A. Joseph Dorairaj

What makes a teacher great?

Defining 10 characteristics of outstanding educators

Great teachers are not born, but made. The process is long and arduous but the outcome is rewarding. What goes into the making of an exceptional teacher? What are the hallmarks of a great teacher?

Self-reflection: Great teachers constantly reflect on their profession and their academic pursuits. They frequently ask themselves: Did my students learn anything today? Is there anything I could have done better? Was my pedagogic strategy appropriate and fruitful? Did I complete the tasks that I had planned? Did I collect my students' feedback and analyse it? This introspection and self-reflection enables them to look back and forward and become better teachers. A teacher who does not introspect on his/her everyday academic pursuits lacks the propulsion to go forward.

Multidisciplinary: Such teachers are multidisciplinarians and impart a holistic education. While grounded in their

They are life-long learners. They ensure that the curricula of their respective disciplines is updated periodically so that their students are conversant with the latest developments.

own respective disciplines, they are acutely conscious that knowledge is whole and, therefore, undertake inter- and multidisciplinary projects. Apart from focusing on cognitive development, their goal is to transform their students into well-rounded individuals who will be connected to the transcendent, their fellow human beings and the ecosystem.

Research oriented: They are research-oriented and try to address real academic problems. They convert academic issues into research problems and try to 'solve' them in a relatively short span of time. They collect data, both quantitative and qualitative, to 'test' their research hypotheses. The fact that practising teachers strive to find answers to classroom issues through action research projects is to be welcomed.

Experimental: Great teachers take risks in their academic ventures. They do not shy away from trying out different methodologies to teach a

particular concept or theory or text. They experiment with new methods, even if these do not always bear fruit. While most teachers shun innovation for fear of failure, outstanding teachers are willing to 'take the road less travelled by', despite potential threats and failures.

Use technology: All great teachers are conversant with technology. Post-COVID, the use of technology for academic purposes, especially teaching-learning, has come down. But good

teachers ensure that technology assists and complements their teaching. They encourage their students to sign up for MOOCs and use online resources for their academic enrichment. Such teachers constantly update themselves with the latest in technology.

Interactive: They are community-oriented in the sense that they share their stories – successes as well as failures – with their colleagues. They draw inspiration with regard to pedagogy and classroom management

from their peers and, in turn, offer suggestions, especially with regard to successful strategies. This makes staff rooms vibrant spaces for informal interactive sessions.

Encourage students: Exceptional teachers believe in the efficacy of student-talk. In a typical classroom, teachers are obsessed with 'covering' the syllabus and refuse to devote time to students' interaction. But outstanding teachers know that students' interaction should be given time and space and encourage stu-

dents to not only ask questions but also have a questioning mind. Great teachers catalyse interactions.

Socially committed: Such teachers have a strong social commitment. They do not get lost in esoteric research projects that do not have any connection to ground realities. They are conscious of their responsibility to protect the fragile ecosystem and reach out to the disadvantaged sections through education. They instill in their students a

concern for the environment and the marginalised, and encourage them to get involved in transformative extension and outreach activities with the dream of creating an equitable world.

Constant learning: They are life-long learners. They constantly update themselves through Faculty Development Programmes (FDPs). They ensure that the curricula of their respective disciplines is updated periodically so that their students are conversant with the latest developments. They prepare their students to face the future confidently by initiating them into the culture of 'learning to learn'.

Improvisation: Great teachers, like all good professionals, think on their feet. When they enter a classroom, they are prepared to adjust their teaching strategies and classroom management. This improvisation enables them to face any situation, however unexpected and challenging. In fact, thinking on one's feet is a vital skill in today's fast-changing world.

Great teachers constantly reinvent themselves so that they are prepared to address fresh challenges. They revitalise themselves every day so that they remain vibrant and relevant.

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A textbook case of politics writing history

Periodic curriculum updates are necessary, including in the humanities, but there has to be epistemological and scientific certitude backing them, especially with regard to the methods of arriving at the insertions or deletions. The controversy that the recent revision of school textbooks by the National Council of Education Research and Training (NCERT) has dredged up indicates that the latest updates may not fully pass this test.

For instance, the revisions remove references to the Aryan Migration Theory (AMT) from history textbooks, asserting that the analysis of ancient DNA recovered from excavation sites establishes that there was continuity between the Harappan people and the Vedic era communities, in line with the claim of Hindu nationalists. The other side argues that the findings resist any such interpretation, especially when it comes to the absence of the Central Asian "steppe" gene in many samples — the so-called Aryan gene that is almost ubiquitous in parts of South Asia today.

This is not surprising since history is a contested terrain and its uses for politics would mean there will always be attempts to manipulate its writing. However, we need to fireproof textbooks from power politics. In the Harappan story, where science has been enriching and updating our understanding of early Indians, migrations into India, and the shaping up of a complex and varied population that speaks of multiple genetic sources, it is best to make available the multiple narratives to students rather than impose any politically driven claim on them.

It would preserve scientific temper in education if polemics were kept out of school textbooks. While, of course, keeping the distinction between science, mythology, beliefs and opinions.

IIT-Delhi lends hand to students: Support panel, campus stay with kin for some

PAGE 1 ANCHOR

YOUR RIGHT TO KNOW

AN **EXPRESS** RTI APPLICATION

VIDHEESHA KUNTAMALLA
NEW DELHI, APRIL 7

TO EASE pressure on students struggling with studies, which in extreme cases has resulted in suicides, the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Delhi has formed a panel of teachers and students to help its undergraduate students with a "poor academic record", and in "exceptional cases" has also permitted a few students to stay with a family member on campus, The Indian Express has learned.

"In a few exceptional cases, the departments have identified at least three such students who they believe require additional support and must stay with a family member. In such cases, the student is allowed to live with a family member on campus and advised not to live alone in the hostel. Students in such cases can use the premises of a hostel we have on campus which also has the facility to cook food," a member of the panel — Academic Progress Group (APG) — told The Indian Express.

According to documents accessed by The Indian Express through the Right to Information Act, the APG has so far identified 192 undergraduate students at the institute as "academically adrift", emphasising that these students need academic help.

The APG was formed in September last year, soon after the death of a student, Anil Kumar, who died by suicide in

IIT-Delhi's Academic Progress Group has identified 192 undergraduate students as 'academically adrift'. *File*

his hostel room. Kumar hailed from Uttar Pradesh's Banda district and was pursuing B Tech in Mathematics.

This year, there have been five student suicides at the IITs across India — two at IIT-Kanpur and one each in Delhi, Roorkee and BHU.

An official notification on the formation of the panel said: "It (APG) will be empowered to interface with academic units and hostels and intervene as required. It will also suggest policy changes that may be needed."

According to official records, the constitution of the APG was revised on March 5 with the inclusion of two student members in the eight-member panel.

The APG has so far analysed the academic records of undergraduate students on probation and backlog, held discussions with several students and provided recommendations for changes at the institute.

The recommendations are classified into two categories: "Immediate Implementation" and for "Broader Discussion".

For immediate implementation, the APG has identified that "a major cause of backlog students not being able to complete their degree requirements is the non-availability of hostel accommodation beyond nine semesters".

"It is recommended that 30 hostel seats be reserved for backlog students beyond nine semesters. The accommodation will be provided subject to 75% attendance in lectures, tutorials and laboratory sessions. The recommendations for hostel accommodation will be made by the APG," it has said.

The APG has also recommended increasing the effectiveness of the existing tutoring system run by the Board of Student Welfare (BSW) and the Dean of Students.

The BSW primarily consists of student representatives from each

•IIT-Delhi lends hand to students: Support panel, campus stay with kin for some

hostel and a few faculty members. According to the institute's website, the BSW's motive of the academic mentorship programme is "to help undergraduate first-year students in their academics via hostel sessions conducted by academically strong second-year students".

In order to strengthen this, the APG said, "An online portal should be developed to help needy students identify tutors. Tutors should be available for fourth- and fifth-year students as well. The in-

centives to the tutors should be enhanced to improve student participation." "Several students have reached out for personal tutoring. We have provided these students with individual tutors," the APG member, who did not want to be named, said.

Among other recommendations is one to fix the institute's attendance system, as the APG "observed that several students are exploiting loopholes in the Timble attendance system, which eventually affects their

academic performance".

Timble is an end-to-end system to mark paperless attendance in classrooms. Essentially, there is a Timble Device in the vicinity of each classroom, which interacts with all smartphones wirelessly, allowing students to mark attendance in the proximity of their respective classrooms.

"Sometimes, students tend to mark the attendance but skip the classes," the APG member said.

A major cause of delayed graduation is failure in one or

more first-year undergraduate courses. While some first-year courses are being run during the summer semester, the APG has suggested that "efforts should be made to facilitate running all such courses with significant backlog. Moreover, steps should be taken to ensure that backlog students register for the summer courses..." to ensure timely graduation of those lagging.

Under recommendations for "Broader Discussion", the APG has suggested several policy changes

in the way students at the institute are being currently graded.

For instance, the panel had suggested removal of the Degree Grade Point Average (DGPA), which is the calculated GPA of all courses.

Currently, a minimum DGPA of 5 is required for the award of a B Tech degree at an IIT, but the pass grade for each course is a D (which is 4 out of 10 points).

According to the APG's suggestion, if a student is scoring a minimum of 4 out of 10 in each

course, passing each individually, but the DGPA does not add up to 5, the student should still be declared as pass and should be awarded her degree.

The recommendations related to academic affairs have to be discussed and passed by the institute's Senate, which is responsible for maintenance of standards of instruction, education and examinations at the institute.

The Indian Express reached out to IIT Delhi for comments on this matter but received no response.

NARROWING THE VIEW

NCERT's textbook revisions pose question mark against its mandate to enable critical thinking

IN ITS FOURTH round of revisions, the NCERT has announced significant changes in the history, sociology and political science textbooks of classes VI to XII. Revision of learning material should be par for the course in a robust education system. But school curricula in India — especially social science textbooks — have not always kept pace with the latest research. History textbooks, for instance, haven't done adequate justice to the archaeological findings that have changed understandings of the Indus Valley Civilisation (IVC). Recent historiography on understudied areas, such as the country's Northeast, is yet to find a way into the school curriculum. Political science textbooks have very little on the new forms of mobilisation enabled by social media. It's also time that the student is apprised of climate change politics. The NCERT's latest revisions do not address such knowledge-related imperatives either. Instead, they appear burdened by the ruling dispensation's anxiety to paper over fraught political moments in the country's recent history — the demolition of the Babri Masjid, for instance. They underplay social faultlines such as those related to caste. Even the changes that take note of new research on the IVC, seem of a piece with the deeply contested and politically loaded narrative that harps on continuity between the Harappan and Rig Vedic epochs.

Last year, an investigation by this newspaper on NCERT textbooks had shone a light on the deletion of key passages on Mahatma Gandhi's assassination, the Emergency, Gujarat 2002 and protest movements. Of course, social sciences have always been an arena of ideological and political contestation and textbook committees have a long history of being fettered by government interventions. However, the recent revisions belie the hopes raised by the NEP — they go against the policy's ideologically agnostic approach to education reform. Some of the changes described as "minor editing" — the deletion of the reference on the poverty and powerlessness of Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe communities in the Class XII Sociology textbook, for instance — seem to tie in with a political agenda of playing up the notion of a cohesive Hindu society. Similarly, the removal of a sentence linking big dam projects to the destitution of tribal groups — also in the Class XII Sociology textbook — betrays an unease with argumentative engagements with developmental processes.

Young minds today are exposed to a glut of information on culture, history and politics from a variety of sources, including social media. Veracity is often a casualty. Classrooms must, therefore, provide a grounding in objectivity while alerting students to social complexities, with all their diversities, conflicts and inequities. The country's foremost textbook framing body should be an enabler of this process, not a hurdle in it.

Assam's path-breaking reforms in school education

RANGAN DUTTA

The decision of the Government of Assam announced on 30 March 2024, to provide primary education in six languages spoken by the state's increasingly assertive plains tribes—Rabha, Tiwa, Mising, Karbi, Dimacha, and Deuri—has been widely acclaimed, especially in upper Assam, capturing the headlines of the media, and its timing just before the Lok Sabha election is significant as the support of these groups could be decisive in a number of constituencies, especially in upper Assam. On the face of it, the decision is sound and in keeping with the National Education Policy 2023 that primary education is to be imparted in the mother tongue, which is the language spoken by the child at home. However, given the linguistic diversity of Assam, which is evident from the number of literary societies formed since the 1980s to promote the languages of ethno-linguistic groups such as Bodos, Koch Rajbanshis, Deori Kacharis, the Adivasi origin tea labour community, and even long-time Nepali settlers, this decision must be seen as path-breaking because implicit in it is, first, the recognition of the linguistic diversity, and second, the policy decision to promote the use of these languages as the medium of primary education has the force of law and cannot be easily backtracked.

This step should not be seen in isolation but in the larger context of Assam's sustained efforts to "manage" its mind-boggling diversity—a fact not duly noted in the national media, such as, for example, the role and functions of the six statutory autonomous councils set up under the state laws for the development of areas inhabited by Rabha, Mising, Tiwa, Deori, Thengal Kachari, and Sonowal Kachari plains tribes; and 34 non-statutory "development council" for the betterment of Assamese castes like the Sut, Brahmin, and Kalita; and surprisingly for even Bengali and Hindi-speaking people as well. This is a most remarkable feature of Assam's quiet effort to harmonise development with diversity, which merits evaluation by the North Eastern Council in its capacity as the "regional planning body" and even by NITI Ayog, as some aspects of this initiative could be replicated elsewhere to promote such development.

However, the object of imparting primary education in six tribal languages will not be easy for reasons such as a lack of textbooks and teachers who are conversant with the languages well enough to teach, etc. However, these could be overcome with determined efforts.

A fascinating aspect of the Brahmaputra Valley is the coexistence of a large number of ethno-linguistic groups who don't understand each other's language largely because of the remoteness of their villages, limited needs, and terrain, and therefore adopted a form of Assamese as the "lingua franca" for communicating with each other. Since the "home languages" of plains tribes such as Misings or Bodos are distinct, the services of Dubhashis, "language interpreters," are needed to enable the DC's and SDOs to interact with the villages inhabited by plains tribals during their tours. It may be recalled that the demand of Bodos in the late 1960's for a separate state, Udayachal, spearheaded by the PTCA. (Plains Tribals Council of Action) and for the introduction of Roman script in the Bodo language in the late 1970's led to decades of violent movement, which ended with the formation of the Bodoland Territorial Council under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution with the signing of the Bodo Accord on 10 February 2003. This naturally led to the adoption of the Bodo language in the educational system in the BTC areas. Thus, from a wider perspective, this is a bold step towards the recognition of the linguistic identity of six more tribes, including two Karbis and Dimachas inhabiting hill areas as well.

This development, however, is not to be seen in isolation but in the context of an equally bold decision by the Government of Assam announced in 2023 to introduce English as the medium of instruction for teaching science and mathematics in all state-run and aided schools from class 6. The grounds, stated and unstated, are straightforward: science and maths taught in English at the early stage will empower the students as well as the teachers in multiple ways, removing inhibitions about the terminology, reasoning, and methods of analysis adopted globally in English for teaching maths and science, and will raise the capacity and confidence of the students, thereby reducing the perceived advantages of those who have attended "English medium schools," which are mushrooming in Assam and the north east as well as elsewhere in the country. Predictably, there are protests against it, which are even seen as a second "medium movement," like the one launched in 1973 on the issue of the medium of instruction at Gauhati University. However, times have changed, and the reality of the post-internet and mobile phone age is that English has become the global language of communication even outside the "Anglosphere," that is, countries that were outside the lands that had historic links with the British Empire. Already, several Delhi-based coaching centres have started issuing advertisements in English dailies about their coaching programmes in "Hinglish," much to the amusement of readers like your columnist. However, this only shows how familiar English has become now, even among the kids in urban and even rural areas who are seen using mobile phones and apps with ease, and this must be the reality in Assam as well. It is quite possible that Assam noted the great success in school education in Andhra Pradesh after the adoption of English as the medium of instruction in all schools, and reportedly, Telengana is moving in the same direction. Thus, together, these two bold policy initiatives of the Himanta Biswa Sarma government is certain to regard these reforms as path-breaking in the school education system and will be watched by other states of India and in the northeast with great interest.

The author is a retired I A.S. officer of Assam Meghalaya cadre and had served as Secretary Agriculture and Revenue Commissioner of Assam.

India, China drive AI focus for global MBA aspirants: Study

40% Eye AI Skills, Takers For STEM-Certified Courses Up 38%

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New Delhi: Driven by growing demand in India and China, graduate management education is poised for a pivotal shift, with 40% of aspirants worldwide now emphasising on learning AI skills. Another notable trend among global MBA aspirants, largely propelled by India (57%) and China (51%), is the increasing clamour for STEM-certified business programmes.

These insights have emerged from the 'Prospective Students Survey 2024' report by GMAC (Graduate Management Admission Council), exclusively accessed by **TOI**. The survey revealed that aspiring scholars of management studies are increasingly drawn towards transformative technologies such as generative AI, which has witnessed a remarkable 38% year-over-year growth, with a significant majority citing its indispensability to their academic pursuits.

Concurrently, there has been a parallel surge in global interest towards STEM-certified business programmes, marking a 38% uptick over the past five years, particularly resonating in Asia, fuelled by the burgeoning demand in India and China.

The demand for AI proficiency mirrors the escalating need for skilled talent, prompting organisations to prioritise upskilling initiatives for their existing workforce, including engineers, IT professionals, with a focus on generative AI and machine learning (ML). Also, in a largely cautious market, AI, along with the oil sector, saw a 20% increase in hiring in Feb 2024, while AI and ML roles saw a 21% year-over-year increase in job creation.

"In the past year, the number of candidates who say AI is essential to their GME curriculá surged from 29% in 2022 to 40% in 2023 — the most year-over-year growth of any curricular option, and evidence of the growing demand to learn about the role of AI in a business context," the survey said.
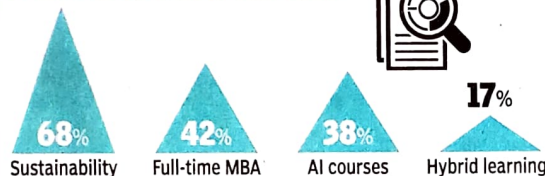
"The 2024 survey of prospective students reveals that candidates expect graduate business education to help equip them to advance social impact as a component of their professional and personal goals. Their strong desire to build evergreen skills like leadership in an uncertain world, data-driven problem-solving, and effective technology and human capital management persists, even though their preferences for delivery formats and study destinations may shift," said Joy Jones, CEO of GMAC.

Specifically, preference for STEM-certified programmes has grown among candidates in India from 43% in 2019 to 57% in 2023, and in China from 35% to 51%.

Alongside, a steadfast commitment to equity, inclusion, and sustainability throughout their academic journey is another dealbreaker. The GMAC survey indicates that for over two-thirds of aspirants, equity, inclusion, and sustainability are important aspects of their academic journey. Three-quarters express those efforts around well-being, as outlined by the United Nations 'sustainable development goals' encompassing eradication of poverty, hunger, ensuring clean water and sanitation, and fostering decent work and economic growth, are important in their pursuit of higher education. To such an extent that many candidates would exclude schools from their considerations if these fundamental themes were not integrated into the curriculum.

Furthermore, the survey underscores that, for Indian individuals aspiring to pursue a global MBA, the esteemed reputation of the educational systems in the United States (77%) and Western Europe (63%) stands as primary attractions, while considerations of affordability emerge as central factors for those eyeing educational opportunities in Central and South Asia (55%).

As per the survey, affordability and growth of quality in-region institutions reshape global student mobility. For example, most Indian candidates now plan to apply domestically, growing from 41% in 2022 to 53% in 2023.

SUSTAINABILITY A KEY FACTOR

Survey sample

Respondents **4,105**

Countries of citizenship represented **132**

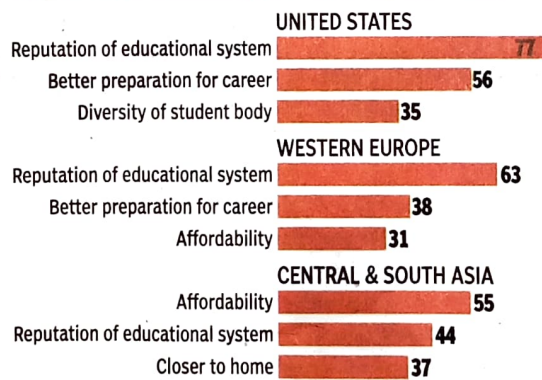Female respondents **42%**

Gen Z respondents **61%**

Dealbreaker choice in curriculum

- **68%** Sustainability
- **42%** Full-time MBA
- **38%** AI courses
- **17%** Hybrid learning

Why Indian candidates prefer their top destination (%)

UNITED STATES
Reputation of educational system	77
Better preparation for career	56
Diversity of student body	35

WESTERN EUROPE
Reputation of educational system	63
Better preparation for career	38
Affordability	31

CENTRAL & SOUTH ASIA
Affordability	55
Reputation of educational system	44
Closer to home	37

AI & STEM

- Candidate demand for AI grew 38% year-over-year, with two-fifths now saying it is essential to their curricula
- Global interest in STEM-certified GME programs grew 38% in five years—and to new heights in Asia, driven by demand in India & China
- 50%+ candidates in India and Greater China prefer STEM certified GME programmes

TRENDS

- The two-year MBA recaptured the top preferred degree spot from the one-year MBA
- Consulting is again the top post-GME industry for both millennials and Gen Z
- Millennials' second-most popular sector is technology, while finance is the second-most popular industry among Gen Z
- Women expressed greater interest in consumer products, media-communication, & nonprofit sectors
- Men are statistically more likely to seek careers in financial services, investment banking, & technology

Will CUET UG common counselling make admissions seamless for students

Academicians support the idea of a single platform for counselling to streamline the admission process

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Like medical and engineering admissions post-NEET and JEE, the UGC is exploring the idea of conducting common counselling for undergraduate admissions based on Common University Entrance Test Undergraduate (CUET UG) scores. If implemented, it would offer a centralised admission platform, enabling students to submit their preferences on a single portal rather than applying separately to multiple universities.

Will curb seat wastage

RP Tiwari, vice-chancellor, Central University of Punjab, Bathinda, says, "Usually, top-ranking students who score well, usually take admission, and block the seat in an institute. When they get better options in other universities, they leave the previous seat. This compels the institution to conduct several rounds of counselling to fill the vacant seats. When new students join slightly late, the colleges have to repeat the orientation and teaching process to help them, which wastes resources. The single-window counselling will not only help curb seat wastage but also give equal opportunity to all students. If counselling is done by different institutions, then the whole purpose of the single-window exam is defeated."

The single-window counselling will also reduce the burden on students. "After the declaration of results, students are required to apply to a couple of institutions and pay fees for each of them. With the single platform, the students will have to pay only once. The measure will also help in reducing the release of multiple merit lists as it will be replaced by a common merit for all students," says Tiwari.

"The idea of common counsel-

Facts at a glance

With over 14.9 lakh registrations in 2023, CUET UG is now the second biggest entrance exam in the country after NEET UG. This year, the exam is scheduled to be conducted from May 15 to 31. The standardised test was introduced in 2022 to streamline admission processes across central, state, deemed and private universities nationwide.

ling was made two years ago, however, due to lack of preparedness it could not be implemented," says Tiwari, adding, "The NTA had itself recommended for decentralised counselling in the beginning as it needed some experience of holding an exam of such magnitude first." In the first year of CUET implementation, there was a lot of work that needed to be taken care of. "In terms of subject combinations, JEE is much simpler which is not the case with UG programmes as there are so many subjects

Glitches must be fixed first

However, some challenges and concerns need to be addressed before fully implementing such a system. Furqan Qamar, former secretary general, Association of Indian Universities (AIU) says, "Once the CUET system stabilises in terms of its reliability and standard, only then one should think of introducing new features, otherwise, one will always remain in the transition phase. There are too many announcements and a practice of moving from ideas to ideas. Someone needs to think through all the details, take feedback, and identify the challenges. Unless a robust system is in place, the issues will continue to persist.

Panel to review idea

The UGC has formed a committee with officials from five different universities to contemplate the

idea. The universities are Mizoram University, University of Hyderabad, Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), Kashmir University, and Banaras Hindu University (BHU). The move will provide a single window for admissions and students can give their choices on a single portal instead of applying separately to universities. However, there is no clarity by when will it be implemented if the committee finds the idea feasible. When reached out to the UGC, the officials refused to comment.

Students from remote areas to benefit

Kiran Hazarika, pro vice-chancellor, IGNOU and former UGC member says, " Students, especially from remote areas, may not be able to decide or may find it difficult to select an institution or a programme as per their own choice since thousands of institutions are offering several programmes and courses. Normally it is common among students to select metro cities. In this scenario, the single-window platform will help students get a fair idea and find good options close to their hometowns."

Exam dates
May 15 to 31, 2024

New NCERT textbooks for classes III and VI to discourage rote learning

The books will be available in May and the CBSE schools will introduce a fresh timetable to accommodate new subjects for the wholesome growth of students

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To promote project-based and activity-intensive learning, the NCERT will release new sets of textbooks for classes III and VI in May. Focusing on curriculum transition, the content of the book will discourage rote learning and help in involving the students to understand the course better. These books have been designed in alignment with the National Curriculum Framework for School Education (NCF-SE) introduced under the NEP-2020 to enable a joyful learning environment. For class III, three new subjects including Physical Education (PE), Art Education and World Around Us have been introduced to give holistic learning opportunity to students.

Foundation programme for class III

The new subjects introduced by NCERT will help in the well-rounded growth of the students. Besides the basic subjects, the students will have to learn these new subjects to get physically active, appreciate art and acquire basic general knowledge. "The curriculum of class II was changed earlier and it was already aligned with the NEP-2020, thus, we have introduced new components besides the regular subjects for class III. These subjects will impart basic knowledge and understanding through various engaging methods, including activities and other interactive approaches," Dinesh Prasad Saklani, director, NCERT told *Education Times*.

Simultaneously, NCERT has developed a 15-day foundation programme for teachers to get familiarised with these new subjects. Under the foundation programme, various guidelines have been incorporated including classroom-oriented, creative, and project-based activities, among other methodologies, adds Sakla-

BRIDGE MONTH PROGRAMME
Grade 6

ni. Parents are urged not to purchase books for classes III and VI that are based on the old curriculum, as these will not be utilised in schools. However, textbooks will be first released online in different languages.

Teacher training

NCERT has formulated a month-long programme for the teachers, who will enable students to think critically, be creative, and will help

them use languages proficiently. "The teachers will undergo a comprehensive training programme called Bridge Month Programme (BMP), which will provide diverse learning approaches, including engaging activities and giving clear directions. The revised curriculum will will aim to offer a tailored learning environment, fostering a culture of joyful learning rather than traditional rote memorisation," adds Saklani.

Implementation strategies

In the first week of April, NCERT officially shared the soft copies of the new textbooks designed for classes III and VI to CBSE. "The CBSE will formulate strategies for implementation of a new curriculum based on the redesigned books," says Saklani. The NCERT has formulated a comprehensive 'Curriculum Transition Plan' following the directives of the NEP-2020. As part of this plan, various transition documents have been compiled. The BMP reflects on just one aspect of the transition plan,

STEM students must learn to tackle deepfakes

They can elevate their academic learning with practical experiences, writes **Diwakar Dayal**

In our digital age, where content manipulation has reached unprecedented levels of realism, deepfakes have emerged as a formidable threat to public trust, national security, and individual privacy. The potential of deepfakes to alter the course of pivotal events, influence democratic processes, and undermine societal cohesion is profound and alarming.

Historically, the global community witnessed the unsettling potential of deepfakes with manipulated videos of public figures such as Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky. In the corporate realm, sophisticated deepfake techniques have deceived employees into transferring substantial funds under the guise of following senior management orders, exemplifying the financial peril these technologies pose.

Beyond monetary losses, the strategic deployment of deepfakes by state actors and malicious entities threatens to distort public discourse, manipulate elections, and escalate geopolitical tensions.

Agility in adoption

Students, particularly those specialising in STEM disciplines, are increasingly pivotal in the cybersecurity arena and tasked with addressing challenges like misinformation and deepfakes. Their agility in adopting new technologies and their innovative approach to digital ethics render them indispensable in the campaign against cyber threats.

For instance, students at IIT Madras have unveiled an AI-driven tool capable of detecting deepfake videos with exceptional precision, demonstrating the significant impact of academic projects on practical cybersecurity measures.

Technical knowledge

Combating deepfakes necessitates a comprehensive understanding of machine learning, digital forensics, and data analytics. Students today can augment their academic learning with practical experiences, such as engaging in collaborative projects or enrolling in specialised online courses that delve into the intricacies of deepfake creation and detection.

By analysing the digital fingerprints of deepfakes, students can utilise AI to track their proliferation and identify communities that aid in their identification and removal. Such proactive engagement not only equips individuals for future industry demands but also paves the way for the development of advanced AI systems designed to thwart emerging cyber threats.

Awareness is crucial

Integrating deepfake awareness into cybersecurity education is crucial. Leading institutions have incorporated AI and cybersecurity ethics into their curricula. In addition, many organisations are partnering to empower the next generation of tech leaders through cybersecurity-focused education programmes. Initiatives like workshops play a vital role in enlightening students about the complexities of digital threats, including deepfakes.

In addition, the partnership between MIT and Harvard University students to create a deepfake research database exemplifies the strength of student and university collaborative efforts. Such initiatives not only advance detection technologies but also cultivate a community dedicated to ethical AI research. Hackathons inspire students to develop innovative cybersecurity solutions, offering invaluable hands-on experience.

Ethical AI practices, policy development

Students are increasingly influential in advocating for the ethical application of AI and in shaping policy. For example, the AI Ethics Guidelines formulated by Stanford University students provide a blueprint for responsible AI development. In India, student involvement in discussions with policy-making bodies like NITI Aayog underscores the importance of balancing innovation with ethical considerations.

Countering threats

As the landscape of digital manipulation evolves, so must our strategies to counteract its threats. Students across the globe, especially in India and the South Pacific, are positioned to lead this charge. By leveraging their technical acumen, engaging in educational endeavours, and participating in collaborative projects, students can significantly influence the battle against deepfakes and other cyber threats.

Students should immerse themselves in the cybersecurity field with enthusiasm and resolve. They should join cybersecurity clubs, participate in hackathons, and engage in forums focused on AI ethics and digital security. Their efforts are crucial in shaping a future resilient to digital misinformation and cybercrime.

(The author is managing director and country manager, SentinelOne)

Workshops help enlighten students about the complexities of digital threats

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Colleges in small towns fail to find internship opportunities locally for their students

UGC mandate on internships can help HEIs bridge the skill gap, but they must bring relevant opportunities closer to the students

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With a view to making undergraduate students more employable, and develop a passion for research, the University Grants Commission (UGC) has written to the vice-chancellors of all universities and the principals of all colleges urging them to complement the 'Guidelines for Internship/ Research Internship for Under Graduate Students'. Experts believe that the regulations may accelerate the industry and research orientation of the students, and while professional courses like BTech and MBA usually have a semester dedicated to major industry projects, a similar plan could be created for all degree courses for students to pursue internships in addition to their summer/ winter breaks.

The UGC claimed to review the implementation of the guidelines by the universities/colleges as part of the NEP 2020 plan and undertake suitable measures to ensure students have the necessary professional working skills, capabilities and confidence. "The NEP 2020 envisages several transformative initiatives in higher education. These initiatives include providing opportunities to students for internships with local industry, businesses, artists, craftspersons, etc, as well as research internships with faculty and researchers at their own or other HEIs/research institutions so that students may actively engage with the practical side of their learning and, as a byproduct, further improve their employability," the UGC letter states.

Talking to *Education Times*, Professor Manish Ratnakar Joshi, secretary, UGC, explains, "While the internships are aimed at bridging the industry-academia gap, the same need not be confined to students' final year where they may be forced to do last-minute firefighting. The training can be provided during the summer/winter breaks, depending on the availability of the industry personnel/mentors assigned."

The regulations stipulate that an internship of 60-120 hours' duration after the fourth semester will be mandatory for the students enrolled in UG degree programmes. For the fourth-year UG degree programme (Honours with Research), engagement of students in the dissertation/research project during the entire eighth semester of 12 credits will be considered as a mandatory component.

Students from across streams should have the flexibility to pursue internships in diverse sectors — industry, NGOs, gram panchayats, government and professional institutions — since exposure and skill enhancement hold key to fulfilling their aspirations, Joshi says.

Highlighting that HEIs should develop a roadmap for the smooth functioning of the internship programme under the Research and Development Cell at all HEIs, he informs that over 1,600 HEIs already have R&D cells, though the numbers are likely to increase in due course. "With the growing number of internship portals, including those offered by the AICTE and Skill Ministry to match demand with opportunities on offer, students will have ample scope to gain practical training. The UGC may also facilitate the setting up of a central portal to synergise processes between the institutional and national level, Joshi says.

Key roadblocks

The HEIs, for their part, are grappling with their own set of challenges. "Many colleges are not able to make internships a part of the curriculum as the latter is decided by their affiliating university. In case of colleges that are in small towns and villages, there aren't many internship opportunities locally," says Anil Pinto, registrar, Christ University, where internships were made mandatory for all UG and PG programmes since 2013 with MA in English being the first such subject to have mandatory internship in India in 2008.

He adds, "In our country's stratified higher education system, tier-I institutions are generally well-equipped to provide internships, but it is a sorry state of affairs in most of the others, specially those that are accredited, unranked institutions."

Internship should be mandatory for students exiting after the first or second year with a certificate, specially after the UGC framed the 'Curriculum and Credit Framework for Undergraduate Programmes' (CCFUP), incorporating a flexible choice-based credit system, multiple entry and exit options, and a multidisciplinary approach in accordance with NEP 2020 to enable them to find better job prospects, says Pinto.

HEIs in many instances may face hurdles related to resources, geographic locations for some programmes, offering mutually beneficial partnerships with industries, scheduling and staffing capacity, all of which can make it hard to offer robust internship pathways, says Balvinder Shukla, vice-chancellor, Amity University, UP, where the Industry Interaction Cell (IIC) and the Corporate Resource Centres (CRC) foster industry-academia linkages through internships, guest lectures, curriculum review, etc. Shukla says HEIs should be receptive to research partnership with other HEIs for faculty as well as students research programmes, training, and internships to implement the UGC guidelines "in letter and spirit".

Conducive ecosystem

Overall, there is an urgent need for the HEIs to skill the students to find internships, bring relevant internship opportunities closer to them, offer appropriate support and flexibility to help them pursue internships along with managing their education. "The solutions may also lie in India's rapidly evolving industry scenario as there are many Ed-Tech companies that are offering outcome-based skilling courses in congruence with the new-age skills and industry demands for the internships and jobs," says Sarvesh Agrawal, founder and CEO, Internshala that partnered with over 7,500 colleges to increase internship awareness and connect their students with internship opportunities through the platform.

The internship opportunities in India, he adds, have risen by 200% in the past five years with over 1 million students actively looking for internships every year. "It is important to create awareness among students, specially those pursuing degrees that are not considered professional conventionally. Additionally, they should be guided on resume creation, cover letter writing, and interview preparation to increase their chances of getting selected for the internships and then making the most of their internship learning experience," Agrawal says.

The solutions may lie in India's rapidly evolving industry scenario

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RPL emerges as a powerful catalyst for learning transformation

It helps provide individuals with formal qualifications aligned with their capabilities, thereby enhancing their employability, mobility, and self-esteem, writes **Shikha Jain**

Amidst an array of skills and talents that enriches our communities, individuals often encounter barriers when attempting to bridge the gap between their inherent expertise and formal recognition. For instance, a skilled wrestler from a rural area, having mastered traditional wrestling techniques through years of dedicated training and participation in local competitions, grapples with the challenge of gaining acknowledgment beyond the village arena.

Similarly, an artist with years of independent practice and daring experimentation, is now facing the daunting task of gaining entry to prestigious art institutes. The transition from the boundless realm of creativity to the rigid structures of formal education presents a formidable hurdle.

Unlocking the potential

In this context, Recognising Prior Learning (RPL) is emerging as a powerful catalyst for educational transformation, especially in higher education. Rooted in the principles of the National Credit Framework (NCrF), and aligned with global perspectives, RPL holds the key to unlocking the potential of individuals whose knowledge and skills have been acquired through various avenues beyond traditional classrooms.

The significant number of individuals facing challenges due to the lack of recognised qualifications, face hurdles while looking for jobs, migration opportunities, and further education. Despite possessing key knowledge and skills, many find themselves at a disadvantage. The RPL process, integrated into the NCrF, becomes a vital tool in providing these individuals with formal qualifications aligned with their capabilities, thereby enhancing their employability, mobility, lifelong learning prospects, social inclusion, and self-esteem. The advantages of RPL extend beyond individual benefits. It is a win-win situation for employers, governments, and the economy. Employers gain access to a pool of skilled personnel with verified qualifications, facilitating better job matching and increased productivity. Governments, in turn, secure assurances of enhanced competitiveness, economic growth, and social inclusion.

The International Labour Organization (ILO) and other institutions have played a pivotal role in recognising RPL systems. This global recognition of learning acquired through formal, non-formal, and informal means signifies a paradigm shift towards acknowledging diverse learning experiences.

For higher education institutions (HEIs) in India, embracing RPL within the NCrF framework presents both opportunities and challenges. Transitioning from a traditional, one-size-fits-all approach to a more dynamic and learner-centric model demands a re-evaluation of assessment methods, curriculum structures, and industry collaborations. The true significance of RPL lies in its ability to break free from the confines of traditional classroom-centric approaches. It champions the idea that learning is not confined to formal educational settings; it can happen through work experience, self-study, familial inheritance, and other unconventional methods.

The challenges are manifold — the need for trained master assessors, unconventional assessment methods, and guidelines for industry involvement are crucial components that demand careful consideration. However, overcoming these challenges will pave the way for a more inclusive and flexible education system, ensuring that no individual is left behind due to the absence of recognised qualifications.

(The author is director, DES's Institute of Management Development and Research, Pune)

Outcome-based assessment

The NCrF's emphasis on an outcome-based assessment approach, as aligned with the principles of the National Education Policy 2020, is a step towards recognising the value of diverse learning experiences. It offers HEIs an opportunity to foster a culture of continuous learning, innovation, and personalisation, addressing the individual needs and aspirations of students. The impact is profound as this method offers individuals the chance to formalise their skills.

Despite possessing key knowledge and skills, many find themselves at a disadvantage

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Changing mindsets, diverse job options lead to more takers for humanities

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

The 12th edition of the All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) 2021-22 report revealed that humanities as a stream has the highest pass percentage of 34.2% at an undergraduate level followed by science (14.8%) and commerce (13.3%). Even at the postgraduate level, the social science stream which is a branch related to the humanities stream, has emerged as a frontrunner by registering a pass percentage of 21.1% followed by science (14.7%) and management (14.4%). In 2021-22, a total of 24.16 lakh students graduated from BA courses at the UG level followed by science with 11.97 lakh graduates. It continues to be a preferred stream for women among all the BA graduates, with 54% being female candidates this year.

Parents, claim academicians, have started to recognise the significance of an alternate academic orientation for their children due to diversified career options in the humanities stream. Traditionally, this was a preferred stream for those pursuing a career in civil services. Academicians feel that this change in perception is a progressive tradition being accepted in the societal setup.

Speaking to *Education Times*, Anil Joseph Pinto, registrar, Christ University, Bengaluru, says, "Even in the previous AISHE reports, the pass percentage in the humanities stream has always been the highest. This has been happening for the past few years primarily because many parents have started to support their children to go beyond the more popular streams of science and commerce."

Consequently, both registration and the pass percentage among the humanities courses at an UG level have been the highest for about a decade now. "There is a possibility to enter into diversified job options after graduating in humanities which explains high enrolment in the stream. Another prominent reason is the moderate fee structure of humanities courses as compared to the science and commerce streams. The humanities stream is the first option for such students who intend to crack the civil services exam in the future," says Pinto. BA students can become psychologists, journalists, lawyers, political analysts, and artists. It has been a norm that there are always more seats available in courses related to humanities as compared to science and commerce streams, says Pinto.

Rudrashish Chakraborty, associate professor, department of English, Kiran Mal College, DU, says, "In the last 10 years, the enrolment percentage in the humanities and social science courses has significantly increased in the university. This scenario has changed largely because of growing interest and opportunities in subjects such as Political Science, English, Psychology and Economics. This has happened despite the fact that cut-off for these courses has significantly in the past few years. As a contrast, the cut-off for science courses has remained stagnant and in some cases even less than the humanities. There have been instances where students from the science stream have shifted to humanities."

Many parents have started to support their children to go beyond the more popular streams

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Balancing new-age tech with mindfulness

Interior designers are navigating a landscape where digital tools are becoming indispensable, write **Agnishikha Choudhuri** and **Mehar Deep Kaur**

Interior design, an intricate and multilayered profession blending creativity and functionality, demands a diverse set of skills and competencies, placing it at the forefront of innovation. As the industry evolves, the integration of contemporary technologies into reshaping education and traditional practices, those by opening new avenues. From the integration of advanced softwares like Building Information Modelling (BIM) and 3D printing to the emergence of Artificial Intelligence (AI), Virtual Reality (VR), Augmented Reality (AR), aspiring designers are navigating a landscape where digital tools are becoming increasingly indispensable.

Creative vision

Traditionally, interior design has been synonymous with the creative act of conceptualising beautiful spaces, harmonising colours, materials, and styles. This reductive perception of the profession has its roots in the rise of famous interior decorators of the 1920s like Elsie de Wolfe and Dorothy Draper. However, in today's age, where design acknowledges profound human considerations such as wellness and spatial justice, the scope of the practice demands more than creative vision. Designers must also possess a thorough evidence-based understanding of how spaces are utilised for specific users.

As times have evolved, many designers now provide a series of renderings for clients to review before finalising the design, often created using 3D softwares like SketchUp, 3DS Max and Lumion, various other software options such as Floorplanner, Foyr, and Cedreo are available in the market, easy to try with freemium or limited time free schemes. The recent use of Generative AI Large Learning Models (LLMs) like Dall-E and Midjourney have caused ripples through the industry, introducing both excitement and complexity to interior design.

Despite these advancements, challenges persist. Though a digital visualisation might seem impressive, it may still contain inaccuracies or impracticalities that only become apparent in the built environment. Additionally, the widespread use of Generative AI has raised concerns about its environmental cost in terms of carbon emissions from the extensive use of computing power; designers may need to consider the sustainability implications of their digital practices.

As we look to the future, the role of technology in interior design will continue to evolve. From Meta's experiments with brainwave simulation to the ongoing refinement of AI capabilities, the possibilities are endless.

(The authors are programme director, spatial and interior design, associate professor, and assistant professor, School of Design and Innovation, RV University)
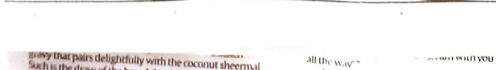
Designers must have evidence-based understanding of using spaces

Fashion Studies and Tourism included in CUET UG 2024 post demands by CBSE, UGC

The CBSE requested NTA to introduce the subjects as they are a part of the class XII curriculum

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To promote skill subjects in line with the NEP recommendations and increase the acceptance of students who opted for Fashion Studies and Tourism in class XII, the National Testing Agency (NTA) recently included these two subjects in CUET UG, 2024. The move will broaden the academic options for students inclined to explore diverse career options.

Following the opening of the CUET UG 2024 registration, the NTA issued a circular announcing the inlusion of the two subjects. "The candidates may note that those who have already submitted their online application form for CUET (UG) – 2024 may also add these subjects during the correction period. The list of participating universities and their offered courses is dynamic," the circular stated.

The CBSE had earlier written to the NTA pushing for the inclusion of these subjects, which was also endorsed by the UGC as several HEIs, too, were demanding their inclusion. "The CBSE had requested us to introduce a few skill-based subjects that are included in the class XII curriculum. This will broaden the horizons for students to take higher studies in these subjects," says Subodh Kumar Singh, director general, NTA.

The CBSE suggested the inclusion of skill subjects including Fashion Studies, Tourism, Agriculture, Media Studies and IT Wave Application (under the category of Computer Science) among the CUET UG test papers. "Several class XII students have picked these subjects as electives and want an option to pursue them in col-

The list of subjects in CUET UG is dynamic and based on the needs of students and HEIs

lege," says Biswajit Saha, director, CBSE.

"Several Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) have BSc (Fashion Studies, Fashion Design) and BA (Travel & Tourism) and CUET will further fuel the ambition of students. The list of subjects in CUET UG is dynamic and based on the requirements of students and those of HEIs," says Manish Ratnakar Joshi, secretary, UGC.

The inclusion of skill subjects is an effort to diversify the academic options for students aligning it with their interests and career aspirations. "By incorporating these subjects into the CUET UG framework, the NTA aims to offer a broader spectrum of educational pathways, catering to the growing demand for specialised knowledge and skills in these fields. Furthermore, there is a noticeable interest among students in Fashion Studies and Tourism. The demand for professionals in the hospitality and tourism industries is growing globally, leading to a rapid development of tourism education. This growth reflects an increasing interest among students in pursuing careers within these sectors, supported by a meta-analysis of studies on students' career intentions in hospitality and tourism management," says Sudhir K Routray, associate dean, Academics, CMR University, Bengaluru, that offers undergraduate courses in Fashion Design, and Tourism and accepts CUET UG scores for admission.

Routray says that fashion plays a significant role in college students' lives, serving as a medium for self-expression and social interaction. This collective interest among students in both fields underscores their relevance and the demand for related educational programmes.

MOOCs exams in offline mode will enhance access and convenience
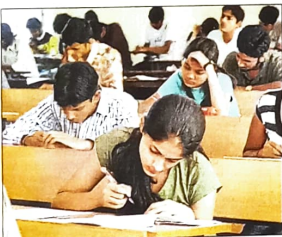
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To increase the low exam registrations compared to the enrolled students for MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses), the SWAYAM board is contemplating the idea of allowing universities and autonomous colleges to conduct offline examinations for the online learners of MOOCs. The move is expected to reduce students' financial burden and provide greater access and awareness about the programmes. Once the exams are conducted offline by universities and colleges, the examination cost would be considerably reduced. The examinations for MOOCs, as of now, are conducted through the NTA which cost learners around Rs 600. If universities and autonomous colleges are permitted to conduct the exams, it will cost around Rs 200-300 per paper. As per a ToI report, presently, around 37.6 lakh learners are enrolled with MOOCs, while the exam enrolment is only around 8.1 lakh.

Discussing the viability of the proposed initiative, Prof Nageshwar Rao, vice-chancellor, Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) says, "The offline mode of the exams will ensure better access, connect and convenience if the university exams of the SWAYAM courses as well. Students will be familiarised with the MOOCs courses and exams through peers, faculty and administrative staff once the exams are conducted under the universities and colleges."

Comfort level

"The offline mode is a better proposition for most of the students who are pursuing their programmes in humanities and social sciences. Relatively, their only exposure to computer-related exposure is somewhat less. The initiative will also help to minimise clash of examination dates between university exams and the MOOCs exams. The students will be in their comfort zones once MOOCs exams get conducted at the campus," he says. Additionally, the credit transfer process will become easier as students will get grade cards from the same institution. "The initiative will boost NEP 2020 implementation keeping in view the credit transfer, digital learning and multidisciplinary programmes," he says.

Fear of online exams

In 2021, there were 220 million candidates registered globally in MOOCs, with over 3100 courses. "SWAYAM hosts about 10,000 courses for 30 million learners. However, less than 5% of registered candidates complete the courses and a still smaller percentage take the online exams, more so because of the scare of online exams and doubts arising among learners about the value of certification," Navaneethakrishnan says.

Free certification needed

"MOOCs certification should be free of cost for registered students at public universities or else it will deter students from taking these courses at scale since they have already paid for the university's courses," says BJ Rao, vice-chancellor, University of Hyderabad, adding, "The purpose is to disseminate knowledge and not collect money. The MOOCs on SWAYAM are extremely good courses to help meet this need."

There should be a provision to allow students to re-do the test when they fail. If it is conducted within the university system, students are likely to complete the courses. "It does not matter if the exams for the courses are held online/offline, but if students have to pin their hopes on a single attempt, it is likely to put the fear of failure in them. Moreover, the examination fee under the existing system may not be affordable for students from the disadvantaged sections and remains a key reason for many dropping out of the system even if the enrolment for the courses is free," he adds.

Attrition rates

PV Navaneethakrishnan, former professor and director, Entrance exams and admission, Anna University, Chennai, attributes the large-scale attrition rates to time constraints, low attention spans, lack of guidance, social interaction and motivation. "The offline exams in universities and colleges can help address these challenges," he says.

AIMA reforms MAT exam pattern giving prominence to business technology

Business schools now seek graduates equipped with knowledge spanning new technologies and evolving business landscapes

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Considering the increasing demand for managers with technical skills, the All India Management Association (AIMA) has revamped the Management Aptitude Test (MAT) from May 2024. This will give a fresh perspective on management education, which will have technology-driven components along with current business and economic trends. Speaking to Education Times, Daljeet Singh, director, AIMA, says, "MAT 2.0 aims to cover new segments including current business and economic trends. The revised version of exam seeks to provide a new outlook on management education with industry standards and expanding educational mandates. The infusion of technology into management education promises to revolutionise delivery methods and enhance program effectiveness. Technology-driven approaches make management education accessible to a wider audience, including working professionals and students from remote regions. Meanwhile, data analytics offers insights into learning patterns, enabling educators to tailor support and enhance learning outcomes," he adds.

While explaining the emerging current business and economic trends, he says, "India stands out as one of the world's fastest-growing major economies, propelled by a burgeoning middle class, expansive consumer base, and growing digital infrastructure. Digital transformation plays a pivotal role in India's economic trajectory, fostering innovation across sectors such as e-commerce, digital payments, fintech, health-tech, and agri-tech."

The exam was modified following feedback from numerous business schools and stakeholders. "B-schools now seek graduates equipped with knowledge spanning new technologies, burgeoning sectors, and evolving business landscapes. Technological integrations have fundamentally reshaped the business ecosystem," says Singh.

In MAT 2.0, there are major alterations, including modifications to exam structure, content focus, and duration. Notable changes encompass a streamlined exam structure comprising 150 questions to be tackled within 120 minutes, facilitating a more targeted examination of candidates with an emphasis on contemporary business domains. There is a new segment on the Economic and Business Environment which delves into the current economic trends, financial products and Services, and technological interventions in business. From May 2024, AIMA is introducing MAT 2.0, a transformed version of the test.

MAT May 2024 schedule

- PBT mode (Paper Based Test): The test date is June 2, and registration will end on May 28
- CBT (Computer Based Test): The test date is May 26, and registration will end on May 19
- IBT-1 (Internet Based Test): Test date is May 19, and registration will end on May 16
- IBT-2: The test date is May 24, and registration will end on May 21
- IBT-3: The test date is May 31, and registration will end on May 28

IITs focus on Humanities courses to promote synergistic thinking among students

Several new courses in the humanities stream have been introduced to expand the understanding of contextual and social aspects of science

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To foster imagination among students and make them think beyond their curriculum, to contemplate human selfhood, literature and culture, rights, and politics, most Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) are delving into courses on humanities subjects. In the decade, Humanities courses were introduced to diversify the outlook of technical education. While the Engineering/Science students at the IITs are taking Humanities courses as minors, several non-technical students are enrolling in innovative courses that include Philosophy, Indian Ancient Scripture, Art, Culture and Mythology.

"The IITs offer Humanities courses to help students understand human culture, history and society, and develop critical thinking, communication, and analytical skills. Humanities is very much part of the IIT trajectory. The humanities programmes at IITs include subjects such as Literature, Sociology, Psychology, Economics, Political Science and Anthropology among others. These programmes help students develop a holistic understanding of the world. The Department of Humanities and Social Sciences at IIT-D focuses on making a significant contribution to the world of research and education," says Prof Farhana Ibrahim, head, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, IIT Delhi. "The IITs are a suitable place to teach humanities subjects because it houses the best brains. There will be synergistic thinking among the students from various disciplines for better educational outcomes. Apart from this, the Humanities and social sciences programme provides the students with real-life connections unlike courses such as engineering," she adds.

"The surge in Humanities courses in IITs can be attributed to a broader understanding of Science's contextual and social aspects. Scholars

IITs aim to provide a holistic education that goes beyond scientific perspectives

underscore that science is not merely a set of ideas but a practice embedded in social dynamics and diverse forms of knowledge. This holistic perspective challenges the traditional hierarchy of disciplines and promotes a more reflexive approach to knowledge," says Saumya Malviya, assistant professor, School of Humanities and Social Sciences, IIT Mandi.

The interest of IITians in Humanities courses is closely linked to technology and societal dynamics. "Recognising that technology and society co-constitute each other, IITs aim to provide a holistic education that goes beyond scientific perspectives. By integrating humanities and social sciences into their curriculum, IITs equip students with a multidimensional understanding of technology's role in society," says Malviya.

Focus on culture

Department of Humanities and Social Sciences at IIT Delhi has recently launched a new academic programme, MA in 'Culture, Society, Thought'. "The Department aims to give a unique vantage point to generate a new corpus of knowledge, populate new kinds of archives, and develop critical methodologies to give new directions to humanities and social science research from the global south. The programme offers a unique opportunity for students to explore courses across traditional disciplines. To forge new synergies in Cognitive Science and Economics, a master's programme is already offered," Prof Ibrahim added.

According to experts, creative thinking and communication skills are useful in the real world, which can only be inculcated in students through Humanities courses. Social science training can also help students understand how humans use technology, create equitable systems, and become successful engineers and technologists.

Increasing enrolment

There is a rise in technology students enrolling in humanities courses at IITs. "This trend is driven by several factors. Firstly, many students find these courses to be a refreshing departure from their prior training, offering them the opportunity to engage with new ideas and perspectives. Courses in disciplines such as History, Literature, and Economics provide students with valuable tools for critical thinking and self-reflection, empowering them to become informed and discerning citizens. As awareness of these courses spreads through word of mouth, there is a growing demand among tech students for both basic and advanced humanities courses. Additionally, these courses enable students to understand and articulate their social context, fostering a dee-

per appreciation for social diversity and difference. Overall, the popularity of Humanities courses among tech students highlights the growing recognition of the value of interdisciplinary education in shaping well-rounded and progressive individuals," says Prof Malviya.

Experts claim that the Humanities courses offered by IITs are different from the ones in regular colleges. Prof Malviya says, "The courses offered at IITs benefit from the interdisciplinary environment inherent to IITs. It allows genuine and meaningful interdisciplinary engagement rather than mere juxtaposition of disciplines. Additionally, these courses are open to undergraduates as well Several undergraduate students enrol in these courses out of curiosity, contributing to a diverse and dynamic learning environment. The active participation of young undergraduates also challenges course instructors to innovate in terms of structure and delivery, further enhancing the interdisciplinary nature of these courses."

Prof Rajesh Kumar, head, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, IIT Madras, says, "The Humanities courses in IIT Madras are designed with the view that the future needs socially responsible professionals. Engineers with arts and humanities backgrounds are expected to address the challenges of understanding technology and human requirements. Future professionals must have a human connect to ensure that technology is human friendly." IIT Madras' Department of Humanities and Social Sciences has seen a significant increase in student enrolment in recent years. "IIT-M offers subjects such as Development Studies and Technology and Policies aiming to foster the knowledge of development and societal aspects of technology among students and why they are applied," says Prof Kumar

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Guidelines to regulate coaching centres will ease academic stress

Students who are forced to join coaching for medical and engineering entrance exams miss out on other career paths, writes Amruth G Kumar

Most Indian parents dream about their children pursuing either of the two most important careers: medical or engineering Unfortunately, parents' dreams have translated into business prospects for coaching centres that have mushroomed across the country These coaching centres deliver 'entrance-ready children' through endless repetitions of lessons, tests

The central government issued guidelines in January 2024 to control bullying and prevent suicides caused due to academic stress in coaching centres According to the guidelines, coaching centres will not be allowed to admit students below 16 years of age. The central government's new guidelines mandate the registration of coaching centres along with their strict regulation. According to the guidelines, coaching centres should have basic facilities, provide extra academic support to students facing learning difficulties, holidays should be given to students every week; exams should not be conducted immediately after the holiday, counsellors and psychologists

Parental expectations

Students' stress in the coaching centres is increased by the academic load that is inappropriate for their age. Based on tests, the ranks of the children are determined and communicated to parents. If the student's rank falls behind, it also creates stress for parents, who exert pressure on students to advance their rank in the next test.

students into the whirlpools of despair. This could also shake the relationship between the children and the parents. Such ruptures lead to resentment and hatred towards the parents in the minds of children. The more serious tragedy is that the students develop reluctance towards the learning process. Students who are forced to join medical and engi-

should be available in coaching centres; mental health of children should be assessed and supported at regular intervals. There is a strict warning against forming separate batches based on the achievements of students in the new central guidelines.

Reducing pressure

The main teaching method of all the coaching centres preparing students for the competitive exams is to give advanced lessons, much above the level of children's understanding, and carry out evaluations based on it at regular intervals. Weekly online or offline exams create a huge mental challenge for students and those who fall behind in the ranks may slip into depression. On one hand, lower ranks bring severe pressure for improvement, on the other hand, high achievers toil hard to maintain their top ranks. Overdose of knowledge and too many exams can push

Overdose of knowledge and too many tests can push learners into the whirlpools of despair

neering entrance coaching, without genuine interest in science and Math subjects, miss out on career paths they are naturally inclined towards

The new central guidelines suggest that coaching centres should charge only fair and reasonable fees from students but what constitutes a fair and reasonable fee is debatable. Many state governments have passed laws to regulate coaching centres, especially regarding fees and study hours. They are Goa and Karnataka in 2001, Uttar Pradesh in 2002, Bihar in 2010, Manipur in 2017 and Rajasthan in 2023. However, the majority of the states are yet to mull over legislation to regulate coaching centres.

Students' skills become more effective if parents who know Science, Maths and other subject areas related to entrances of competitive exams can help students in solving question papers. In short, the role of parents can be a bonus for the students to get ahead in the fierce competition.

(The author is professor and dean, School of Education, Central University of Kerala)

How to teach English effectively in a multilingual classroom

The educational bodies can support teachers by creating bilingual dictionaries and textbooks in local languages, writes Gauri Puranik

India is a land of colossal cultural and linguistic diversity with rich history and a multilingual population at its heart. It is an amalgamation of different languages, lifestyles, customs, and traditions.

And so, in India, most classrooms are multilingual, and students are frequently taught in a common language rather than their first language. It is also common for students to know one local or home language in addition to the language they are taught in at school. With the knowledge of English and their multilingual skills, students can communicate across language barriers in formal situations as well as their daily lives. Adding to this, students' awareness of local cultures, history and contexts, is likely to make them more effective communicators. Educators are increasingly realising that there is a significant opportunity to celebrate linguistic diversity in the school's environment. Using multilingual approaches when teaching English in the classroom could enable teachers to tap into this opportunity and ensure more meaningful learning takes place. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 highlights 'multilingua-

lism and power of language' stating that all languages will be taught with high quality, to all students. To make the learning more effective, students need access to appropriate language learning resources to listen and use language in their day-to-day communication, and most importantly, receive timely feedback on their progress.

It is important to equip teachers with new and innovative methods of teaching in language education. However, this can be relative to

rious skill-based workshops and language training programmes to help teachers. Over a period of 10 years, the Government of Maharashtra with partners such as Tata Trusts, introduced projects to develop teachers' capacity in using student-centred English teaching pedagogy to improve learning. In Delhi, Bihar, and Hyderabad, the University of Cambridge conducted the MultiLiLa Research Project (2016-2022) to examine how multilingual students in India perform in school, particularly when taught in English versus their regional language. They assessed students' cognitive, literacy, and numeracy skills between 2017-2020, aiming to determine if learning in a different language affected outcome.

how well the teachers know the language and if they can teach it effectively. As a result of the pandemic, teachers have now been trained in more specialised professional areas, including managing huge classrooms, teaching online or remotely, and conducting competency-based assessments.

Pedagogical changes

Given the multiplicity of languages in India, policy leaders and educators are harnessing the regional medium of instruction in schools. However, there is still scope to bridge gaps that exist between the language spoken by the child and the medium of teaching.

Improved outcomes

Recently, several state governments have introduced initiatives to improve learning outcomes through va-

(The author is head, English Programmes - India, British Council)

The anti-cheating law needs strict implementation

The law must be a shared responsibility of the central and state governments and the citizens, writes Satyajeet Tambe

Central government's The Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Act 2024, to punish those guilty of leaking exam question papers is a step in the right direction towards safeguarding education and the organised crime surrounding it. The act was the need of the hour to streamline the sector and bring transparency and credibility to it. The implementation of the law at state level with the central government monitoring the entire process will lead to cleansing of the education sector. However, before understanding whether the act will accomplish its aims, it is crucial to comprehend the psyche of the offenders and the way the nexus operates.

Student desperation

When it comes to services examinations, job security and social status prompt parents to break the bank for their wards' careers. The pressure on students to excel in competitive exams is immense. Mental health challenges such as stress and fatigue, often go hand in hand. The societal stigma surrounding failure in exams can aggravate the situation, leading students to feel isolated and hopeless. According to NCRB Data, the number of students who committed suicide in

India rose by 70% between 2011 and 2021. As many as 13,089 students died by suicide in 2021. It is crucial for both families and educational institutions to recognise the toll this pressure takes on students and to provide support systems to help them

Guards up

In January 2023, it was reported that students who were not even registered at the Madhya Pradesh Medical Science University were able to pass exams. It was found that the malpractices had

infiltrated the government system too. The act has brought forth an issue that had been plaguing the system for years. Now that the government has decided to crack down on the offenders, their guards will be up. Even a few convictions from the government will set an example that it will no longer wait and watch.

Status symbol

The Act must be a shared responsibility of the government and the ci-

tizens. Parents and students should do away with the notion that only government employment will safeguard their careers.

The way out

The problem until now was that the government was only trying to get quality education in place and making efforts to provide education to the last person. It is understandable that the government wants to ensure the integrity of exams and pre-

vent cheating, but it is also important to consider the potential impact on innocent students Implementing selective eviction and stoppage in declaring results from specific areas where cheating or organised crime occurred could be a more targeted approach. This way, innocent students in other areas would not be unfairly penalised for the actions of a few

It is crucial for states to take responsibility for addressing crime within their jurisdictions This decentralised approach could lead to more effective crime prevention measures while also ensuring that students' efforts are recognised and valued Overall, it's essential for policymakers to consider the broader implications of their decisions and strive for solutions that balance the need for exam integrity with the rights and well-being of students As stated in the act, individuals found guilty could face imprisonment from three to five years and fines up to Rs 10 lakh Service providers may be fined up to Rs 1 crore Additionally, organised crime could result in a minimum of five years' imprisonment and a Rs 1 crore penalty. All of this should be implemented strictly

(The author is member, Maharashtra Legislative Council)

The offenders should be convicted within a stipulated timeframe to ensure speedy justice

National Moot Court Competition-2024 concludes at USLR

Assam Rising, Guwahati, April 6 : The University Law College, Gauhati University team has won the first edition of the Dr. B. R. Ambedkar National Moot Court Competition 2024 today while the Christ University Bangalore became runner-up. With the participation of 16 prestigious institutions from various parts of India and the region, this National Moot Court Competition was successfully organized by the University School of Law and Research, University of Science and Technology Meghalaya (USTM) in collaboration with the Meghalaya State Legal Services Authority from April 4 to 6. The final round of the competition today was graced and judged by Justice Sanjay Kumar Medhi, Judge, Gauhati High Court; Justice Prasanta Kumar Deka, Former Judge, Gauhati High Court and Hasibur Rahman, Sr. Advocate, Gauhati High Court. The delegates, along with Prof GD Sharma, Vice Chancellor USTM graced the valedictory session and handed over the awards to the winners of the competition. The champion, University Law College, Gauhati University was awarded a cash prize of Rs 25,000, trophy, citation, and certificate and the runner-up team from Christ University Bangalore received Rs 15,000, trophy, citation, and certificate. The Best Speaker prize went to Agastya Kashyap from USLR USTM, the Best Researcher prize was awarded to Cordelia Lyngdoh from NEHU, and the Best Memorial prize was awarded to the team from Symbiosis Pune, each awarded with a cash prize of Rs 7,000, trophy, citation, and certificate. In the valedictory session, Justice Sanjay Kumar Medhi said that those who take law as a profession and become an advocate must be aware that their priority is to serve society. "I am amazed to see the USTM campus, and happy that the University has organised this Competition which is the first of its kind here", he said. Addressing the gathering, Justice Prasanta Kumar Deka congratulated USTM for organising this national-level competition. He appreciated the manner in which the proceedings have been organised and said that the standard of debate by the competitors have been as good as real courtroom proceedings. Advocate Mr Hasibur Rahman also addressed the august gathering and shared his views. Mahbubul Hoque, Chancellor of USTM extended gratitude to the delegates and the participants and said that the presence of such distinguished personalities in the National Moot Court competition at USLR has amplified the significance of the event. Earlier, the welcome address was made by Prof. GD. Sharma, Vice Chancellor, USTM. The vote of thanks was delivered by Prof. Subhram Rajkhowa, Sr. Professor, USLR. Prof. Baharul Islam, Dean, USLR, USTM was also present on the occasion. The participating teams in this prestigious competition were Symbiosis Pune, Christ (Deemed to be) University Bangalore, North Bengal University, NEHU Shillong, Techno India University West Bengal, NERIM, University Law College, Gauhati University, JB Law College Guwahati, Dhubri Law College, The Assam Royal Global University, Jorhat Law College, Goalpara Law College, NEF Law College Guwahati, Nowgong Law College, DHSK Law College and USLR USTM - a release stated.

Viksit Bharat drive on Delhi campuses comes to a halt; some say it served political ends

Ashna Butani
NEW DELHI

Over the past five months since its launch, the 'Viksit Bharat @2047: Voice of Youth' programme has reached many college-going students in the Capital. As part of the scheme, 'Viksit Bharat' selfie points and banners were installed in colleges, dedicated 'Viksit Bharat' cells created in universities, and a multitude of seminars and workshops conducted on the theme. A professor from every college was appointed as a nodal officer for the programme.

Although the drive has not officially been concluded, a nodal officer of a Delhi University (DU) college, who did not wish to be named, said they had not received instructions on the drive from the University Grants Commission (UGC) after the enforcement of the Model Code of Conduct.

The scheme's aim was to provide a platform to the youth to contribute thoughts to the vision of 'Viksit Bharat @2047' – the idea of a developed India by 2047, the 100th year of Independence.

However, many academics and students in Delhi's colleges have termed the programme "a misuse of educational institutions" and claimed that it had political ends.

Platform for youth

At the programme's launch on December 11, 2023, the Prime Minister suggested that special campaigns be run in every college and university. He also announced the launch of the 'Ideas Portal', where college students could write essays on five themes with ideas on how they envision a developed country by 2047 and win cash prizes from ₹2 lakh-₹5 lakh.

According to data on the Viksit Bharat dashboard on the government portal, 46,409 people from Delhi participated in the essay competition. Universities

Vice-Chancellor Yogesh Singh addressing a Viksit Bharat event at Delhi University sports complex. FILE PHOTO

such as DU, Ambedkar University, and Guru Gobind Singh Indraprastha University (GGSIPU) hosted theme-related events. Most colleges continue to have a dedicated 'Viksit Bharat' section on their websites.

The DU college nodal officer said they received regular mails from the UGC regarding programmes and events from December to March. "It is no coincidence that the programmes took place right before elections. It seemed like propaganda to attract the youth," said the officer.

However, a DU official refuted the allegations about political motives: "If the government asks students for suggestions for the future of the country, how is that wrong?"

The programme saw a mixed response. Some students said they participated with gusto. Monika Yadav, a second-year PhD scholar at GGSIPU working on women's safety and crimes against women, said she penned her thoughts on the subject on the 'Ideas Portal'.

'Attended the event'

A student of DU's Indraprastha College for Women told *The Hindu* that many students attended the programmes because they received five days of additional attendance for attending each event.

Aditi Tyagi, a student at DU's Arts Faculty and a member of the Students' Federation of India (SFI), did not participate in any

of the programmes. "What is the point of having a selfie point when the campus does not even have water coolers?" she said.

'Political aims'

N. Sukumar, a professor at DU's Political Science Department, said, "The 'Viksit Bharat' tag has been added to most academic programmes. It is clearly aimed at promoting the Prime Minister rather than being an academic programme."

Naveen Gaur, a teacher at DU's Dyal Singh College, said, "Selfie points are put up in every college and students are encouraged to post on social media. It is normalised so students do not feel like they are forced."

What is the outlook on women's employment?

What does the India Employment Report, 2024 state about key labour market indicators? Why is women's participation in the labour force low? What are the recommendations to bring about a change in women's job prospects?

Sudipta Datta

The story so far:

The authors of the India Employment Report, 2024, released recently by the Institute for Human Development and the International Labour Organization, point out that key labour market indicators have improved in recent years. The Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR), the Workforce Participation Rate (WPR) and the Unemployment Rate (UR) showed long-term deterioration between 2000 and 2019 but improved thereafter, the authors note, saying that the improvement coincides with periods of economic distress, both before and during the COVID-19 pandemic, with the exception of two peak pandemic quarters.

What about women's participation?

The female LFPR is very low compared to the male counterparts; in 2023, the male LFPR was pegged at 78.5; and the women LFPR was 37. The world women LFPR rate is 49, according to the World Bank figures. The female LFPR had been steadily declining since 2000 and touched 24.5 in 2019, before inching up, particularly in rural areas. But the writers point out that notwithstanding the modest improvements,

> Nearly two-thirds of the employment after 2019 comprised self-employed workers, among whom unpaid (women) family workers predominate

employment conditions remain poor.

Amit Basole, who teaches Economics at Azim Premji University, and heads the Centre for Sustainable Employment, explains that the increase in labour force participation has come mostly in rural areas and mostly in self-employment, which means largely unpaid work. "This suggests that it is distress resulting from the economic slowdown prior to COVID and then the pandemic itself that has contributed to women entering the labour force," he says.

Prof. Basole adds that there are some other hypotheses out there, such as improvements in measuring women's work in the Periodic Labour Force Survey and increased non-farm employment for men that has led to women substituting for men in agriculture. "But this is less likely. However, definitive evidence on the cause(s) is lacking," he notes.

Where are women employed?

The India Employment Report shows that it is women who largely account for the increase in self-employment and unpaid family work. Nearly two-thirds of the incremental employment after 2019 comprised self-employed workers, among whom unpaid (women) family workers predominate. The share of regular work, which steadily increased after 2000, started declining after 2018.

The rate of youth not in employment, education or training globally has been consistently the highest in South Asia, at an average of 29.2% between 2010 and 2019 (ILO 2022a). India also has a large share of youth not in employment, education or training, and the rate is higher among young women than men.

What are some of the reasons for low women's participation in the labour force?

Economists and women's rights experts point at various barriers women face in terms of a careers or a job. They list factors from a lack of jobs, women being made responsible for all care-giving duties at home plus cooking and cleaning to low wages, patriarchal mindsets and safety issues. In her 2022 book, *The Making of a Catastrophe: The Disastrous Economic Fallout of the COVID-19 Pandemic in India*, Jayati Ghosh, observing the sharp decline in women's labour participation between 2004 and 2018, writes that only some part of the phenomenon of women moving out of the labour market could be explained by greater involvement in education, especially for the age cohort 15 to 19. But with participation rates falling for women across all ages, "clearly, there was a process in operation, which has also been noted globally, of women being squeezed out of employment because of overall scarcity of paid work."

Prof. Basole feels there are both supply and demand side reasons for the decline in women's LFPR. On the labour demand side, in general, India's growth pattern has not been job intensive. This combined with social norms that restrict women's mobility and make them primary caregivers at home, means that women are not free to take up available opportunities. In addition, concerns over public safety and lack of transport also confine women to looking for work close to home, further limiting their options, a point Prof. Ghosh too makes.

The 2023 Economics Nobel Laureate Claudia Goldin's research showed that several factors have influenced the supply of and demand for female labour. "These include women's opportunities for combining paid work and a family, decisions relating to education and childrearing, technical innovations, laws and norms, and the structural transformation of the economy." In a paper about her research, the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences, pointed out that at the heart of Golden's analysis is the fact that women's choices have often been, and remain, limited by marriage and responsibility for the home and family. Her research may have been conducted in the U.S., going back 200 years, but her insights hold true in many other countries, including India as well.

What needs to change?

Economists say interventions are needed on both the demand and supply side of the labour market. On the demand side, says Prof. Basole, policies that promote labour intensive sectors (in both manufacturing and relatively higher productivity services) are needed. Public investment in safety and transport is also critical as is public investment in affordable child and elderly care. "All of these types of support can enable women to work outside the home and take advantage of relatively better paying opportunities," he adds.

GETTY IMAGES

'We are not ashamed of doing anything, if it is correct'

Rupa Books chairman Rajen Mehra on his memoir, the challenges of being a publisher and how to make book fairs more inclusive

Udbhav Seth

RUPA PUBLICATIONS chairman Rajen Mehra decided to pen the journey of his publishing company during a hospitalisation a few years ago — *Never Out of Print* (Rs 500). His granduncle Daudayal Mehra started the company in Calcutta back in 1936. Today, it's one of the few independent English-language book publishers in India. We speak to Mehra on this journey of over eight decades. Excerpts:

Your non-fiction catalogue is much larger than fiction. Are you going to invest more in fiction?

In the 1980s, we published best-selling authors such as Sidney Sheldon, Agatha Christie and Alistair McLean. Our sales were internationally talked about. Youngsters like Anurag Mathur, Ranjit Hoskote, Sudipto Sen, Salman Rushdie were coming up. We had distributed *Midnight's Children* while availability and pricing were an issue. Fiction is very difficult, you have to get a plot, work it around. Everyday things are changing so rapidly.

How do you combat international publishers and their gradual consolidation? They dominate the market.

It's a blessing in disguise. We were the first to import Penguin into the country and our relations with them were great from 1936 to 1992. But, suddenly, they decided to go away and we lost more than 50 per cent of our business. We decided to become more independent. You can't build publishing in a day. HarperCollins joined us. When they left us in 2002, we were ready with half the list we wanted. By 2015, we became totally dependent on our own publishing.

Are modern-day publishing targets and quotas diluting editorial quality or the choice of books published?

You don't get an author like Milan Kundera today. (Ideological) writing got over in the mid-1980s. In India it was after 1992's liberalisation. If you don't have an ideology, what do you do? What comes, you take it and forget about it. It's like fast food. The quality obviously has to go down. Crime writers like Ken Follet, Robin Cook and Jeffrey Archer have a commitment to write one book a year or two. An ordinary book takes more than 10 years to complete. It is also affecting the film industry. People like fun and frolic, with sex and music and dance.

Rupa started with publishing in Bengali, but had to shut it down in the 1980s. The translated catalogue isn't huge. Do you want to go there?

I was very keen to get into Hindi publishing. I invested a lot of money in promoting that
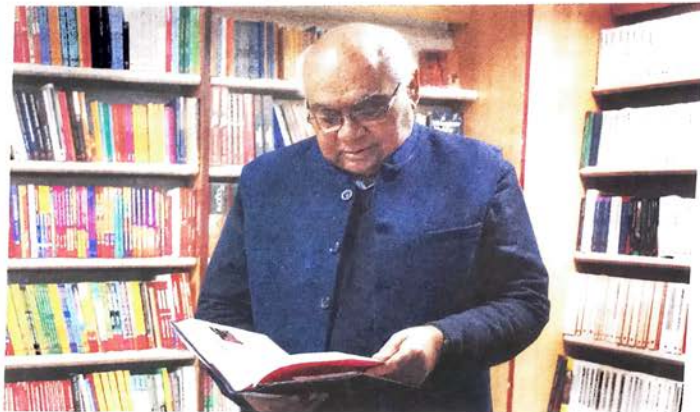
A BOOK MAN
Rajen Mehra at
Rupa Publishing's
New Delhi office

CALEIGHCHRISTY

but somehow it didn't click. Older publishers like Rajkamal Prakashan and Radhakrishna survived because they have been around a long time. Translations only work when the writing is good and long-lasting. It takes about two to three years to do it well. And writers like Mahasweta Devi, Ashapurna Devi, Sivasankari and Sarala Devi Chaudhurani are not easy to translate. At Aleph, we do lots of translations which are doing very well.

Does self-help, a major market for Rupa,

get an unfair rap? Critics accuse it of passing unscientific advice for a small, privileged, urban, neurotypical audience.

When a manuscript comes to us, we can only suggest to an extent the audience it should have across A-tier, B-tier or C-tier cities. A-tier cities are where books sell most. If, say, public libraries are strong in Kanpur, then obviously literature will go towards that. It's like a river. It makes its own passage.

Book fairs are often criticised today for

not being disruptive enough, for inviting many establishment figures. Has their role been reduced to commerce and not championing marginalised voices?

I had a fight once in Jaipur, over a 1,600-page history book on Rajasthan, by an author from Jaipur. It took her 10 years to write it but there was no review. I was invited to speak and I spoke of how the book wasn't talked about even in Jaipur. A huge gap is there. We should have more reading sessions. I remember actor Roshan Seth was one of the finest orators in Delhi. When there was a book launch, people would ask him to come and read it out.

D Mehra published couplets about Jawaharlal Nehru and Lal Bahadur Shastri upon their deaths. Rupa has consistently published controversial political memoirs. Has the space to publish anti-establishment books shrunk in the past 10 years?

On the current dispensation, talking about Advani or Jaswant Singh or anybody, we are not ashamed of doing anything if it is correct. We are not pressured by everybody. I'm very firm on this. I've fought for Rushdie many times. You can ask Mark Tully, whose *Mrs Gandhi's Last Battle* (1985) was detained. I was under pressure. We had to pay very heavy damages. We sorted it out and printed 30,000 copies and the book sold. The person who wanted to pressure us ran away because they were afraid that they'd be exposed... I haven't come across anybody (opposing anti-establishment books). When we published *R Venkataraman* (on the former president) I said openly how the Congress party behaved. And journalist Karan Thapar picked it up.

New Delhi

Jobs missing, IIT grads feel 'undue pressure'

Shreya.Ghosh@timesgroup.com

New Delhi: A BTech student at Indian Institute of Technology Delhi failed to find employment during the placement season. Often, youngsters like him with the coveted IITian tag expect, perhaps unreasonably, to be picked up for high-paying jobs. Not this time. After his rejection, the student said that he approached over 50 recruiters on LinkedIn but was left disappointed.

The student described the 2024 placement as "lacklustre" and said, "Despite better outcomes for undergraduate placements compared with postgraduate and PhD placements, we are feeling ourselves under undue pressure".

IIT-D placements occur in three phases with the first and second phases in Dec and Feb and the final one in May. Many students who weren't placed have been left applying for positions on LinkedIn, asking batchmates and seniors for referrals or contemplating additional qualifications and preparing for the CAT exam for higher degrees.

IIT Kanpur alumnus Dheeraj Singh, founder of the Global IIT Alumni Support Group, said, "Off-campus placement is extremely challenging and many on-campus placed students are not happy with the pay packages offered. The situation is appalling."

Students do prepare well for the placement process, which spans around 15 days. "We are mentally prepared for a set pattern of placement interview questions, but this time the companies were more demanding, seeking fewer candidates with specialised skills in artificial intelligence and machine learning for annual packages ranging from Rs 10-50 lakh," the student said, adding that he lacked the skills required by the hirers because his interest lay in software development.

When **TOI** asked the IIT-D authorities about how they assist the students equip themselves for the hiring process, an official said, "We arrange several activities and events to help students make informed career choices, including but not limited to avenues for alumni interactions, career fair and connecting them with business leaders and industry hiring teams."

It wasn't actually surprising that the placement season proved dissatisfying for so many. "We were informed that tech companies would come in fewer numbers due to the recession. We were, therefore, mentally prepared and very scared," admitted another student. "Sought-after companies like Amazon and Goldman Sachs did not arrive for mass hiring. If they don't come, what can we do?"

A woman MTech student said, "The overhiring that occurred during the Covid pandemic could be the reason why companies aren't recruiting in large numbers. Although women students were prioritised this year, maybe because the companies have to fulfil diversity norms and Microsoft hired nine girls out of the 12 they selected, the competition is incredibly stressful. Clearly, we have to take up other courses to make ourselves marketable."

An electrical engineering student with an interest in software development also expressed disappointment with IIT-D's Office of Career Services, alleging biased student representation that resulted in diminished chances for some students. A chemical engineering student said that after several rejections, he has decided to try new things and decide what works for him if he ends up without a job.

"I faced extreme self-doubt and took counselling on the campus," the student said, mortified since his family believes grabbing a placement is the endgame of an IIT education. "But," he added, "some of my friends accepted the placement only because they didn't get the jobs of their choice. They hope to switch to their favourite profile after a year or two."

Rohit Shaw, a textile engineering student who was placed with a startup, noted the weakening market demand, both domestic and international, due to recession. "Surprisingly, popular consulting firms such as Bain and Co and Boston Consulting Group were not interested this year," said Shaw.

A STUDENT SAYS

We are mentally prepared for a set pattern of placement interview questions, but this time the companies were more demanding, seeking fewer candidates with specialised skills in artificial intelligence and machine learning for annual packages ranging from Rs 10-50 lakh

Chandrayaan flies into NCERT textbook now

Manash.Gohain
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New Delhi: Chandrayaan has found its way to Class III textbooks in a playful way. Rani, a girl from a village is curious about "why the sky is blue?" and "Where does the Sun go at night." Listening to her mother singing "Chanda mama door ke …" makes her curious to know the distance between earth and moon and next morning when she heard her brothers' excitement on seeing the moon landing, Rani wonders: "How did Chandrayaan reach the moon?"

The first set of school textbooks (English, Hindi & Urdu) under National Curriculum Framework for school education 2023 for Class III, the first stage of middle school, was uploaded by National Council of Educational Research and Training Friday. The Council has also released a bridge course for Class VI, the first stage of high-school.

According to NCERT sources, the other subject books under the National Education Policy 2020 would be made available by May 2024, which include 'The world around us', Mathematics, Art Education and Health Wellbeing.

English textbook for Class III titled 'Santoor' comprises four units of three chapters each. The

CURRICULUM UPDATE

units include 'Fun with Friends', 'Toys & Games', 'Good Food', & 'The Sky.' As per the foreword, "The book emphasises conceptual understanding, critical thinking, creativity, values and dispositions essential for this developmental stage. It incorporates cross-cutting themes such as multilingualism, gender equality, and cultural rootedness integrating appropriate ICT & school-based assessments."

गैर-शैक्षणिक कर्मी भी विश्वविद्यालयों को देंगे ऊंचाई

जागरण ब्यूरो, नई दिल्ली : विश्वविद्यालयों में किसी भी छात्र के दाखिला लेने के दौरान उसका सामना सबसे पहले उन गैर-शैक्षणिक कर्मचारियों से होता है जिनका छात्र की पढ़ाई से कोई सीधा वास्ता नहीं होता है, लेकिन उनकी बात-व्यवहार और दक्षता छात्र के मन में संस्थान को लेकर नई छवि गढ़ता है। नई राष्ट्रीय शिक्षा नीति (एनईपी) के तहत विश्वविद्यालयों को विश्वस्तरीय बनाने में जुटे विश्वविद्यालय अनुदान आयोग (यूजीसी) ने फिलहाल इस दिशा में बड़ी पहल की है। विश्वविद्यालयों में काम करने वाले सभी गैर-शैक्षणिक कर्मचारियों को क्षमता निर्माण से जुड़ा एक विशेष प्रशिक्षण दिया जाएगा। जिसका उन्हें प्रमाण-पत्र भी मिलेगा। माना जा रहा है कि आने वाले दिनों में इसको पदोन्नति और वेतन-वृद्धि आदि से भी जोड़ दिया जाएगा।

यूजीसी ने विश्वविद्यालयों के

- यूजीसी ने इन कर्मियों की क्षमता निर्माण को लेकर छेड़ा अभियान
- मिशन कर्मयोगी के तहत क्षमता निर्माण आयोग कराएगा प्रशिक्षण

❝ केंद्रीय विश्वविद्यालयों के सभी गैर-शैक्षणिक कर्मचारियों को अगले चार महीने में क्षमता निर्माण से जुड़ा प्रशिक्षण देने का लक्ष्य रखा गया है। विश्वविद्यालयों से भी अपने कर्मचारियों को जल्द से जल्द प्रशिक्षण दिलाने का अनुरोध किया गया है। यह प्रशिक्षण आनलाइन है। उन्हें इस कोर्स को करने के बाद सर्टिफिकेट भी मिलेगा।**-प्रो. एम.जगदीश कुमार,** चेयरमैन, यूजीसी

गैर-शैक्षणिक कर्मचारियों को क्षमता निर्माण के लिए विशेष प्रशिक्षण देने की यह पहल 'मिशन कर्मयोगी' के तहत केंद्र सरकार की ओर से गठित क्षमता निर्माण आयोग (कैपेसिटी बिल्डिंग कमीशन) के साथ मिलकर शुरू की है।

इन क्षेत्रों में होगा फोकस

प्रशिक्षण में जिन क्षेत्रों पर फोकस होगा, उनमें मनोविज्ञान को समझना, प्रौद्योगिकी का उपयोग करना, उच्च शिक्षा के इको सिस्टम को समझना, शिक्षाविदों का प्रबंधन करना, स्थापना मामलों को संभालना, वित्त प्रबंधन और उससे जुड़ी परियोजना का प्रबंधन जैसे विषय शामिल हैं। इसके साथ ही एआइ का उपयोग, उभरती प्रौद्योगिकी के बारे में परिचय, डाटा-संचालित निर्णय लेने (डीडीडीएम) की तकनीक, माइक्रोसाफ्ट एक्सेल का परिचय, नोटिंग और ड्राफ्टिंग, आरटीआइ अधिनियम, जीएफआर नियम, और संचार कौशल आदि शामिल हैं। इसके साथ ही मिशन लाइफ व कार्यस्थल पर योग आदि विषय शामिल हैं।

कार्यक्रम के पहले चरण में 45 केंद्रीय विश्वविद्यालयों को शामिल किया गया है। जिन्हें चार महीने के भीतर अपने सभी गैर-शैक्षणिक कर्मचारियों को प्रशिक्षण दिलाने के लिए कहा गया है। यह पूरा प्रशिक्षण आनलाइन होगा। इसके बाद राज्य,

डीम्ड और निजी विश्वविद्यालयों को इससे जोड़ा जाएगा। देश में मौजूदा समय में 1100 से अधिक विश्वविद्यालय हैं। यूजीसी ने हाल ही में अपने कर्मचारियों को भी क्षमता निर्माण आयोग के जरिये ही प्रशिक्षण दिलाया था।

डीयू में अब नेट से होंगे पीएचडी में दाखिले

यूजीसी की ओर से पीएचडी प्रवेश परीक्षा को लेकर नए नियम में नेट को किया आनिवार्य

उदय जगताप ● नई दिल्ली

दिल्ली विश्वविद्यालय में नवीन सत्र से पीएचडी में दाखिले के लिए नेशनल एलिजिबिलिटी टेस्ट (नेट) को महत्व दिया जाएगा। नेट की अर्हता को पूरा करने वाले छात्रों को प्रवेश का मौका दिया जाएगा। डीयू में पिछले साल एक कामन एंट्रेंस टेस्ट के जरिये पीएचडी में प्रवेश की प्रक्रिया अपनाई गई थी। हाल में विश्वविद्यालय अनुदान आयोग (यूजीसी) की ओर से पीएचडी प्रवेश परीक्षा को लेकर नए नियम जारी किए हैं। जिसके तहत प्रवेश के लिए नेट को अनिवार्य कर दिया गया है।

यूजीसी ने कहा है कि यूजीसी नेट- सीएसआईआर नेट पास छात्र पीएचडी में प्रवेश ले सकते हैं। जिन्होंने जूनियर रिसर्च फेलोशिप (जेआरएफ) ली है, वे भी सीधे प्रवेश के लिए आवेदन कर सकते

1655 विद्यार्थियों का डीयू में इस वर्ष पीएचडी के लिए हुआ है प्रवेश

हैं। नए नियमों के मुताबिक पीएचडी प्रवेश के लिए नेट की योग्यता को 70 प्रतिशत और साक्षात्कार को 30 प्रतिशत वेटेज दिया जाएगा। इसके आधार पर ही प्रवेश होगा। अब डीयू भी इसी प्रक्रिया को अपनाने की तैयारी कर रहा है। हालांकि, नए नियम को लागू करने से पहले अकादमिक और कार्यकारी परिषद

एसएयू में आवेदन की तिथि 10 अप्रैल तक बढ़ाई गई

जासं, नई दिल्ली : साउथ एशियन यूनिवर्सिटी (एसएयू) में नए अकादमिक सत्र 2024- 25 के लिये प्रवेश के लिए आवेदन की तिथि अब 10 अप्रैल तक बढ़ा दी गई है। पहले आवेदन की अंतिम तिथि 31 मार्च थी। अन्य सार्क देशों के छात्रों की मांग पर आवेदन की अंतिम तिथि बढ़ाई गई है। समस्त सार्क देशों से विभिन्न कार्यक्रमों में प्रवेश के लिए अब तक

पांच हजार से ज्यादा आवेदन आ चुके हैं। सभी प्रोग्राम के लिए आनलाइन आवेदन का लिंक www .sau .int पर उपलब्ध है। विश्वविद्यालय में नये सत्र से चार और नए कार्यक्रम शुरू हो रहे हैं। ये कार्यक्रम डिपार्टमेंट आफ कंप्यूटर साइंस, बीटेक, बीटेक- एमटेक डूअल डिग्री, एमटेक और इंटीग्रेटेड एमएससी- एमटेक कोर्स शामिल हैं।

की स्वीकृति ली जाएगी। पिछले वर्ष डीयू पीएचडी में प्रवेश के लिए कामन एंट्रेंस टेस्ट में शामिल हुआ था। इसके अंकों और साक्षात्कार के आधार पर छात्रों को प्रवेश दिए गए। हालांकि नेट और जेआरएफ उत्तीर्ण छात्र सीधे प्रवेश के लिए आवेदन पहले भी करते थे। शेष बची सीटों के लिए एंट्रेंस टेस्ट लिया गया।

लेकिन, डीयू में पीएचडी में प्रवेश के लिए अलग-अलग विभागों ने स्वयं की प्रक्रिया अपनाई।

डीयू के एक प्रोफेसर ने कहा कि डीयू में इस वर्ष पीएचडी प्रवेश में एकरूपता नहीं रही। नेट के जरिये प्रवेश के नियम से एकरूपता आ जाएगी। इस वर्ष 1655 छात्रों का वि. में पीएचडी में प्रवेश हुआ है।

NCERT books tweaks: References to Babri Masjid, Gujarat riots, Hindutva dropped

New Delhi, April 5: Dropping references to the demolition of Babri Masjid in Ayodhya, the killing of Muslims in Gujarat riots and Hindutva, and tweaking the reference to Manipur's merger with India are among the latest set of revisions made public by the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) in its textbooks.

While NCERT did not comment on the topics being dropped, officials said the tweaks are part of the routine updation and are not linked to the development of new books as per the new curriculum framework (NCF).

The changes have been made in the Political Science textbooks of Classes 11 and 12, among others.

According to a document detailing the changes prepared by the curriculum drafting committee of the NCERT, the references to the Ram Janmabhoomi movement have been tweaked "as per the latest development in politics."

Chapter 8 on Secularism in Class 11 textbook earlier said, "More than 1,000 persons, mostly Muslims, were massacred during the post-Godhra riots in Gujarat in 2002."

It has been changed to "more than 1,000 persons were killed during the post-Godhra riots in Gujarat in 2002."

The NCERT's rationale behind the change is that "in any riot, people across communities suffer. It cannot be just one community?"

On Pakistan-occupied Kashmir, the earlier textbook stated, "India claims that this area is under illegal occupation. Pakistan describes this area as Azad Pakistan."

The changed version says, "However, it is the Indian territory which is under illegal occupation of Pakistan and called Pakistan occupied Jammu and Kashmir (POJK)."

The NCERT's rationale behind the alteration is that the "change that has been introduced is in complete concurrence with the latest position of the government of India in regard to Jammu and Kashmir."

THE NCERT'S rationale behind the change is that "in any riot, people across communities suffer. It cannot be just one community?" It did not comment on the topics being dropped.

— PTI

SC stays HC order striking down law regulating madrasas

Krishnadas Rajagopal
NEW DELHI

The Allahabad HC had struck down the law and directed the transfer of students to 'regular' schools

The Supreme Court on Friday stayed the operation of an Allahabad High Court judgment which struck down a 20-year-old Uttar Pradesh law regulating madrasas and ordered the transfer of their students to regular schools.

A three-judge Bench headed by Chief Justice of India D.Y. Chandrachud decided to freeze the implementation of the High Court judgment of March 22 in an interim order even as the Uttar Pradesh government said it had learnt to "accept" the verdict.

The State claimed to have fought tooth and nail for the survival of the Uttar Pradesh Board of Madrasa Education Act, 2004 in the High Court. However, it has now reconciled to the High Court's point of view that the Act threatened the principles of secularism and was violative of the Basic Structure of the Constitution.

Additional Solicitor General K.M. Nataraj, for Uttar Pradesh, said the course of instruction provided in madrasas did not involve broad-based subjects such as maths, science, and social studies. But the court countered the State's logic, asking how the striking down of a law regulating madrasas would ensure that students were instructed in maths, science, social studies, languages and history.

SC stays Allahabad HC order on madrasas

"The remedy would not be to strike down the Madrasa Board Act, but to issue suitable directions to enable students pursuing their education in madrasas to access the quality of education made available by the State in other institutions," Chief Justice Chandrachud dictated in the order for the Bench.

The court said if the State had a "legitimate public interest" in all students, including those in madrasas, it ought to ensure that "they receive education of a requisite quality and standard which make them qualified to pursue a dignified existence". Issuing notice to Uttar Pradesh, the court said it would hear detailed arguments in the second week of July. The court said it was left to the choice of students and their parents to stay back or leave madrasas to join mainstream schools. However, it was unwarranted on the part of the High Court to direct their transfer to "regular" schools.

Mr. Nataraj, for Uttar Pradesh, tried to reason that the madrasas had not been shut down after all. He argued that Article 28(1) of the Constitution prohibited religious instruction in educational institutions wholly maintained out of State funds.

The petitioners argued that imparting religious instruction in secular institutions was not proscribed in the Constitution. Besides, subjects other than Islamic theology are taught in madrasas, the petitioners submitted.

They said without the Board, madrasa education would continue unregulated. In his order, the Chief Justice said the High Court seemed to have "conflated the concept of madrasa education with the regulatory powers attached to the Board". The reasoning was *prima facie* misconceived.

Students halt stir after Ashoka University agrees to socio-economic survey
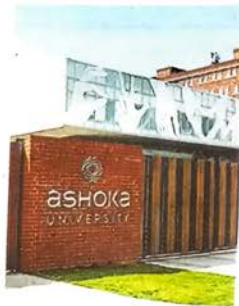
Ashna Butani
NEW DELHI

Following a 16-day protest by students calling for wider caste representation, the Ashoka University administration on Friday agreed to fulfil certain demands raised by the protesters, including the creation of a panel that will hold annual lectures on themes of social justice and conduct a socio-economic survey.

The protest – led by the Social Justice Forum (SJF), a forum founded by Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Muslims and Kashmiri students – has since been temporarily suspended, but protesting students say that "dialogue will continue" regarding their remaining demands.

The students had, on March 20, launched the protest over the call for a caste census on campus, reservation in admissions, and an annual Ambedkar Memorial Lecture on themes of social justice.

The issue made headlines last week after purported videos of the protesters surfaced on social media, where they could be seen raising caste-based slogans. The university at the time had condemned their actions, saying it "deplores expressions of hatred directed against any individual or group".

Exchange of ideas

However, on Friday, a university statement said that the administration had engaged in conversations with various student groups, faculty, and administrators on matters of "diversity, inclusion, and sensitisation".

"One of the measures emerging from these conversations is an Equal Opportunity Cell (EOC) having representatives from faculty, students and administrative staff. Among the activities of the EOC are a lecture on themes on social justice and a socio-economic survey, details of which are yet to be firmed up."

The students also received an email at 8 p.m. on Thursday from the Pro Vice-Chancellor's office, stating that the EOC would be constituted in the coming week, and that the survey would be rolled out under its aegis. "The processes dealing with timely fee payment will be refined and shared with students, and a helpdesk established to assist them with their queries and concerns," the email added.

'Unfair fee policy'

Students had earlier highlighted that the fee payment policy was "too stringent". "We have sent proposals to the administration regarding affirmative action and financial assistance to increase the representation of marginalised communities on campus, and we have been assured that the socio-economic survey will include a caste component," a student told *The Hindu* on the condition of anonymity.

Rakhigarhi findings in NCERT books; Narmada Dam references dropped

In Class 12 history textbook, NCERT has said that continuity in DNA of Harappans rules out migration of Aryans; in political science textbooks, it has dropped references to Babri demolition and given added emphasis to Ram Temple movement

Maitri Porecha
NEW DELHI

The National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) has proposed that findings from the DNA analysis of skeletal remains unearthed at the archaeological site of Rakhigarhi in Haryana be added to the Class 12 history textbook. It also proposed that references to how the Narmada Dam project adversely affected tribal people and drove them to greater destitution be dropped from the sociology textbook.

These are among the latest set of revisions in school textbooks proposed by the NCERT.

In the sociology textbook for Class 12, the NCERT has dropped the sentence "That Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes are social groups specially marked by poverty, powerlessness and social stigma."

In a major addition to the chapter "Bricks, Beads and Bones – The Harappan Civilisation" in the Class 12 history textbook *Themes in India History Part - I*, the NCERT has stated that the study of ancient DNA from archaeological

In order to study genetic history of Harappans, DNA was extracted from the skeletal remains excavated at Rakhigarhi. FILE PHOTO

sources in Rakhigarhi suggests that the genetic roots of the Harappans go back to 10,000 BC. "The DNA of the Harappans has continued till today and a majority of the south Asian population appears to be their descendants. Due to trade and cultural contacts of the Harappans with distant regions there is a mixture of genes in small quantity. The continuity without any break in genetic history as well as cultural history rules out large-scale immigration of the so-called Aryans," the text reads.

The revised text adds that the research also indicates that people coming from the bordering areas and distant regions were absorbed in the Indian society. "At no stage, the genetic history of the Indians was either discontinued or broken. As the Harappans

started moving towards Iran and Central Asia, their genes also gradually spread in those regions," it says.

In order to study the genetic history of the Harappans, DNA was extracted from the skeletal remains excavated at Rakhigarhi. This research was carried out by Deccan College Deemed University, Pune in collaboration with the Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology, Hyderabad, and the Harvard Medical College.

The analysis of the data was interpreted by some as that the Harappans were the indigenous people of this region. The same team of researchers also reconstructed 3D features of the Harappan people. The NCERT stated that the reconstructed facial features of the Harappans, male

and female, show remarkable similarity with the modern population of Haryana and that the study has indicated unbroken continuity for 5,000 years in this region.

In an article for *The Hindu*, archaeologist Mudit Trivedi had argued that "the DNA of this person from Rakhigarhi ... is a mixture with contributions coming from very ancient ancestry shared with Iranian populations and that from... Andamanese or South-East Asians in the deep past of her ancestry... media coverage has stressed her 'indigeneity' and not the fact that her genetic admixture makes one rethink the social geographies which the data groups her with, which are significantly more westerly than the limits of present-day India."

On page 85 of the Class 12 sociology textbook *Indian Society*, the NCERT said the sentence "Projects such as the Sardar Sarovar dam on the river Narmada in western India and the Polavaram dam on the river Godavari in Andhra Pradesh displace hundreds of thousands of adivasis, driving them to greater destitution" would be changed to

"Projects such as the Sardar Sarovar dam on the river Narmada in western India and the Polavaram dam on the river Godavari in Andhra Pradesh displaced hundreds of thousands of adivasis from their original habitats".

It has also dropped other mentions about the Narmada project. In chapter three, the sentence "The coming of private property in land has also adversely affected tribals, whose community-based forms of collective ownership were placed at a disadvantage in the new system. The most recent such example is the series of dams being built on the Narmada, where most of the costs and benefits seem to flow disproportionately to different communities and regions" will now read, "The coming of private property in land has also adversely affected tribals, whose community-based forms of collective ownership were placed at a disadvantage."

The NCERT has dropped references to the Babri Masjid demolition from its political science textbooks and given added emphasis on the Ram Janmabhoomi Temple movement.

DISPUTE OVER CASTE CERTIFICATE

SC stays order cancelling MBBS admission of son of panipuri seller

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
AHMEDABAD, APRIL 5

THE SUPREME Court Friday temporarily stayed an order that cancelled the admission of a panipuri seller's son at a medical college following a dispute over his caste certificate. The MBBS student can now be readmitted to the course and can continue with his studies for the time being.

The division bench of Justices Hrishekesh Roy and Prashant Kumar Mishra granted interim relief to Alpeshkumar Rathod and issued notice to the state and college authorities.

On March 26, a division bench of the Gujarat High Court had cast aspersions on the validity of the student's Socially and Economically Backward Classes category certificate and had upheld the cancellation of admission by the Admission Committee for Professional Medical Educational Courses and the Government Medical College at Vadodara.

Copyright vs AI

As 'The New York Times Co v Microsoft Corp et al' weaves its way through the court system, more such challenges for the law will emerge

OPENING ARGUMENT

BY MENAKA GURUSWAMY

C R Sasikumar

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI) is reconfiguring our lives and forcing us to question whether only human beings are capable of sophisticated intelligence? After all, AI is passing lawyers' bar exams and other professional tests. It's even performing precise but finite surgical procedures. However, there are some fetters in the AI revolution. And this has come from an unlikely quarter — copyright law. Novelists, newspapers, writers are amongst plaintiffs who have sued various companies using AI alleging that AI "ingests" their work. These plaintiffs from various suits include the popular author John Grisham and *The New York Times*.

The New York Times (*NYT*) in a very high-profile case, in late December 2023 sued OpenAI and Microsoft for copyright infringement. In their petition, the *NYT* alleges that the "defendants' generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) tools rely on large-language models ('LLMs') that were built by copying and using millions of *Times* copyrighted news articles, in depth investigations, opinion pieces, reviews, how-to-guides, and more. While the defendants engaged in wide-scale copying from many sources, they gave *Times* content particular emphasis when building their LLMs — revealing a preference that recognises the values of those works."

The *NYT* in these absolutely delightful pleadings, argues that the Constitution and the Copyright Act recognise the "critical importance of giving creators exclusive rights over their works". The newspaper felt strongly that their copyright was violated by OpenAI and Microsoft and hence they were unable to enjoy the "fruits of their labour and investment." How does the *NYT* explain this alleged exploitation of their labour? They argue that "powered by LLMs containing copies of *Times* content, Defendants Gen AI tools can generate output that recites *Times* content verbatim, closely summarises it, and mimics its expressive style", as demonstrated by scores of examples. "Defendants also use Microsoft's Bing search index, which copies and categorises the *Times* articles that are significantly longer and more detailed than those returned by traditional search engines."

Essentially, the *NYT* is arguing that the defendants are using its intellectual property without paying for it and enriching themselves. The *NYT* links this use of its intellectual property protected work to the growth in Microsoft's valuation to a trillion dollars, and OpenAI's ChatGPT's valuation of $90 billion.

In a bid to address the argument of "fair use" that is often a defence against copyright infringement, the *NYT* argued that there was nothing transformative about using *NYT* content without payment to create products that substitute for the newspaper and steal audiences away from it. The core argument of the

NYT is that the outputs of "Defendants' GenAI models compete with and closely mimic the inputs used to train them" copying *NYT* works and hence is not fair use.

The *NYT*'s petition includes extracts from searches conducted on ChatGPT, and Bing Chat (Microsofts' GenerativeAI) that are alleged to throw up *NYT* articles verbatim. Importantly, the petition for the *NYT*, while arguing that it has lost billions of dollars, does not ask for a specific amount for damages. It does ask for an injunction to stop the alleged unlawful conduct from continuing.

The reply of OpenAI is clever. In fact, the legal petitions filed by the three parties are rigorous and deeply enjoyable reading. For students of law (by that I mean those in law school and those practising law) the petitions are worthwhile to review for they are indicative of what good legal drafting ought to be. Succinct, clever and elegantly incorporating the law.

However, the case of *The New York Times Co v Microsoft Corp et al* is also fascinating since it has all the attributes of an international caper. How, you might ask? OpenAI responds to the allegations by arguing that "the *Times* paid someone to hack OpenAI's products." Further, that it took the newspaper ten of thousands of attempts to generate the "highly anomalous results" that constitute the illustrations in the complaint. Further, that they were able to do so only "by targeting and exploiting a bug by using deceptive prompts that blatantly violate OpenAI's terms of use. And even then they had to feed the tool portions of the very articles they sought to elicit verbatim passages of, virtually all of which already appear on multiple public websites."

Microsoft responded strongly by com-

In a bid to address the argument of 'fair use' that is often a defence against copyright infringement, the NYT argued that there was nothing transformative about using NYT content without payment to create products that substitute for the newspaper and steal audiences away from it. The core argument of the NYT is that the outputs of 'Defendants' GenAI models compete with and closely mimic the inputs used to train them' copying NYT works and hence is not fair use.

paring the *New York Times* lawsuit to the one waged by the Motion Picture Association of America and Hollywood against the VCR (Video Cassette Recorder). When the VCR was first introduced, the entertainment industry claimed that it violated copyright. As Microsoft writes, the "(US Supreme) Court rejected the alarmism and voted for technological innovation and consumer choice, in its seminal decision in *Sony Corp of America vs Universal City Studios, Inc.* freeing consumers from broadcast schedules and ushering in an on-demand world." Clearly, that decision did not destroy Hollywood — quite the opposite, it's argued that the entertainment industry flourished "when the VCR opened new markets and revenue streams".

News conglomerates have not all chosen to fight the use of their work product to feed the insatiable appetite of AI. Some have joined hands with it. The large European news conglomerate Axel Springer has announced a partnership with OpenAI to "strengthen independent journalism in the age of AI". In July 2023 OpenAI and the *Associated Press* (AP) announced a deal for the AI company to license AP's archive of news stories.

As *The New York Times Co v Microsoft Corp et al* weaves its way through the court system, more such challenges for the law will emerge as AI swiftly takes over how humans access, process and pay for news and creative work. Alternatively, we can ask ChatGPT — "are you using *New York Times* stories and reports without paying for it?" I suspect we will get a legally nuanced answer involving "fair use".

The writer is a Senior Advocate at the Supreme Court

# Proposal to start a govt school on land for Urdu one opposed in HC

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: A plan proposed by Delhi govt to start a Sarvodaya Vidyalaya in Sadar Bazar on land allotted for a private Urdu-medium school has been challenged in high court.

The Qaumi Senior Secondary School's building was razed during the Emergency around five decades ago and students have since been taught under tents and temporary tin structures.

Firoz Bakht Ahmed — on whose petition Delhi High Court directed Delhi Development Authority (DDA) in 2018 to carve out land to erect permanent structures for the school — approached HC again on Friday.

Ahmed questioned the Delhi govt's stand and pointed out that the DDA was to provide full 4,000 sq metres of land instead of 1,600 metres for the Urdu-medium school. In March last year, the court permitted DDA's plea to give 1,600 sq metres of land instead of the earlier commitment of 4,000 sq metres after the land-owning agency plea-
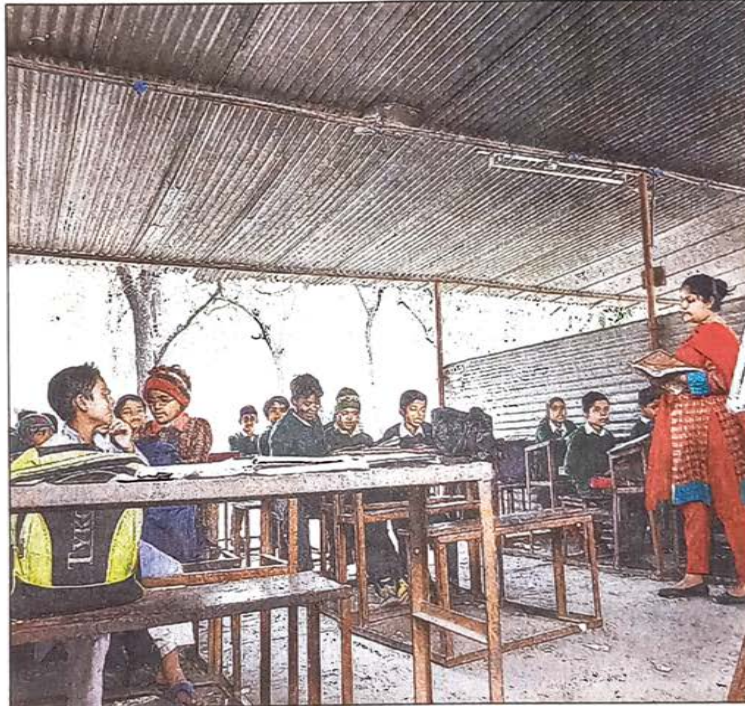
File Photo

Students being taught under tents and temporary tin structures

ded helplessness in giving such a large chunk of land in that area.

A special bench of Justices Sanjeev Sachdeva and Subramonium Prasad heard Ahmed on Friday and asked him to file an affidavit. Ahmed argued that efforts must

be made to save the Urdu-medium school where thousands of students from surrounding localities such as Nabi Karim, Bada Hindu Rao, Ballimaran, and Jama Masjid study.

He also urged the court to reconsider the concession

granted to DDA and sought that 4,000 sq metres must be allotted for the construction of a senior secondary school.

Originally built in 1948 for Muslim families that chose to remain in India after the Partition, Qaumi Senior Secondary School's management had to operate out of tin structures since the school's razing to not only give classes a semblance of a room, but also to protect students from extreme weather conditions.

Ahmed complained that Delhi govt is bent upon acquiring the patch of land and opposed the possible closure of Qaumi school to make way for a non-Urdu medium Sarvodaya Vidyalaya up to class X. He alleged that it would involve transfer of Urdu-medium students to other schools in the city as land has already been halved and a senior secondary school cannot be accommodated on it.

On its part the Directorate of Education (DoE) maintained that there is no provision in law that allows it to construct a school and hand it over to a private entity.

छठी क्लास में प्रमोशन के लिए 33% मार्क्स की अनिवार्यता गलत नहीं: HC

AI Image

विशेष संवाददाता, नई दिल्ली

दिल्ली हाई कोर्ट ने उन सरकारी आदेशों की वैधता को बरकरार रखा है जिसमें कहा गया कि पांचवीं के स्टूडेंट्स को छठी क्लास में प्रमोट होने के लिए फाइनल एग्जाम में कम से कम 33% अंक और मिड टर्म एग्जाम्स में 25% मार्क्स हासिल करने होंगे। जस्टिस सी हरि शंकर ने अपने जजमेंट में कहा कि दिल्ली सरकार के शिक्षा विभाग (डीओई) ने शिक्षा का अधिकार नियम के नियम 21ए द्वारा मिली शक्ति का इस्तेमाल करते हुए 2 अक्टूबर, 2022 और 22 अगस्त, 2023 को आदेश जारी किए थे। इन आदेशों को शिक्षा निदेशालय में निहित क्षेत्राधिकार से ज्यादा नहीं कहा जा सकता। कोर्ट ने कहा कि किसी भी तरह से नहीं कहा जा सकता कि पांचवीं के स्टूडेंट को पास करने के मानदंड बेवजह कड़े है।

सिंगल जज की बेंच ने अलकनंदा के सेंट जॉर्ज स्कूल में पढ़ने वाले अर्नव शर्मा नाम के एक स्टूडेंट की याचिका पर ये टिप्पणियां कीं। शर्मा की याचिका में तर्क दिया गया कि उसने फरवरी 2024 में सालाना एग्जाम दिए थे, लेकिन स्कूल ने उनका रिजल्ट घोषित नहीं

> **कोर्ट ने कहा, पांचवीं क्लास के स्टूडेंट को पास करने के मानदंड सही है**

किया और बजाए इसके, उन्हें दोबारा एग्जाम में बैठने के लिए कहा, जो 6 मार्च, 2024 और 18 मार्च, 2024 के बीच हुए थे। बच्चा दोबारा परीक्षा में बैठा। स्कूल ने रिजल्ट घोषित करते हुए कहा कि वह परीक्षा में फेल हो गया है और उसे छठी क्लास में प्रमोट नहीं किया जा सकता। इसके बाद शर्मा ने हाई कोर्ट का रुख करते हुए डीओई के आदेशों को इस आधार पर रद्द करने का अनुरोध किया कि यह बच्चों को मुफ्त और अनिवार्य शिक्षा का अधिकार अधिनियम, 2009 (आरटीई अधिनियम) की धारा 16 का उल्लंघन करता है। कोर्ट ने मामले पर विचार किया और कहा कि याचिका में यह नहीं बताया गया है कि सरकारी आदेशों ने आरटीई अधिनियम की धारा 16 का उल्लंघन कैसे किया।

NBT/6