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IIT Bombay's \$100 Netbook Wants to Get Out of Campus

IIT Bombay is also working with open-source tech cos to make the project commercially viable

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Bengaluru: The IIT Bombay team, which earlier this year developed a \$100 (₹6,647) netbook computer that it claimed could be the world's cheapest, is in talks with several colleges across the country, including Christ University in Bengaluru, to roll out the devices for students and is also working with early-stage open-source technology firms to make the project commercially viable in the near term.

The netbook, which was conceptualised during IIT's work with the low-cost Aakash tablet project and was launched in February, is currently being used by about 90 students at IIT Bombay and plans are underway to get more college students across the country to use the machines, said IIT Bombay professor Kannan Moudgalya.

The 10-inch machines, which are being loaned out to the students for a year at the cost of ₹5,000, were built primarily for students from low-income households who cannot afford costlier laptops.

"I believe that if you're serious about Digital India,

we need to give computers to our children," said professor Kannan Moudgalya.

"Now if IIT students have difficulty in programming without a computer, you can imagine how it is in other colleges... now if college students don't have computers, they don't do programming. They don't do programming, they start mugging up since they have to pass their exams. So, if Digital India has to work, students will need computers."

The team has now started working with open-source language startups such as Julia Computing and is also using Brazilian chemical process simulator DWSIM as part of this project, said Moudgalya said.

While the earlier Aakash tablet project, which was commissioned by the HRD ministry, was hamstrung by launch delays and quality issues, the IIT-Bombay team working on this netbook project has gone about its launch in a

different, low-key manner.

While almost 1 lakh devices were commissioned for the Aakash project, only 1,000 machines have been ordered so far for the new netbook project.

"Unlike Aakash, where we gave lots of machines to everybody to start developing software, here we are seeding it in a very careful manner because we have only 1,000 machines as opposed to 1 lakh," said Moudgalya.

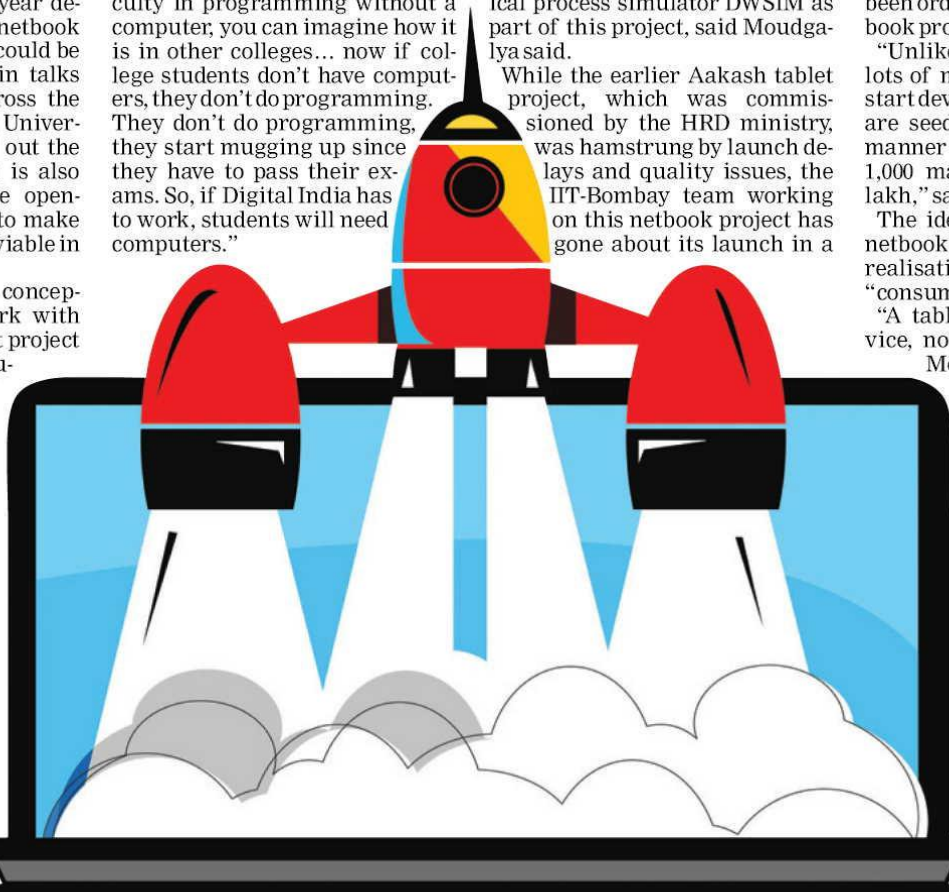
The idea of creating affordable netbooks was also born out of the realisation that a tablet is merely a "consumption device".

"A tablet is a consumption device, not a creator device," said Moudgalya.

IIT Bombay has forged a tie-up with Delhi-based Basic Comtech, which delivered 1,000 netbooks for the pilot phase.

Kannan said more orders will be placed once the project starts getting accepted and rolled out in colleges across the country.

Under the pilot, IIT Bombay has lent these netbooks to first year BTech students at the institute who have to undergo an introductory programming course called CS 101.



ANIRBAN BORA

Deccan Herald ND 11/09/2015 P-08

NITs' plan to scrap weightage to Class XII score criticised

Prakash Kumar

NEW DELHI: The National Institutes of Technology (NITs) may have been pitching for scrapping of system that gives weightage to Class XII board exam scores in admissions, but many of people from these institutes as well as the IITs which played a major role in its introduction along with the Joint Entrance Examination (JEE) disfavour it.

The system to give weightage to students' Class XII Board examination in JEE-Main was introduced in 2013 with twin primary objectives—to create a level playing field for students of the state boards and make students focus on their Class XII board examinations, instead of joining a coaching institute for preparation of the entrance test.

“If this is scrapped, students

will again focus more on the entrance tests than Class XII board and help prosper coaching institutes. It will defeat the basis purpose for which the system of giving weightage to school board was introduced,” a former director of one of the IITs told *Deccan Herald*, requesting anonymity.

Besides, those pushing for the scrapping of the weightage system should also consider the fact that there was need to maintain a “level playing field” for all the students of the country.

“Scarping of the weightage system will take the reforms in reverse gear. There are 42 school boards in the country producing a large number of students with varying system of examination and assessment of students. It's because of this a system to normalise the state board examination

scores was also developed for the JEE-Main examination. In a federal country, you have to give importance to the state boards also, and have system in place which gives equal opportunity to their students also,” a former director of one of the NITs said.

The Human Resource Development Ministry has recently set up a committee to review the system of giving weightage to Class XII board examination in JEE Main as the Central Board of Secondary Education has found the normalisation of state board student's score “challenging”.

On the other hand, the NITs feel that the system was not helping them get bright students as the standard of school education boards had deteriorated over the years, official sources said.

DH News Service

Govt, IIMs show signs of headway in autonomy fight

There are indications the government might rethink the two clauses that allow it a greater say in the functioning of the institutes

VINAY UMARI

Ahmedabad, 10 September

The Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs), especially the older ones, appear to be gaining ground in the fight for retaining their autonomy, which has been threatened by the draft IIM Bill 2015.

Officials of the human resource development (HRD) ministry are learnt to be reaching out to the institutes with the assurance that the question of their autonomy would be resolved satisfactorily.

The ministry appears to be rethinking the clauses that have been the bone of contention. One of them is Section 35, which empowers the Union government to "make rules for carrying out the provisions of this (IIM) Act". The other is subsection (1) of Section 36 that states the "IIM Board may, with the approval of the Central government, by notification, make regulations not inconsistent with this Act and the rules made thereunder to carry out the provisions of this Act".

While the older IIMs — IIM-Ahmedabad, IIM-Bangalore and IIM-Lucknow — have spoken out openly against these clauses, the relatively newer ones have chosen to remain silent on the issue.

The draft IIM Bill 2015 proposes to grant statutory status to the 13 existing IIMs at Ahmedabad, Kolkata, Bengaluru, Lucknow, Indore, Kozhikode, Shillong, Raipur, Ranchi, Rohtak, Kashipur, Tiruchirappalli and Udaipur. It aims to declare them as "Institutions of National Importance" to enable them to grant degrees to their students.

The IIMs have protested the subjection of the board of governors to government control for any regulation, be it appointing chairpersons and directors, fixing fees and staff remuneration or deciding the curriculum. The IIMs also argue that the draft in its current form is not what was agreed upon by the institutes in their meeting with the HRD ministry in October 2014.

At a press conference, A M Naik, chairman of IIM-A board of governors, said, "The final bill, which was approved between all the IIMs and HRD ministry, has been 'completely changed' and made even worse than when we started three years ago." The Bill, he said, virtually turns the institutes into mere operational centres and gives sweeping powers to the government with all the major dictates, directions, approvals and regulations coming from Delhi.

At the same conference, IIM-A Director Ashish Nanda, said, "Our stance is that there is a misunderstanding from their side. We are having



The IIM-Kozhikode campus in Kerala. IIM Kozhikode, along with the IIMs in Ahmedabad, Bengaluru, Kolkata, Lucknow and Indore, is happy to continue offering post-graduate diploma in management instead of degrees

a conversation with them to help them understand how we see the impact of this Bill. Oversight, we don't mind, but micro-management is not good."

Pushing for more freedom for all IIMs, Naik had further said, "More and more freedom should be given to educational institutions in framing curriculum, devising fee structure and recruitment of the faculty."

The question of degree

There is, however, a divide among the IIMs on certain aspects of the Bill. It is about whether or not there is a need for the IIMs to grant degrees?

While IIMs Ahmedabad, Bangalore, Calcutta, Lucknow, Indore and Kozhikode are happy to continue offering post-graduate diploma in management (PGDM), the newer ones want the power to grant a degree. Their argument is that a master of business administration (MBA) degree carries more weight than a diploma, both in academics and in the industry.

This is the argument that the government is believed to have latched on to while proposing changes in the draft bill.

"Till now, these institutions could award only certificate, post-graduate diploma and fellow programme in management certificate, which lacked universal acceptability in the field of academia and research," the ministry

had stated while putting up the draft online for public consultation. "The post-graduate diploma in management programme was relatively unaffected by [the] absence of a formal degree, both in terms of recruitment of students as well as suitable placements in [the] job market but the fellow programme in management did not get the same status as that of a PhD in the job market, especially in faculty appointments," the ministry had stated. "The proposed Bill," it added, "will address this gap."

The older IIMs, however, argue that given their success in terms of global rankings and student placements, the premise of granting degrees is the weakest point in the entire debate. "The PGDM certificates offered by IIMs are stronger than any MBA degree. It would, in fact, degrade the IIMs if we began offering degrees instead of the post-graduate diplomas," says a member of the IIM-A faculty.

Making a concession

Samir Barua, former director of IIM-A, says he personally thinks there are alternatives to establishing IIMs under an Act of Parliament to enable them to grant degrees. "As of now, institutions that are under the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) or those that are established under a specific Act of Parliament are permitted to award degrees," he says. "One of the key reasons that the government gives to bring IIMs under an Act of Parliament is to facilitate them to grant degrees. I, however, think there is another way institutions may be permitted to grant degrees." He says they have suggested that institutions that have

excelled may be recognised as "Institutes of National Importance". "Such institutes may be given the power to grant degrees. I would like to believe that several older IIMs would qualify for such a status. These institutes then need not be brought under the purview of the proposed Act. I am sure this would find acceptance among the parliamentarians," Barua says.

To ensure that this special dispensation is available only after it is earned, Barua suggests that the government may adopt "stringent criteria based on achievements, performance and rankings before an IIM is permitted to grant degrees. If required, the government may even put a threshold of at least 15-20 years of functioning before an IIM becomes eligible for such a status".

Some of the newer IIMs also agree to such a proposal. "Let the draft be split into two: one meant for the more experienced IIMs and the other for the relatively newer ones," says the director of a new IIM requesting not to be named. "It needs to be understood that the older IIMs have, for decades, functioned in a particular way that did not see direct intervention from the government. Some of them were not even receiving grants."

To be suddenly brought under the direct control of the government would understandably make them uncomfortable, he says. "But the newer IIMs have been dependent on government grants from day one of their inception. Hence, we do not mind such a control as long as we are sustained through the grants," he says.

While the debate rages on, a rethink of the draft Bill might be in the offing.



"We are having a conversation with them (govt) to help them understand how we see the impact of this Bill. Oversight, we don't mind, but micro-management is not good"

ASHISH NANDA
Director, IIM-A

Indian Express ND 11/09/2015 P-14

A SHARED FAILURE

C.N.R. Rao is right. Industry can and should do more to shore up scientific research

BACK IN JULY, in his convocation address at the Indian Institute of Science in Bangalore, N.R. Narayana Murthy threw down the gauntlet to the Indian scientific establishment. What, he asked, were the contributions of the products of such institutions? Had India produced a single invention in the past 60-odd years that could be said to be indispensable to lives across the world? C.N.R. Rao, distinguished scientist and chairman of the scientific advisory council to the prime minister, has responded to Murthy in *Current Science*, pointing out that though the government has hobbled scientific research for its own sake with its insistence that engineers and scientists focus on solving specific problems or building on existing technology, private enterprise has failed to step into the space vacated by government.

Murthy was right, but so is Rao. Several of the truly groundbreaking inventions from the last half-century or so, such as the internet, cellphone or the global positioning system, originated from research subsidised by the United States military. But besides Darpa, the US defence research agency, the common thread running through many of these technological innovations is private partners. The US government played entrepreneur, taking risks to support such future successes as Tesla Motors and Apple. And Google Maps, for instance, owes its existence to an MIT project funded by Darpa. The Indian government, on the other hand, has chosen to apply its energies to reinventing the wheel with the doomed Akash tablet, for instance.

Certainly, much of the blame for the lack of similar stories coming out of India lies in the state's wearying paranoia and lack of vision when it comes to allowing private players a role in defence research. But corporations have also failed to put their money where their mouth is. Murthy name-checked MIT in his speech at IISc, to which he unfavourably compared the IITs. But, as Rao noted, Indian billionaires have not, separately or together, founded institutions like MIT or Stanford — both of which have trained and nurtured the best minds to enable scientific advancement. Separate reports by Bain and McKinsey this year find that philanthropy levels in India remain low by global standards. According to Bain, in the UK, 74 per cent of people made charitable donations in 2013, compared with 28 per cent in India. And McKinsey notes that Indian donors tended to prefer direct interventions to help beneficiaries immediately, rather than indirect interventions that seek to build organisational capacity at scale. As the American example makes clear, it is the willingness and ability of both public and private economic agents to take risks that produces new, gamechanging advances.

UGC makes over 400 PhD aspirants ineligible

<http://www.asianage.com/mumbai/ugc-makes-over-400-phd-aspirants-ineligible-774>

PhD through distance education or through universities in other states deemed invalid

A recent circular from the UGC will make nearly 400-500 aspirants pursuing PhD from the University of Mumbai ineligible as 10-15 per cent of the guides are neither working as teachers in any of the university departments nor any affiliated PG college. Based on the circular, no state university can offer PhD beyond their jurisdiction thus making those aspirants ineligible who are doing PhD through distance education mode or through universities in other states.

The circular issued by Jaspal Sandhu, secretary, UGC, stated that it had come to the notice of the governing body that many universities in the country have been circumventing the provisions of Minimum Standards and Procedures for Award of MPhil/PhD regulations of 2009 by utilising the services of adjunct faculty as supervisors. The circular reiterates that only regular faculty can be appointed as research supervisors and aberrations by the university the UGC Act of 1956 will be invoked against them and the university will be blacklisted.

Due to the high demand for MPhil and PhD courses for various subjects and topics the MU has been appointing research supervisors or guides from other universities that include both within and outside the state. This phenomenon is prevalent in almost all streams including Arts, Science, Commerce, Law and Technology. According to a senior academician, nearly 10 to 15 per cent of guides appointed by the university across streams are not regular teachers in university departments or any of the affiliated colleges offering post-graduate courses. As a result of this nearly 400-500 students doing research under them would become ineligible.

Further analysing the UGC circular, the academician said that outstation universities offering PhD courses in the city would also become ineligible. “The joint director of education office has deemed that the PhD done from some of the universities from other states is invalid and hence those who did their PhDs there are now having to redo it from local universities,” said the academician. This circular by the UGC is the second circular issued by the UGC with the first one being issued on July 6.

In the absence of the vice-chancellor of MU Dr Sanjay Deshmukh who is away in Israel, Dr Abhay Pethe caretaker vice-chancellor said that the university would ask UGC for clarification regarding the circular and its implications. “It is an important issue and a collective decision to apply the norms of the UGC need to be thought of,” said Dr Pethe.

Gandhiji’s vision on clean India relevant even today

Hindustan Times (Lucknow)

About 100 years ago, during the foundation ceremony of Banaras Hindu University, Gandhiji gave his first public address in India on February 6, 1916. He exhorted the countrymen to be morally, mentally and physically clean and fit.

He mentioned about the dirty condition of the lanes of Banaras, particularly, at the heart of the sacred town—Vishwanath temple. The theme of his talk was two-fold: Cleanliness and a sharp divide between the rich and poor.

Actually, Gandhiji had raised three fundamental issues: A more rational attitude towards our way of life, the sharp inequalities among different sectors of our society, and the arrogance of officers.

Citing the example of Kashi Vishwanath, the holiest temple in the holiest city, he called for 'cleanliness'. "Why was it so filthy? If we were incapable of maintaining even our places of worship, how could we justify our claim for a self-rule?" he had questioned.

Gandhiji's speech represents an act of courage which had no parallel at the time when he had little influence or power in his homeland.

He made direct and scathing criticisms of wealthy princes, important officials and the guardians of religious orthodoxy.

In India's holiest city, during the function inaugurated by the viceroy and patronised by his leading collaborators, Gandhiji proclaimed his vision to transform the destiny of his country through truthfulness and nonviolence.

On February 4, 1916, Lord Hardinge laid the foundation stone of the university. From February 5 to 8, a series of lectures by a galaxy of eminent people were planned by Malaviyaji.

These lectures were delivered at the Central Hindu College. The speakers included Gandhiji, Mrs Annie Besant, JC Bose, PC Ray, CV Raman, Sam Higginbottom, Harold Mann, Kaviraj G. Sen, P. Geddes among others.

Gandhiji aptly named Malaviyaji as 'Devata Purush' (a man of God). Malaviyaji firmly believed that the country could gain strength and develop itself only when people from different communities in India live in mutual goodwill and harmony.

Gandhiji had returned from South Africa in January 1915. On his way, he met his mentor Gopal Krishna Gokhale in London.

Gokhale advised him to observe silence for one year and shun from any public speeches on Indian politics. During this period, Gandhiji travelled widely and interacted with his countrymen.

Malaviyaji invited Gandhiji to the BHU foundation ceremony. Gandhiji had already been to the Kashi Vishwanath temple in 1902.

At that time too, he was pained to see its dirty condition noting, "Where one expected an atmosphere of meditation and communion, it was conspicuous by its absence."

Gandhiji's third visit to Banaras was in February 1920, when he spent six days in Malaviyaji's house where he prepared the first draft on the horrors of the Martial Law Administration and the impact of the Jallianwala Bagh massacre.

Gandhiji was back in Banaras towards the end of 1920, seeking volunteers for the non-cooperation movement. Kashi Vidyapith (now Mahatma Gandhi Kashi Vidyapith) was inaugurated by Gandhiji during this movement of the freedom struggle on the auspicious occasion of Basant Panchami on February 10, 1921.

Gandhiji's longest visit to Banaras was in July-August 1934, when he spent a whole week in the city. He was deeply disturbed on the menace of untouchability, and gave two speeches on successive days describing the practice of untouchability as "a blot on Hinduism."

Gandhiji came to Banaras in January 1942 to deliver the BHU's convocation address at the silver jubilee year of the university.

Gandhiji's speech at Varanasi had five striking features: 1) the importance of cleanliness, 2) the importance of the mother tongue, 3) the divide between the rich and poor, 4) the need for Hindu-Muslim harmony and 5) the end of untouchability/ discrimination.



In conclusion, Gandhiji's first public speech at BHU's foundation ceremony is as relevant today as it was then about 100 years ago.