगरानी रखेगा।

परियोजना से जुड़े छात्र संयोजक कर्तव्य नीमा ने कहा कि उपग्रह प्रथम का निर्माण कार्य अंतिम चरण में है और दो महीने में इसे अंतिम रूप दे दिया जाएगा। उपग्रह के प्रक्षेपण की कोई तिथि तो निर्धारित नहीं की गई है, लेकिन इसे साल 2011 के पूर्वार्द्ध में अंतरिक्ष में प्रक्षेपित किया जा सकता है। विशुद्ध रूप से छात्रों के प्रयास से तैयार किया जा रहे 'उपग्रह प्रथम' का वजन आठ किलोग्राम होगा और यह 817 किलोमीटर की ऊंचाई पर कक्षा में चक्कर लगाएगा। नीमा ने कहा कि उपग्रह और ग्राउंड स्टेशन के बीच ऐसी व्यवस्था बनाई जा रही है जिससे 'सिग्नल' जमीन पर नौ सेकेंड में प्राप्त हो जाएं। आईआईटी बी के एक वरिष्ठ अधिकारी ने बताया कि इस परियोजना की सफलता के आकलन के बाद संस्थान अगले पांच वर्ष में पांच उपग्रहों का निर्माण करेगा जिसका उद्देश्य शिक्षकों और छात्रों को अंतरिक्ष प्रौद्योगिकी से जुड़े शोध के क्षेत्र में मदद करना और संस्थान को उपग्रह एवं अंतरिक्ष प्रौद्योगिकी के एक प्रमुख केंद्र के रूप में स्थापित करना है।

परियोजना से जुड़े अधिकारी ने कहा कि संस्थान के एयरोस्पेस इंजीनियरिंग विभाग में स्थित ग्राउंड स्टेशन से न केवल हम अपने उपग्रह के सिग्नल का पता लगा पाएंगे बल्कि इलेक्ट्रान काउंट का कार्य भी कर सकेंगे। पिछले कुछ दिनों में ग्राउंड स्टेशन ने अंतरिक्ष में तैरते कई उपग्रहों के संकेत प्राप्त किए है।