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GOVT TO FUND EDUCATION OF GAMES MEDAL WINNERS

Press Trust of India
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NEW DELHI: The central government has decided to bear all educational expenses of students who win medals in the Commonwealth Games.

"The government will bear all educational expenses of youth participants of Commonwealth Games who have won medals at the Games whether he/she is studying in CBSE or non-CBSE schools, colleges or universities," HRD Minister Kapil Sibal said.

He said the government will bear the educational expense till they wish to continue study and the support will include tution and hostel fees.

The objective, he said, is to motivate and encourage more and more students to perform well in sports and bring laurels to the country in sporting events like Asian Games and Olympics.

A number of students are participating at the Games which would conclude on October 14.

While the educational expenditure for college and university-level students will be borne by UGC, the CBSE will meet that of school-going children, Sibal said, adding, both UGC and CBSE will soon work out "exact modalities".

The minister also said the UGC and CBSE will also formulate suitable schemes of financial incentives to support talented sportspersons among students and strengthen sports infrastructure in schools.

'Many distance learning courses not recognised'

Charu Sudan Kasturi
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NEW DELHI: Several courses offered by popular distance education institutions like Sikkim Manipal University and Punjab Technical University are unapproved, India's apex technical education regulator has warned students.

The All India Council for Technical Education has warned students across India to avoid these courses because degrees earned at the end of these programmes will be unrecognised. The AICTE member secretary has issued a public advisory recently, council member secretary D.K. Paliwal confirmed.

The decision came after the AICTE received several complaints from students and other stakeholders of institutions – including SMU and PTU – running technical education programmes through distance mode, the sources said.

Thousands of students across India are enrolled in various distance education programmes offered by SMU and PTU, which are among the country's best known and most popular institutions for distance education after Indira Gandhi National Open University.

AICTE acting chairman S.S. Mantha said the council under its policy approved distance education programmes only in MBA and MCA. "Any other programme offered through distance education has not been approved by us," Mantha said.

AICTE BLACKLIST

■ AICTE has warned students to avoid courses by popular distance education institutions because the degrees will be unrecognised.
■ Many distance education course do not have the required approval by a joint committee of the AICTE, UGC and the Distance Education Council.

SMU offers a slew of engineering, technology and hospitality-related programmes through the distance mode. PTU also offers a BSc in information technology.

Any institution can start a distance education course only after it is approved by a joint committee of the AICTE, University Grants Commission and the Distance Education Council.

PTU Dean Dr N.P. Singh, however, said the varsity had obtained approval from the joint panel. "The AICTE advisory is unwarranted as it will create confusion among them," he said.

"We went through the entire process of applications. Our programmes were recognised by the DEC but face the AICTE's concerns because of technicalities which are not in our hands," SMU academic director V. Sivaramakrishnan said.

Paliwal however told *HT* that at the last meeting of the tripartite committee, SMU and PTU requests for recognition to various programmes were rejected.

Copycats from IIT-Kanpur?

Two Papers By Researchers Pulled From Journal; Institute Orders Probe

Mathang Seshagiri | TNN

Bangalore: In one of the most blatant cases of plagiarism to hit the elite IITs, Bio-technology Advances, a review journal, has retracted two papers from IIT-Kanpur after the researchers allegedly stole chunks of their manuscript from several sources, including journal articles and Wikipedia.

The two retracted articles — "Microbial production of dihydroxyacetone" and "Molecular imprinting in sol-gel matrix" — are from researchers at IIT-Kanpur's department of biological sciences and bio-engineering.

The journal's retraction notice in the upcoming November-December 2010 issue states that the two-year-old articles were pulled out "at the request of the editor as the authors have plagiarized part of several papers that had already appeared in several journals. One

I'm a cut 'n paste above the rest.

Neelabh

The journal's retraction notice in the upcoming Nov-Dec 2010 issue states that the articles were pulled out 'as the authors have plagiarized part of several papers that had already appeared'

of the conditions of submission of a paper for publication is that authors declare explicitly that their work is original and has not appeared in a publication elsewhere. Reuse of any data should be appropriately cited. As such this article represents a severe abuse of the scientific publishing system. The scientific community takes a very strong view on this matter and we apologize to readers of the journal that this was not detected during the submission process."

The review paper, "Microbial production of dihydroxyacetone", by Ruchi Mishra, Seema Rani Jain and Ashok Kumar, was found to have been plagiarized from Wikipedia and StateMaster.com.

The other paper, titled "Molecular imprinting in sol-gel matrix" by Radha Gupta and Ashok Kumar, reproduced texts from as many as five publications. What is more damning is that the papers continue to be

IIT-K's policy on plagiarism

The institute may initiate action against a person allegedly involved in plagiarism. These actions may be a disciplinary warning in the form of a written notice, reprimand or suspension, which may vary on a case-to-case basis, depending upon the degree of seriousness."

listed among the publications of professor Ashok Kumar.

An embarrassed IIT-Kanpur has constituted an inquiry committee. "This is a very serious issue. We cannot accept plagiarism of any sort. But at the same time we want to examine the case carefully. I have constituted a committee of eminent people to examine the issue and we will take action based on their findings," IIT-Kanpur director Sanjay Dhande told TOI.
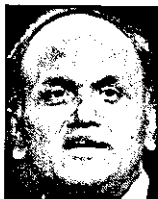

Is MS planning to bid for Adobe?

Steven Ballmer, Microsoft's CEO, recently showed up with a small entourage of deputies at Adobe's offices to hold a secret meeting with Adobe's CEO, Shantanu Narayen. The meeting covered a number of topics, but one of the main thrusts of the discussion was Apple and its control of the mobile phone market and how the two companies could team up in the battle against Apple. A possible acquisition of Adobe by Microsoft were among the options.

Holly Campbell, senior director of Adobe's corporate

communications, did not deny the meeting took place when asked via e-mail. "Adobe and Microsoft share millions of customers around the world and the CEOs of the two companies do meet from time to time," she said. "However, we do not publicly comment on the timing or topics of their private meetings."

A source close to the development said the two firms had talked about the blockade that Apple had placed on Adobe's Flash software for its hand-held devices and whether a partnership by Adobe and Microsoft could fend off Apple. NYT NEWS SERVICE

TEAMING UP: Are Adobe's Shantanu Narayen and Microsoft's Steve Ballmer planning to take on Apple together?

Hot bod on screen? Software to alter shape & size

Instead Of Actually Gaining Or Shedding Weight To Suit Roles, Tech Allows Easy Way For Actors To Appear Thinner Or Heavier On Film

Los Angeles: Goodbye, Hollywood fat suits!

Scientists in Germany have created software that enables actors to appear thinner or heavier on-screen. The program also alters muscle tone and body shape, according to the New Scientist.

The developers say their software will save money because advertisers won't have to shoot different actors to account for "standards of beauty across cultures."
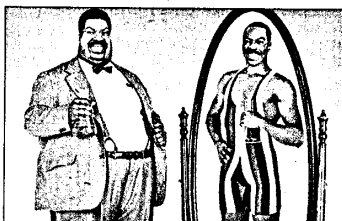
They also say it can help stars stay healthier, pointing to Robert De Niro, who famously gained 60 pounds for his role in "Raging Bull."

"The actor wouldn't need to go to all that trouble," a scientist is quoted as saying.

Fatsuits may be intended to be either deliberately visible, or invisible. Most are intended as unseen body padding beneath a costume, others appear as realistic flesh and are viewed directly

Developed by Christian Theobalt of the Max Planck Institute for Informatics in Saarbrucken, Germany, and colleagues, it allows professional and amateur moviemakers to dramatically alter how muscular, leggy or heavy people appear on film. Until now laborious frame-by-frame retouching could only do this.

Theobalt's team began by generating 3D scans of 120 men and women of varying size and shape in a range of poses. By merging the scans, they were able to create a single model that could be morphed from any body shape or pose to any other.

Turning to the video sequence containing the actor whose shape they wish to manipulate, the team uses a mix of off-the-shelf and bespoke software to track the actor"s silhouette through the scene.

The software then maps the silhouette onto the morphable model, and tweaks it to generate the required height, weight, leg length or muscularity.

It could also be a cost-saver for advertising companies. Because standards of beauty vary across cultures, it is the norm to shoot several adverts for a single product. With the new software, firms could make one film and tweak the model's dimensions to suit different countries.

Although the results are realistic, extreme alterations slightly distort a film's background.

To find out whether this is distracting, Theobalt's team asked 15 people to view an unaltered video while 15 others watched a version in which the actor's body shape had been tweaked.

There was no significant difference between the numbers of distortions the two groups reported, suggesting that this distortion will not unduly worry audiences.

The work would be unveiled in December at the computer graphics conference Siggraph Asia in Seoul, South Korea.

Daniel Cohen-Or of the School of Computer Science at Tel Aviv University, Israel, is developing a similar technique that alters the appearance of people in photographs. He is impressed by Theobalt's software, but notes that it may not always be applicable. "It requires a clear scene, meaning no occlusion or distracting objects," he says. AGENCIES

TECH THAT: Eddie Murphy won't need a fatsuit if he were to shoot today for 'The Nutty Professor'

Free education for medal winners: Sibal

Aarti Dhar

NEW DELHI: With a view to promoting sports, the Union Human Resource Development Ministry on Friday announced free education for students who win medals for India in the ongoing Commonwealth Games.

It has also asked the University Grants Commission and the Central Board of School Education to formulate schemes of financial incentives to support talented sportspersons and strengthen the sports infrastructure in educational institutions, HRD Minister Kapil Sibal told journalists here.

* **For winners, Centre will bear cost for entire duration of studies**

* **Benefit will cover students of private institutions also**

"As a token of appreciation and for encouraging sports among students of all categories, the cost of education of students who win medals in the Commonwealth Games 2010 would be borne by the Centre for the entire duration of their studies." This would include tuition fee and maintenance expenditure like hostel charges.

While the expenditure for college and university students would be taken care of by the UGC, the CBSE would bear it for school students irrespective of whether they were in CBSE-affiliated institutions or not. The benefit would cover private institutions also. The support would continue as long as the medal winners wished to pursue studies. The UGC and the CBSE would soon work out the modalities. Appreciating India's performance in the Games, Mr. Sibal said the sportspersons had won medals despite the lack of world-class infrastructure.

"The incentives will encourage sportspersons to perform better in the Asian Games and Olympics also."

The nation must back sportspersons and they must feel they were being supported, he said, adding that though cricket was now self-financing, other sports needed support.

$1-billion innovation fund mooted for inclusive growth

20 industry clusters, 20 university clusters to be identified for "seed innovations"

P. S. Suryanarayana

SINGAPORE: A $1-billion fund to facilitate innovations for inclusive economic growth in India has been proposed.

The proposal, yet to be approved by the Centre, was agreed to at a recent meeting of the National Innovation Council (NIC), according to Sam Pitroda, Adviser to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on Information Infrastructure and Innovations.

In a conversation with The Hindu here on Thursday, Mr. Pitroda said 20 industry clusters and 20 university clusters would be identified to help "seed innovations" for promoting inclusive economic growth under this new initiative.

The modalities of creating and operating the proposed investment fund were now being explored.

Tracing the "do-able" projects for the development of information infrastructure in India, he said: "We are a na-

* **Real challenge now is to provide broadband: Pitroda**

* **"Soon, we will have 800 million cell phones in India"**

tion of a billion connected people now." Nearly 700 million cell-phones were in use across the country today. "Pretty soon, we will have 800 million." And, the "real challenge now is to provide broadband." The current 10-million broadband connections should be scaled up to the required 100-million mark.

"We can capitalise on the [existing] 800,000-km of fibre [optics] to connect broadband facilities to our companies, government, homes and all that. That's one do-able. In the next three years, we should have pretty much100 million connections and started rolling out 3G."

Some of the other "do-able" initiatives were the UID process, which "has started;" the prospective connectivity among the IITs, IIMs, and some CSIR labs; the programme of linking 2,50,000 panchayats; and the computerisation of all the court cases.

Following the Supreme Court's recent intervention on the issue of public distribution, "the NIC is going to put together a software package to develop real data." On whether and how the issues between Blackberry and the Centre could be resolved, Mr. Pitroda said: "No matter what you try, I will not be able to comment on the [current] situation. I know the technical problem. It is a little complicated."

Chinese dissident awarded Nobel Peace Prize

■ Recognition for Liu Xiaobo is a rebuke to Beijing's authoritarian leaders at a time of growing official intolerance for domestic dissent

Beijing, Oct 8: Liu Xiaobo, an impassioned literary critic, political essayist and democracy advocate repeatedly jailed by the Chinese government for his writings, won the 2010 Nobel Peace Prize on Friday in recognition of his pursuit of non-violent political reform in the world's most populous country.

Liu, 54, perhaps China's best known dissident, is currently serving an 11-year term on charges of "inciting the subversion of state power."

He is the first Chinese citizen to win the Peace Prize.

In awarding the prize to Liu, the Norwegian Nobel Committee delivered an unmistakable rebuke to Beijing's authoritarian leaders at a time of growing intolerance for domestic dissent and spreading unease internationally over the muscular diplomacy that has accompanied China's economic rise.

In a move that in retrospect appears to have been counterproductive, a senior Chinese official recently warned the Norwegian committee's chairman that giving the prize to Liu would adversely affect relations between the two countries.

Although there was no immediate response to news out of Oslo, where the prize was announced, the Chinese government in recent weeks has not been shy in describing Liu as unworthy of such an accolade. "This person was sentenced to jail because he violated Chinese law," a foreign ministry spokeswoman said last week.

Liu Xia, his wife, said it unlikely her husband would immediately learn of the news because he has no access to a telephone.

File photo of pro-democracy activists with Liu Xiaobo banners, in Hong Kong

The prize is enormous boost for China's beleaguered reform movement and an affirmation of the two decades Liu has spent advocating peaceful political change in the face of unremitting hostility from the ruling Chinese Community Party.

Blacklisted from academia and barred from publishing in China, Liu has been harassed and detained repeatedly since 1989, when he stepped into the drama playing out on Tiananmen Square by staging a hunger strike and then negotiating the peaceful retreat of student demonstrators as thousands of soldiers stood by with rifles at the ready.

"If not for the work of Liu and the others to broker a peaceful withdrawal from the square, Tiananmen Square would have been a field of blood on June 4," said Gao Yu, a veteran journalist who was arrested in the hours before the tanks began moving through the city.

His most recent arrest in December of 2008 came a day before a reformist manifesto he helped craft began circulating on the Internet. The petition, entitled Charter '08,

demanded that China's rulers embrace human rights, judicial independence and the kind of political reform that would ultimately end the Communist Party's monopoly on power.

"For all these years, Liu Xiaobo has persevered in telling the truth about China and because of this, for the fourth time, he has lost his personal freedom," his wife, Liu Xia, said earlier this week.

Given his detention, it is unclear how Liu would take possession of the prize, which includes a gold medal, a diploma and the equivalent of $1.46 million.　　*NYT*

South India to strengthen top slot in medical colleges

Soma Das

New Delhi, Oct 8: The lop-sided distribution of medical colleges in the country, skewed in favour of southern states is only set to get further accentuated in near future.

Almost 50% of the new medical colleges approved in the last three years are likely to come up in three of the southern states – Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Andhra Pradesh. Of the 43 medical colleges which have managed a green signal from the the Centre since 2007, around 21 are proposed to be located in the these three states alone. Already, over 60% of the existing medical colleges are concentrated in the four southern states of

STUDY TIME

■ Over 60% of medical colleges are clustered in 4 southern states

■ 21 out of 43 colleges approved since 2007 are in TN, AP and Kerala

■ These states have got over 80% of engg seats & 50% of engg institutes

Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra.

As a result of this, the northern, eastern and central states are under-served

when it comes to healthcare services. "Increasing the seats with a skewed country-wide distribution would only increase regional disparity in healthcare services, with under-served areas remaining under-served," said N Ananthakrishnan, former head department of surgery, JIPMER, Pondicherry who has studied the problems plaguing the medical education space.

Experts attribute this mushrooming of colleges in a few states to the ease of getting a no-objection certificate from these states and availability of contiguous land, along with a pro-active state government policy to promote private educational institutes.

■ **Continued on Page 2**

South India to strengthen top slot...

Most existing hospitals couldn't add medical colleges later as it required them to have 25 acres of contiguous land adjoining the medical facility, according to Ananthakrishnan. This raised the investment levels required for setting up medical colleges significantly as the promoters – private or government – had to plan a hospital of a stipulated bed size alongside the college.

Hence, a distorted scenario has emerged where Hyderabad city has the same number of medical colleges as the whole of Orissa; Kochi has nine medical colleges while Bihar has only eight, Bangalore has 11 while West Bengal has just 9 and Pune has around 20 including dental and nursing colleges while Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh have less than half of that figure each.

Amitabh Jhingan, partner, Ernst and Young points out that this lopsided distribution is just another reflection of larger north-south divide that one witnesses in most other

educational and health indicators. These southern states also account for over 80% of engineering seats and 50% of engineering institutes.

Medical Council of India board member Ranjit Roy Chaudhury told FE that in under-served areas, medical colleges around railway hospitals and Employee State Insurance Corporation should be encouraged under public-private partnership arrangement. By increasing the retirement age of faculty in medical colleges, relaxing the land limit and some other clauses, the MCI board is trying to increase the the strength of medical faculty and number of colleges in the country. The board headed by S K Sarin has projected the need for 500 medical colleges in the next five years in the country. Experts also feel investment on the part of government in medical education space must increase, if the gaps in the under-served area have to be filled up. Currently, around 54% of medical colleges are owned and run by private players.
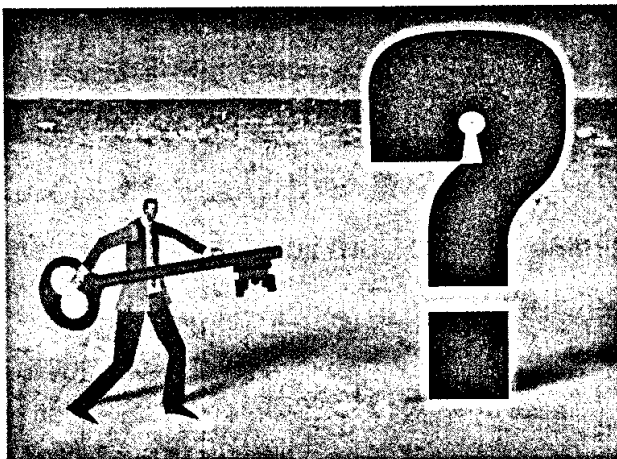
'Wicked' problems and the IAS

The cognitive processes that Indian civil servants adopt to tackle complex real-world problems have much to offer B-school curricula, deficient in ways to tackle conflicted, unstable problems, says **Sameer Sharma**

FOLLOWING the global crisis, increasing calls (e.g. Nitin Nohria – dean of Harvard Business School, Matthew Stuart) are being made to overhaul the B-schools pedagogy based primarily on technical rationality. The fact that the rational model is little used in real-time decision-making is well-known to the IAS. In real-life conditions are complex, uncertain, and unstable, leading to "wicked problems", a term used by Rittell and Webber to describe problems that are unique, lack clear-cut definitions or singular solutions, and cannot be unravelled using the rational model or its derivatives.

Wicked problems, as opposed to tame problems, lack definitional clarity and depend upon an elusive political judgment for resolution. Moreover, diverse perspectives of multiple stakeholders add to the definitional conundrum. Second, solutions are often indeterminate. Wicked problems do not have stopping rules and only best solutions are possible. Often, we do not know when the job is accomplished and once we run out of time, money or patience, the problem is deemed to be resolved. Furthermore, solutions depend upon the level of analysis and choice of explanation and the "half-life" of consequences is long, every trial counts, and path reversal leads to another set of consequences. Third, wicked problems are unique and the singularity is accentuated by the fact that wicked problems are unstable and uncertain — problems are like "moving targets", they evolve as they are being addressed.

To resolve wicked problems, IAS officers primarily depend on experience rather than on general theories and rules. Donald Schon and others suggest, in another context, that IAS officers build up a mental "usable repertoire of unique cases", carrying from the past a list of usable supply of experiences. Confronted with a new decision situation, the IAS scan the list, looking for common elements between the old and the new setting that are then used to understand, decide and act. In other words, the outputs of a previous experience are used as an input for a new operation and this is called "knowing in action". For example, the 'know-how' of a sub-divisional magistrate who is able to disperse protestors without using force lies in, and is revealed by, the way she talks to the crowd, shows force, or exhibits patience on different occasions.

Frequently, IAS officers are surprised during task accomplishment and engage in reflective conversation with the situation. Confronted with unstable and unique situations, IAS officers try to develop a new description of it and test the new description by on-the-spot experiments, called "reflecting in action". The iterative process has the potential to lead to innovation, famously called *jugaad*. For instance, a municipal commissioner reading a long, analytical paper before the municipal council notices that several council members are falling asleep. She carries out a "thought experiment" on the spot, mentally cuts all but points of special concern to the dozing counsellors, and then speaks animatedly to wake them up. If they awaken and pay attention, her experiment is a success. Her reflecting in action on her knowing in action has taught her how to improve her future practice. Finally, at the end of the day, competent practitioners also "reflect on practice". During this process they submit their assumptions to a reality check, review their strategies and reflect on the unexpected. This helps them to understand the generalisability and scalability of their small experiences.

FURTHERMORE, the art of competent practice is tacit and spontaneous; therefore, difficult to describe and explain. Dreyfus brothers describe the embedded craft as follows — "the mind of the proficient performer (IAS officer) seems to group together situations sharing not only the same goal or perspective but also the same decision, action or tactic. At this point not only is a situation, when seen as similar to a prior one, understood, but the associated decision, action or tactic simultaneously comes to mind". Additionally, the Dreyfus phenomenological five step learning process to progress from novice (IAS probationer) to the expert is especially relevant to train the IAS. The Dreyfus learning model starts with the novice (IAS, Phase I), progressing to advanced beginner (Phase II), competence (Phase III), proficiency (Phase IV), and finally, expertise (Phase V).

Mastering a set of context independent generalised rules (e.g. public administration, welfare policies) and the skill (e.g. programme management) characterise a novice (probationer). The IAS probationer can follow these without the benefit of any prior experience, and performance is judged solely on the basis of application of guidelines. After returning from district training, during Phase II, the probationer advances to the next stage and begins to understand how rules can be applied under different conditions or in differing contexts.

Subsequently, during district postings, IAS officers are exposed to a growing number of cases or situations, allowing them to adapt rule application to different features or aspects rather than follow rules rigidly. After their district tenures, the IAS learn to deal with increasingly complex cases, organising the information by adopting a "perspective" and responding to the features and aspects that the perspective makes important. Expertise is achieved only on the basis of a great deal of experience of real-life and varying situations and finally the expert the IAS officer responds intuitively, not on a consideration of which rules to apply.

Accordingly, IAS officers are called upon to deal with wicked problems characterised by uncertainty, instability, and value conflicts. A unique inventory of experiences, not general theories and rules based on technical rationality, is used to decide on real-life situations. The challenge is, first, to learn from the practice of IAS officers to inform practice, and second, to integrate competent practice stories with management theories and techniques. Current trends to have a relook at B-school syllabus hold much promise to lead to the convergence of pedagogic purposes of B-schools and IAS trainers.

(Author is an IAS officer. Views are personal)