Newspaper Clips
September 29, 2010

Hindustan Times, ND 29-Sep-10 p-9

V-Cs against common test

NO TO SIBAL Central universities should retain admission autonomy, says panel

ht EXCLUSIVE

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NEW DELHI: Each central university should be allowed to decide how to admit its students, a panel of Vice Chancellors of central universities tasked with examining the possibility of a common entrance test has told the government.

The panel's recommendations will be discussed at a meeting between HRD minister Kapil Sibal and 40 central university VCs on Wednesday. The HRD ministry under Kapil Sibal is keen to scrap multiple entrance examinations conducted by different institutions and replace them by a single, common admission test.

The panel headed by Jawaharlal Nehru University V-C B.B. Bhattacharya was set up in March this year to study the possibility of a common entrance test and credit transfers to allow students to simultaneously pursue different courses at different varsities. A common entrance test will elim-

> *The minister's idea of a common entrance test is good but individual institutions must have the autonomy to decide how to admit students.*
> **A VICE-CHANCELLOR**

inate the pressure of appearing for multiple entrance tests, the HRD ministry is arguing.

In its report to the HRD ministry, the panel has started by accepting that a common

entrance test is needed. But it has then demanded that each institution should be allowed to decide how to admit its students — which if accepted could effectively kill the aim behind a common test — panel sources have revealed to *HT*.

"The minister's idea of a common entrance test is good but individual institutions must have the autonomy to decide how to admit students — that was the outcome of the panel's deliberations," a V-C said. But, HRD ministry sources said they were confident that they could convince V-Cs to accept a idea.

The common test could be used as a screening tool — instead of as an admission test — like UGC's National Eligibility Test for teachers, panel has said.

The Bhattacharya panel's report comes close on the heels of directors of the IITs rejecting a proposal to scrap Joint Entrance Examination and replace it by an aptitude test. The panel has also suggested that universities sign MoUs to facilitate credit transfer of students.

A number of other key reform proposals for central universities have been accepted by different panels of V-Cs.

Hindustan Times, ND 29-Sep-10 p-6 ht horizon

Duke University mulls location for its Indian campus

Duke University plans to set up a campus in India, though the exact location has not been con-firmed. The probable locations for the campus are Delhi, Mumbai, Chandigarh or Pune. "We will start with a business school at the campus that will offer a diploma programme. This is a part of our plans of having a globally dispersed campus. We are looking at China and India and the campus in China is already underway," said Jaivir Singh, advisor to the dean of the Fuqua School of Business, Duke University. This will be part of the varisty's plans to set up global campuses in Dubai, Russia, China and India. Duke university is one of the first international institutes to announce plans to establish its India campus after the MHRD gave its approval to allow foreign universities to set up their campuses in India in March.
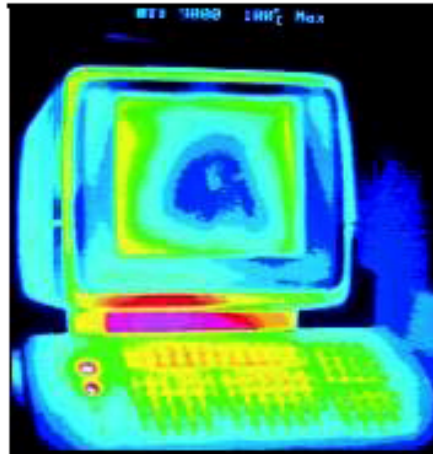
Soon, PCs that run on own heat rather than electricity

London: Computers may soon be able to recycle part of their own waste heat, using a material being studied by researchers.

The material is a semiconductor called gallium manganese arsenide. Researchers at the Ohio State University describe the detection of an effect that converts heat into a quantum mechanical phenomenon – known as spin – in a semiconductor.

Once developed, the effect could enable integrated circuits that run on heat, rather than electricity.

This research merges two cutting-edge technologies: thermo-electricity and spintronics, explained team leaders Joseph Heremans, Ohio eminent scholar in nanotechnology, and Roberto Myers of the Ohio State University.

HOT IDEA: A thermographic image shows the cool and warm areas of a desktop computer

Myers and Heremans have been trying to combine spintronics with thermo-electronics – that is, devices that convert heat to electricity.

"Spintronics is considered as a possible basis for new computers in part because the technology is claimed to produce no heat. Our measurements shed light on the thermodynamics of spintronics, and may help address the validity of this claim," Nature quoted Heremans as saying.

In one possible use of thermo-spintronics, a device could sit atop a traditional microprocessor, and siphon waste heat away to run additional memory or computation.

The researchers studied how heat can be converted to spin polarization. Scieintists at Tohoku University detected the effect in a piece of metal. The new study has provided the first verification of the effect in gallium manganese arsenide. ANI
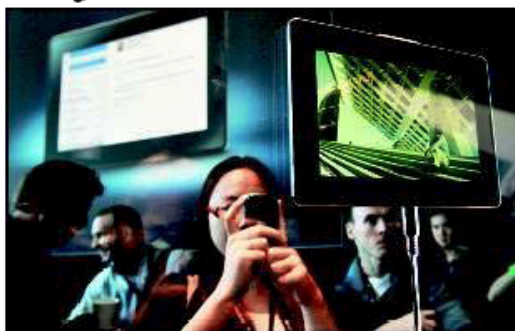
BlackBerry takes on iPad with PlayBook

Hugo Miller and Greg Bensinger

Research In Motion, whose BlackBerry smartphone rose to prominence on Wall Street, is now targeting business customers with a tablet computer, PlayBook, to compete with Apple's iPad and add a fresh source of revenue.

The BlackBerry PlayBook, slimmer and lighter than the iPad, supports corporate applications and has advanced data-security features, RIM said. The device has a 7-inch (18cm) screen, smaller than the iPad's 9.7-inch display. "The principal market for this is busy working people," RIM Co-CEO Jim Balsillie said in an interview in New York. "We're not trying to say this is all things to all people."

RIM is racing to get its tablet into stores as Hewlett-

ON THE TABLE-T

Packard, Samsung and Motorola build similar devices to emulate the success of the iPad in filling the gap between smartphones and laptops. Apple sold 3 million iPads in the first 80 days after the device's April debut.

The tablet will be available in the US in early 2011 and in

other countries in the second quarter, Waterloo, Ontario-based RIM said. The company didn't give a price for the device.

RIM is counting on the tablet to increase revenue as BlackBerry loses ground. The company's share of the smartphone market slid to 18.2% in

the second quarter from 19% a year earlier. Apple's iPhone boosted its share to 14.2% from 13% and devices based on Google's Android software surged to 17.2% from 1.8%, according to IDC. RIM fell $1.47, or 3%, to $46.89 on the Nasdaq Stock Market at 9:42 am New York time, and Apple lost $5.25, or 1.8%, to $285.91. RIM had lost 28% this year before Tuesday, compared with a 38% gain for Apple.

The PlayBook has been built with the BlackBerry's security features that made it popular with governments and Wall Street banks, differentiating the tablet from the competition, Balsillie said. The device's Web browser is compatible with Adobe's Flash technology to allow customers to watch a broader range of video content from the Internet, he said. The iPad doesn't run Flash video or ani-

mation.

Balsillie said the PlayBook, which weighs 0.9 pounds (400 grams), includes a front- and rear-facing camera and will be sold through carriers and retailers, without giving specifics.

The tablet uses Wi-Fi to connect to the Internet and can also be connected wirelessly to BlackBerry phones via Bluetooth. But the device won't be able to connect directly to the mobile-phone network the way some iPads can, though RIM plans to add the feature in later versions.

RIM is building the device based on software built by QNX Software Systems, a company RIM bought in April for $200 million. That marks a shift away from BlackBerry 6, the latest version of the BlackBerry operating system, used in its Torch phone released in August. BLOOMBERG

Times of India ND
29/09/2010 P-17

Scientists join hands to crack winter fog code

Kounteya Sinha | TNN

New Delhi: Does the winter fog carry deadly antibiotic resistant germs? Is it safe for patients suffering from HIV or TB to travel during winter in India? Is the fog around a hospital more dangerous, if at all, than that enveloping an airport?

In a first-of-its-kind study in the country, leading scientists have joined hands to resolve the mystery behind seasonal fog, and whether it can cause serious harm to human health.

The committee — looking at the health effects of winter fog and whether it varies across Indian cities — is being headed by professor Sarman Singh, head of clinical microbiology at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS). The panel also includes scientists from Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), PGI (Chandigarh), SGPGI (Lucknow), Himachal Medical College and Jalandhar Medical College.

The study, which will begin this winter, aims to come out with the first round of data by April 2011.

Speaking to TOI, Dr Singh said, this is part of a larger long-term study being conducted by the ministry of earth sciences on the phenomenon of fog every winter.

"We want to study fog at various heights and temperatures. We will analyse the fog water at various heights, and see whether it carries fungi, bacteria and viruses. If they do, at what levels they are there and at what level they are not. This way, we will be able to predict till what level fog is contaminated," Mr Singh explained.

GLOBAL EDUCATION: NEW CHAPTER

Student exchange takes wing

While B-Schools Form Impressive Global Linkages, It Proves Great For Corporate Hopefuls Too

Shreya Biswas
NEW DELHI

RAUNAK Mehta, 24, could be the envy of many well-settled professionals. This international business management student from the Indian Institute of Foreign Trade (IIFT) signed up for the institute's student exchange programme, and a new world opened up to him, literally.

All he had to do was take an interview organised by the international exchange cell and landed up at the Helsinki School of Economics, Helsinki (Finland), one of the student exchange partners of IIFT. He spent three months (from January to March, 2010), studying and working in Helsinki and discovering Europe — Italy, France, Estonia, Germany and Austria. And this, on his maiden visit abroad.

Raunak is not the only lucky one. His 34 other batchmates travelled to the US, Italy, Germany, South Korea, Japan and Canada during the same time, studying, experiencing varied cultures and figuring out what it takes to be a global manager.

"It was hectic but I loved every bit of it. I did all that I didn't do here," says Raunak. Unlike in India, he submitted a qualitative research paper in marketing (shopping behaviour of Indians in retail formats in Helsinki) and a paper on business, government and society, apart from travelling across Europe to get a feel of work and life in that part of the world.

Raunak and his batchmates are part of a growing crowd of students who experience working and travelling across the world while still in school, thanks to the scaling up of student-exchange programmes at their respective institutes.
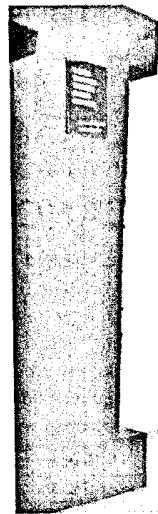
This is happening as Indian schools try to position themselves as global brands, foreign institutions eye the booming Indian education sector and companies seek culturally aware, flexible and better-groomed hires, says Prof Munish Bhargava, corporate and placement advisor at IIFT.

Also, "the number of student exchange tie-ups has increased many fold," he explains. In contrast, five years ago, with limited seats at IIFT, only two students could visit foreign universities.

Today, top B-schools of the country have an impressive list of global institutions as part of their international linkages which they have added in the last 5-10 years. This includes the

> **THIS KIND OF INITIAL EXPOSURE IS NECESSARY FOR GETTING HIRED IN COMPANIES EYEING NEWER AREAS OF GROWTH AND IN EMERGING MARKETS**
>
> **RAUNAK MEHTA**
> STUDENT, IIFT

School of Public Policy, George Mason University, Cambridge College, Massachusetts, Robert H Smith School of Business, University of Maryland in the US, ESCP Europe; EDHEC Business School, France, HHL Leipzig Graduate School of Management, Leipzig, Germany, Vienna University of Economics & Business Administration and National University of Singapore (NUS), among others.

That has allowed many more Indian students to travel abroad and study under different pedagogy and understand international work cultures.

For instance, IIM-Lucknow sent 53 students to 22 universities in four continents this year, up from nine students visiting three universities in 2001. IIM-Calcutta has seen the outgoing students' list grow longer from single digits in the early 2000s to 90 students this

year who went to 45 different universities. MDI's student count for the exchange programme has gone up 22% from 2007 to 45 students this year. Narsee Monjee Institute of Management Studies, Mumbai, too has seen a similar outflow, up from 10 students in 2005 to 35 in 2009.

A candidate with international exposure is preferred over others, specially in the services industry.

Prabhakar Shyam Jha, an MBA in finance from MDI, Gurgaon, realised this during placement. A five-month internship in General Electric's EMEA (Europe, Middle East and Africa) headquarters' working capital management division gave him the chance to interact with staff in the region and understand their preferences, working styles and cultural inclination.

"My 10-month stay in Paris came in

Top: Raunak Mehta, final year student at IIFT (right), goes sightseeing with batchmates Sachin Pal and Auro Prakash in Helsinki.
Left: Raunak Mehta and Auro Prakash make a stopover in Amsterdam during their world tour

handy when EvalueServe came to recruit at MDI this year as their client base is international," he says. Prabhakar now works as a senior business analyst in the company.

Prabhakar spent five months studying at ESCP Europe as part of the student exchange between MDI and ESCP and the rest working at GE. Just the reason students don't mind taking education loans and spending ₹2-3 lakh for the programme

What has helped their intent further is the growing volume of scholarships awarded to students. Last year, IIM-L students received 13 scholarships, while MDI got six. IIM-C got seven scholarships and 60 students were given grants from ₹15,000-30,000 from the institute this year. All this is international aid from global universities that promote themselves as higher education destinations across the globe.

"(In) the way we want to promote our school to attract international students, they are doing the same thing. More so, when they (foreign institutes) think it is possible to have their presence in India through various means, including local tie-ups," says

Dr Debashish Sanyal, dean, NMIMS.

Interest from overseas partners has also led domestic schools to expand areas of exchange.

Sujata Rathi, student exchange representative of IIM-C, says, "We have started pursuing international relations aggressively and are seeking student exchanges with more B-schools across the world. That would also mean getting double degree programmes under such exchange."

And, it's not only new courses but geographies as well as they try to bring diversity in their offerings. Like IIM-L, which is tying up with B-schools in North America and Asia and now plans to reach out to Australian institutes.

That's good news for students like IIFT's Raunak who want to make a mark in the corporate world. "This kind of initial exposure is necessary for getting hired in companies eyeing newer areas of growth and in emerging markets. At least, I will know how to manage in new surroundings. It has prepared me for the long-term," he says.

Economic Times   P-12
ND29/09/2010

Raise the technology bar
For Intelligent Snooping

THE US reportedly proposes a law that would require all communication service providers to be capable of complying with a wiretap order, meaning, to provide the government access to specific pieces of communications on their networks. India has been trying to enforce a similar law, but in vain. India's problem is not the absence of an enabling law; rather, it is the government's primitive technological capability. As the law stands, India prohibits the use of encryption using ciphers with a block size larger than 40 bits, which is plain ridiculous. No financial transaction is safe if carried out on encryption less than of 128 bits. As a result, India's electronic commerce violates the law. Why should the law lay down such a feeble standard of encryption? So that the government has the capability to decrypt the coded information in the interest of national security. This simply will not wash. The solution is for the government and its official snooping agency to get more tech-savvy. This is not just a question of procuring more sophisticated equipment — breaking codes calls for very heavy computing power and supercomputers will, no doubt, need to be deployed. But that is not the nub of the problem. The real challenge is to get the right talent. Bright young people who are not just capable of keeping abreast of fast-changing technology but positively enjoy doing it have little reason to leave the lucrative, as well as stimulating, private sector and enter the stuffy confines of a *sarkari* office. Instead of spending all its time trying to armtwist the likes of Blackberry-maker RIM and Google and Skype to give the government decryption keys that they might not even possess, the government would do well to turn its focus on creating a separate personnel policy to man its high-tech snooping agency.

It also would do no harm to tighten the norms for telecom service providers to offer virtual private networks (VPNs), the closed user groups, communication within which gets encrypted. If banks can have know-your-customer (KYC) norms to open an account, there is no reason why there should not be stricter KYC norms for VPNs.

Pioneer, ND 29-Sep-10 p-2

Experts show easy path to enter US universities

New Delhi: To provide a better platform to Indian students aspiring to study abroad, several B-School experts recently discussed importance of the entire application process for good B-Schools in the US at a conclave in the national Capital.

Clarifying the doubts of candidates, Clint Conrad, Admission Officer of Western Kentucky University, USA, introduced the Pathway Programmes of the Western Kentucky University and University of Massachusetts. "The Pathway Programmes are specially targeted at 10+2 students from India, who plan to get direct admission into undergraduate programmes of their choice without the hurdles of tests like the SAT. This is a first of its kind Pathway Programme for a direct entry into the final year (third-year) of undergraduate study programmes in the USA," said Conrad.

Apart from Conrad, other speakers for the Conclave session including W Benoy Joseph, Associate Dean for academic Affairs at Cleveland State University at Ohio, Valmik Mundkur from the University of California at San Bernardino, Lola Gulomova, Commercial Officer at American Centre in Delhi, Ruchika Castelino, Director India Operations of Study Overseas and Rahul Dutt, Country Business Head of US Division, Study Overseas were also present.　　　　*SR*

Pioneer, ND 29-Sep-10 p-14

LTI TIES-UP WITH IIT-CHENNAI

LTI has joined hands with IIT Chennai for engine and new concept development for its DG products, so as to provide fuel efficient and durable Diesel Genset products at competitive price.
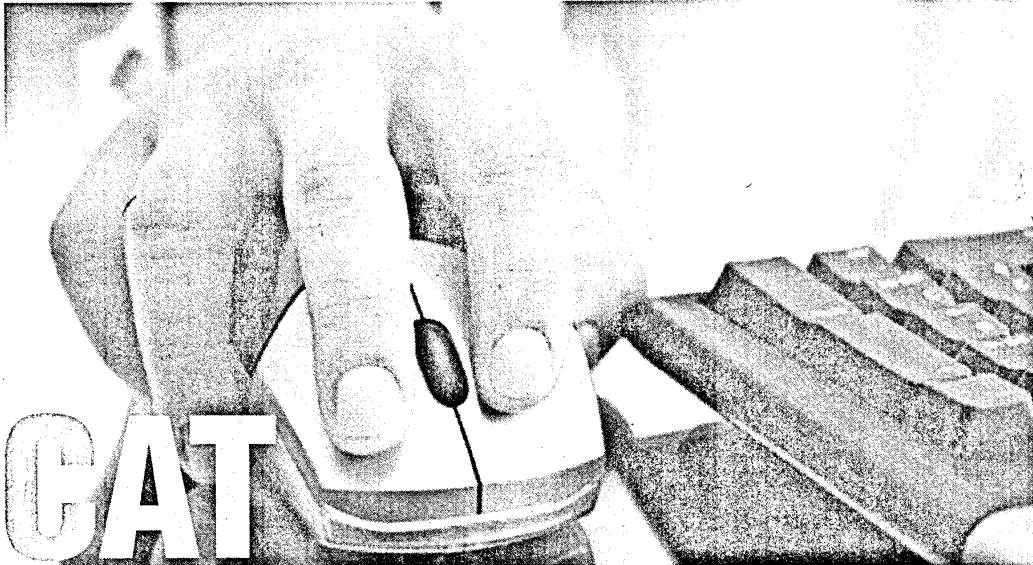
Luminous Teleinfra Ltd (LTI) has started its engine R&D and test bed facility in Chennai to develop diesel products amalgamating the innovative power solutions with engine technology.

Rakesh Malhotra, Founder and CEO, Luminous Power Technologies said: "This collaboration will further strengthen our knowledge base to develop world class engines based on optimised fuel consumption."

LTI will initially develop diesel gensets that range from 3 KVA to 30 KVA and will cater all kinds of domestic markets — commercial, industrial and telecom.

With just one month left for the online CAT exam, students should adopt good strategies to excel in them. **VINAYAK KUDVA** gives you some tips and tricks to sail through the exam

BAGGING THE CAT

The Common Admission Test (CAT) for MBA colleges are scheduled to start on October 27, 2010. As they are being conducted online since just the past one year, students require guidelines as to how to prepare for this new format as very little past data is available for them to refer to.

Students get quite anxious when it comes to giving a competitive examination, and it is at this time that they must adopt various kinds of strategies for them to sail through without any hindrance.

It is always good to take mock tests before going in for the actual exam. One of the most common queries by students is how many tests should they take in the last month of preparation. Taking about 5 to 6 tests in the last 30 days is recommended. But more important than taking the test is its analysis. If a students doesn't learn from each test before proceeding to the next, there is no point in taking a large number of them.

A student should try out various strategies for each test, such as dividing time equally in each section or spending more time on the weaker sections by working quickly in the stronger sections. It is also important to attempt a variety of tests because you may score well in a test that is more suited to your strengths while the CAT may carry more questions of the kind you are uncomfortable with. An exposure to range of problems and the rationale behind them will ensure that you are better prepared.

Most students prefer to become bookworms while preparing for the exam. But ideally, they shouldn't spend more than four hours a day on studying for the CAT. The manner in which those four hours are utilised depends on an individual student's strengths and weaknesses. Some may prefer to spend more time on verbal while other on DI. Ultimately, a student must ensure that his/her progress in each section is equal. This holds greater relevance if you are aiming only for the IIMs because at these institutes, cut-offs matter. Organise your day in such a way that the hours spent studying are those when your brain is most active. Working professionals, for example, shouldn't study at night after a hard day's work. Preparing for this test is not like preparing for school and college, where you need to spend long hours memorising.

Following are some frequently asked questions by CAT aspirants.

■ **Can I leave out topics that I find too tough?**
Students usually find topics such as Modern Math tough but they must remember that Modern Math questions in the CAT are not always tough nor are arithmetic questions always easy. Your aim is to maximise your score in all sections, you can do that by solving all the easy questions. The earlier CATs had a greater number of questions so you could probably afford to leave out certain topics. But today, with 20 questions to a section and possibly a further division into 1 and 2 mark questions, you cannot afford to leave questions out. You can't even

> **IDEALLY, STUDENTS SHOULDN'T SPEND MORE THAN FOUR HOURS A DAY ON STUDYING FOR THE CAT. THEY SHOULDN'T TURN INTO BOOKWORMS. THE MANNER IN WHICH THOSE FOUR HOURS ARE UTILISED WOULD DEPEND ON A STUDENT'S STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES**

assume that the one-mark questions will be easier than the two markers.

If you leave out Modern Math entirely, you have narrowed your selection to only the easy questions in Arithmetic and Algebra. How do you maximise your score then? Tough questions from any topic should be ignored in any case. For example, in one of the IMS practice tests, a student left a question based on playing cards because he felt it involved permutations and combinations. When he looked at the problem later, it turned out to be a simple linear equations question. So, read problems properly before leaving them.

■ **What exactly do students do when they analyse a test?**
For attempted questions, check whether your mistakes were silly, careless or conceptual errors. Check if there are better ways to solve questions. Did you comprehend the problem irrespective of the level of difficulty. If the concept is new, learn the concept and move on.

If answered correctly, check the solution the best possible approach to the problem? Should you really have attempted these when and if there were easier questions elsewhere in the section? Why were you attracted to that particular question?

Solve each unattempted question. Identify which questions were potential score increasers and analyse why you left them. Did you even read these questions?

Now you have an idea of where you are faltering. Pick one area you need to work upon and spend 2-3 days on solving every possible question of the kind from the material given to you (section tests/comprehensive tests), from the previous years papers and also refer to your Basic Reference Material. In the tests ahead, you're assured that you will be able to solve any question relating to the topic you picked.

■ **What are the suggestions for a test prep strategy for the final leg of preparation?**
A suggested strategy is to take a test every four days. If you take a test on Day 1, get into the analysis mode for Day 2, 3 and 4. Make sure you get in touch with the basics of your weak areas in this period. Before beginning a test, ensure you have an overall target score and section target scores.

While taking the test, you could mentally slot the questions into those that you can understand and solve, can solve but will take time and can't solve (whatever the reason may be).

Before the Test:
■ Carry your Admit Card, Test Voucher and other documents as specified on your admit card.
■ Use the 15 minutes before the test to go through the CAT software tutorial.

While taking the test:
■ *Intelligent guessing:* Test the alternatives one by one for correctness for certain questions. Some answer options may just strike you as wrong when you first read them. Don't discard such intuition; you have spent time preparing for this test and your learning is so ingrained that it is possible your mind unconsciously recognises a certain type of sum.
■ *Don't get mired in one particular question:* If you are stuck with the solution of a question, leave it. Students can't let go of questions either because they feel that it's impossible that they cannot crack a problem or after having spent precious minutes on this particular problem, a few more minutes will definitely get them the answer.
■ *Watch the clock:* The value of timing yourself and sticking to your time limits cannot be stressed upon enough. You have to display consistent performance across the sections.
■ *Think positive!*

Bottom line: Be alert. In the end, it's not just about your strengths or weaknesses in each section or the number of attempts, etc, but also about your self esteem and your belief in giving yourself a fighting chance.

By dividing the questions in this manner you will be able to prioritise and plan your time. Also, developing this habit in practice tests will hone your ability to pick the 'right' kind of questions. One of the main reasons people don't do well is that they get stuck in problems and can't move on. If you find that you began a problem assuming you can solve it but can see that your attempts aren't leading you to the answer, let it go and move on to the next.

■ **Does analysing a test with a group of friends help?**
Taking a test with a group of friends is immensely beneficial because people tend to complement each other's strengths and weaknesses. With, say four friends, you will have four different approaches to solving a problem. When you analyse a test by yourself, you will probably come up with time saving approaches for about 5-6 problems because one person can come up with a limited number of perspectives.

With a group, however, you can be assured of multiple approaches to a sum.

Hindu ND 29.09.10 p-7

Two PGI doctors held for fraudulent admission

Institute orders probe; 500 doctors to be quizzed

CHANDIGARH: The Central Bureau of Investigation on Tuesday arrested two resident doctors of the Post-Graduate Institute (PGI) of Medical Education and Research here on charges of fraudulently securing admission to the post-graduate course and searched the premises of the mastermind of an admission racket in Mumbai.

In a related development, the Institute has started verification of all 500 resident doctors who joined its post-graduate courses in the last two years following media reports that seats were secured through impersonation and other irregularities with the help of agents operating from Mumbai and New Delhi.

According to a CBI release, the investigation agency arrested two doctors pursuing their post-graduation courses at the PGI following a case registered against them and

* **Premises of racket mastermind raided in Mumbai**

* **Documents seized; "agents also operating in Delhi"**

others.

It was alleged that these two doctors secured admission to the courses in the PGI on the basis of impersonation and manipulation, the release said.

They obtained admission through an organised racket assuring admissions in various private and government medical colleges by charging amount running into lakhs of rupees.

In such cases, some brilliant students, part of the organised racket, appeared in the entrance examination by impersonating the aspiring candidates and qualified the

same, the release said.

Searches were conducted at the premises of one of the masterminds of the organised racket in Mumbai in order to establish further links..

Documents and other material have been recovered during the raid, the release said.

The internal inquiry in PGI is being conducted by the Registrar and the Heads of Departments, Institute sources told PTI. The inquiry would cover about 500 resident doctors who have joined various departments, including medicine, radiology, orthopaedics and ENT during the last two years by taking the entrance examination.

"We have started verifying credentials of all the resident doctors who have joined in the last two years. We are extending full cooperation to all the investigative agencies involved," said the PGI in an official statement. - PTI

Indian Express ND 29-Sep-10 p-7

Scientists say goofed, stand by report

EMBARRASSED by the revelation that parts of its report on genetically-modified crops had been lifted directly from a magazine article, a group of scientists from India's top science academies has owned up the mistake but maintained that the main recommendations remained "unaffected".

Speaking on behalf of the scientists, M Vijayan, president of the Indian National Science Academy, admitted that copying from a magazine article without the mandatory attribution was 'inappropriate' even if the author of the article belonged to one of the academies participating in preparing the report.

Vijayan said even the conscious decision of the group to not include references or citations in the report was wrong.

"In retrospect, and on the basis of the feedback subsequently received, we now feel that this (mention of references and citations) could have been done. We shall do so and make appropriate modifications," he said. "Nevertheless, it is inappropriate for the report to contain chunks of material from another article, even if it was authored by a Fellow of a participating academy... We, the signatories of the report, take the responsibility for the slip," he said.

The report, compiled by six top Indian science academies, had given thumbs-up to the use of genetically-modified crops and recommended the immediate release of Bt brinjal.

Financial Express ND 29-Sep-10   p-9

Postcards of Change

Surat: building a city that cares

How other cities can and why they must follow suit

ISHER J AHLUWALIA & RANESH NAIR

THE city of Surat, home to 42% of the world's total rough diamond cutting and polishing, faced its worst ever crisis in September 1994 with the outbreak of plague. It has been a remarkable story of comeback. In 2008-09, it won the 'Best Performing City' award from the Ministry of Urban Development. Again, in 2010, a Government of India study ranked Surat 3rd on its sanitation score across 423 cities of India. Surat has made full use of the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission in working towards its urban renewal, bagging 34 projects worth Rs 2,429 crore under the Mission.

What is strikingly different and refreshing is Surat's focus on the quality of life of its residents and not just on the hard physical infrastructure. The slogan 'The city that cares' may well have arisen from adversity, but it has become a way of life for the city's administrators.
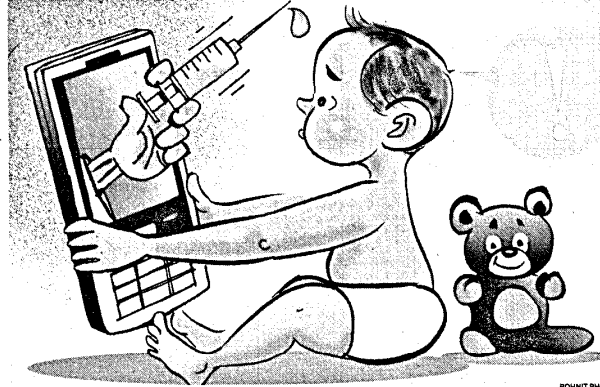
Use of mobile phones to provide real time information on vaccinations for babies is an m-Governance initiative of the Surat Municipal Corporation (SMC) that should reduce costs of healthcare for parents. Those who provide their mobile number at the time of registering the birth of their child are issued alerts to vaccinate their child against preventable diseases according to the schedule prescribed under the national immunisation programme. The alerts are personalised and child-specific, compared to the usual standardised print and electronic blurbs, and have evoked the desired response. The service is low cost for the Corporation and involves no cost to the citizen. Over 2,00,000 messages have been sent since the start of the initiative in 2009, covering nearly 50,000 parents who have availed of the 'vaccination alert on SMS' initiative.

In Project Yashoda, healthy mothers donate milk, and after proper pasteurisation, the milk is stored and passed on to newborn babies who need it. Started in December 2008, the human milk bank has received 43,000 ml of milk from 570 mothers, and 450 babies have received 39,000 ml of milk from the bank.

The SMC conducts medical camps in low-income localities every year during the monsoon season (every Saturday in the months of July, August and September). In 2010, so far, 78 medical camps have been held with 4,700 doctors attending on 13,000 patients, and conducting 218 cases of surgeries. Medicines are provided free of cost to patients visiting the camp. A Health Exhibition to educate people on the prevention of diseases is organised on the sidelines of the camps.

The city has taken many initiatives to serve its senior citizens. A number of gardens have been developed for them in residential areas. Known as Shantikunj, these quiet corners are exclusively for senior citizens. Newspapers are provided free of cost every morning at these gardens. The Corporation has also built a Senior Citizen Centre at a cost of Rs 1.3 crore, with a meditation hall, a room for medical check-ups, a reading room, a Conference hall and a hall for multi-purpose activities. Over 20,000 senior citizens are expected to avail the services offered by this Centre. In the spirit of caring, the rebate on property tax for senior citizens was introduced in 2007-08 at 5% and raised to 10% in 2009-10.

Surat's Veer Narmad Central Library has a collection of over 2,50,000 books and an e-library of over 1,500 e-books. The Corporation has built 47 reading rooms and actively manages these to inculcate the habit of reading amongst its citizens. To cater to the needs of its challenged citizens, the Library also houses a collection of over 2,600 Braille books on different subjects in Gujarati and English. The facilities include free membership, audio equipment and free home delivery of books.

The city that cares also fares well on the cultural front. It has been focusing on building infrastructure aimed at making it an attractive place to live in. An institutional complex with a Science Centre, an Art Gallery and a Museum complex has been built at a cost of Rs 44 crore and was inaugurated in November 2009. It includes a planetarium, a city museum, a science gallery with over 51 exhibits, an auditorium and an amphitheatre. The admission fee ranging from Rs 30-80 per person is moderate and contributes towards maintenance of the complex. The Corporation is now building a Performing Arts Centre to provide rehearsal and performance space at low cost to learning and budding artists.

Since 2007, Surat has been celebrating Heritage Week from the 19th to the 25th of November, creating awareness of history and tradition through activities like heritage walks, seminars and exhibitions concerning the city's heritage. The Surat Municipal Corporation has created a Heritage Cell, formed a Heritage Conservation Committee and set up a Heritage Fund to protect and promote its cultural history. Over 2,800 public and private properties of heritage value have been identified and documented through an extensive survey. The Corporation is now working with local architects and other agencies to finalise the blueprint for the development of the Chowk area in the city as a Heritage Square. A 400-year-old historic water tank—the Gopi Talao—in the heart of the old city is being restored to conserve heritage as well as environment.

Surat is a highly flood-prone city with more than three-fourths of its 3.8 million population in the coastal plains at risk from the overflowing of river Tapti. In 2006, the river flowed into nearly 70% of Surat, causing unprecedented havoc. A recent study has highlighted that slums and low-income settlements of Surat that are located close to the river are extremely vulnerable to floods. To counter the threat, the Corporation has set up the Surat City Advisory Committee to prepare a strategy for resilience. Surat is one of the 10 cities selected under the Rockefeller Foundation's Asian Cities Climate Change Resilience Network. Under this initiative, local institutions and individual experts have come together to study climate change impacts on health, energy, transport and housing, with a focus on the more vulnerable sections of the society.

Citizen-focused initiatives have also been successful in attracting greater community participation in city management. Ward Committees constituted in March 2008 meet once a month to discuss development issues and recommend works and activities for priority attention. An online system for registration of grievances and redressal has been started since July 2009. Of the 2,500 complaints received between July 2009 and September 2010, 2,300 have been resolved.

Surat received the 'Most Inclusive Approach' award from the Ministry of Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation in 2009 for its initiatives for the urban poor. Note that 42,000 houses are being constructed for the economically weaker sections of society. Between 1980 and 2006, over 12,600 sites and over 7,400 built houses were allotted on lease basis to the poor urban households. In the last 2 years alone, over 12,000 households from slums have been rehabilitated in well-planned colonies.

Building liveable cities is not only about mega projects. Surat has shown that small initiatives matter. As Commissioner S Aparna put it, "The 'caring initiatives' are one way of reaching out to citizens and taking care of the small things that matter a lot to individuals."

Isher Judge Ahluwalia is chair of Icrier and chair of the high powered expert committee on urban infrastructure. Ranesh Nair is a consultant to the committee. Views are personal

This is the 9th in a monthly series on urban infrastructure

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ROHNIT PHORE

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Academies admit slip on Bt Brinjal

SIX science academies, which gave a clean chit to genetically modified brinjal in their report to the government that was later found to have been plagiarised, on Tuesday admitted their slip and offered to 're-examine' the report.

"Now we know how the slip occurred. We, the signatories of the report, take the responsibility for the slip," Dr M. Vijayan, president of the Indian National Science Academy, said in a signed statement. "Mistakes, often inadvertent, occur in pursuit of science and efforts based on it. Once detected, the right thing to do is to own it up and take corrective measures, which is what we are dong now."

Mail Today

DNA Mumbai 28.09.10 P-1

THANE SCHOOL INTRODUCES WEB-BASED EXAMS, HAPPY WITH RESULTS

Bye-bye pen & paper, hello online tests
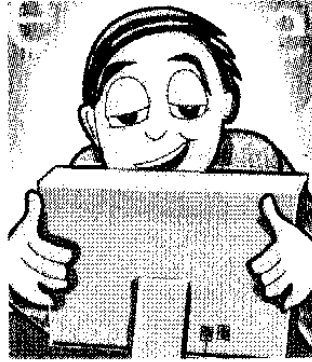
Yogita Rao MUMBAI

The pen and paper format in class tests may soon be passé. Providing a glimpse into the future to its students, a school in Thane discarded temporarily the old way of writing papers and conducted unit tests for the standard XII science papers online. The move seems apt at a time when competitive examinations for professional courses like the Common Admission Test (CAT) are shifting to the online mode. Smt Sulochanadevi Singhania School wanted its students to have a feel of the system.

Though the number of questions was the same, their order was re-jigged to stop students from peeping into each other's computers. The software for the test, developed in-house, was programmed to deliver the scores immediately.

"The software pointed out their mistakes to the students and provided the correct answer with an explanation. The papers carried multiple-choice questions, which is the format of the papers set in entrance exams," said Revathi Srinivasan, the principal of the school.

The school plans to extend online tests to other senior classes as well. "We have initially started it only for science subjects; we are going to develop the software in phases to accommodate language

papers as well. We also plan to introduce subjective questions in the later stages," added Srinivasan.

The test was for just 10 marks and it was time-bound. Students were tested on problem-solving skills and critical analysis, among other abili-

ties. Currently, negative marking is not part of the testing format. However, it will soon be made compulsory to give students the feel of a real entrance test.

"We wanted our question papers to be more concept-driven. It was aimed at enhancing thinking skills in students. Also, the questions tested the students' understanding of the subject," said Srinivasan.

Students found the tests interesting, said a school source. "It was like a speed test for them and they were looking forward to it. Even the teachers found it very challenging to frame the questions and the four choices," he added.

ONLINE TEST

CAT '10 deadline extended

DC CORRESPONDENT

HYDERABAD

Sept. 27: The Indian Institutes of Management and the Prometric, which conduct the online Common Admission Test, have extended the registration period for CAT-2010 by a week. The deadline has been extended from September 30 to October 7.

This is the first time in the 34-year history of the CAT that the due date to register for the exam has been extended.

Last year, the CAT was conducted online for the first time after being conducted in a pencil-paper format for 33 years.

The cold response to online CAT this year is apparently a result of the fact that last year's exam was marred by several technical glitches that had forced the Prometric to re-conduct the exam at several centres. As a result, the deadline has been extended.

The poor response is also being attributed to large number of aspirants from semi-urban and rural areas possibly shying away from the CAT as they are not comfortable taking the computer-based test

This time, the number of centres has been reduced from 104 to 78, and the number of computers from 17,000 to 9,000. The testing window has been increased from 10 to 20 days.

Tighter security measures have also been put in place in order to prevent proxy candidates from taking the test.