IIT Kgp celebrates shy student they knew would make it big

Jhimli Mukherjee Pandey | TNN

Kolkata: IIT Kharagpur was a tad disappointed with this alumnus after he gave its convocation a miss last Sunday. His name had been publicized as the star presence that day for a distinguished alumnus award. On Tuesday 5 am onwards, when news went viral across the globe that Sundar Pichai had become the new Google CEO, everyone at IIT Kharagpur knew why this old boy didn’t return home.

The IIT Kgp community got over their disappointment and erupted in joy. Faculty and students across batches and cities started calling each other and posting on Facebook. It was a virtual reunion.

So what if he’s 71 and one of the most senior professors on campus, Sanat Roy was part of the melee celebrating his favourite student’s achievement. Hadn’t he prophesied that P Sundarajgan of the 1983 batch was an uncut diamond? That was the name Pichai was known by so when he metamorphosed into Sundar Pichai, initially it left his institute confused.

Roy’s voice choked with emotion. “I had seen this coming. Three years ago when the boy became Google’s vice-president, didn’t I tell you this is the beginning, he’ll make it straight to the top? Sundar proved that an experiment we conducted with the metallurgy department in 1985 had clicked!” Roy said proudly. The switch over from pure studies in metal to material sciences, including polymers, ceramics and electronic materials was what perhaps acted as a buoy for Pichai, Roy felt. “He was the class topper, meticulous with sharp native intelligence that went much beyond the curriculum. He stood head and shoulders above the rest. Yet, he was unassuming, always looking to be part of the class fabric,” Roy remembers. The fact that Pichai went to Wharton for his masters in computer science doubly proved this, Roy says.

That he was shy was a refrain one heard from his friends too. That he could fall in love with a girl from the campus was something

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that even his closest friends didn’t believe for a long time till they saw “Sundar” marry Anjali from the chemical engineering department of the same batch. “Today when he has become the world’s most sought after CEO, I was tempted to tell friends this was easier achieved than expressing his feelings for Anjali,” laughed batch mate Phani Bhushan, who was a resident of Nehru Hall with Pichai. But in the right company, he could crack the wildest of jokes. “He was good at carom and TT, but we had to drag him out of his perch to play. He loved gossip. Those days we neither had mobile phones nor computers/laptops to hold us to ourselves,” Bhushan said from Mumbai where he now owns three IT companies.

Friends expected him to be a scientist. The lanky boy with a tilak on his forehead in true Tamil style was a picture in brilliance, felt Sourav Mukherjee, another batchmate, now dean of academics at IIM Bangalore. “He was way ahead of us. In the first year he had a serious leg injury that forced him to stay away from campus but he bounced back making up for the loss and more...We were amazed... Yet, he didn’t study much...not the typically studious kind...just plain brilliant. My wife, who is also a batch mate, and he remain close. We saw this coming.”
Alpha Bet On G-Male: IIT Grad Is Chief Of Revamped Tech Titan

This Google Search Had Only One Answer: Sundar Pichai

Company To Be Subsidiary Of Larger Entity Called Alphabet

Chidanand Rajghatta @timesgroup

Washington: In 2004, Sundar Pichai was trying to persuade one of his colleagues at management consultancy McKinsey not to leave the firm to join Google. The chat ended when Pichai realised that it made sense for him to join Google too.

Eleven years later, the Indian-bred Pichai’s gamble has paid off, and now On Monday, Google turns page to Pichai: P7, 16 & 17

he was named CEO of Google by the company’s founders Larry Page and Sergey Brin after they created a mother company called Alphabet to take care of a growing portfolio.

Pichai, 43, a Chetan native who went to IIT Kharagpur and later to Stanford and Wharton, will helm a slimmed-down Google that Larry Page said will be stripped of companies “that are pretty far afield of our main internet products.” Page will be Alphabet’s CEO.

Alphabet will include, besides Google, units such as Calico (which focuses on longevity), X (which incubates new efforts like Wing, Google’s drone delivery effort) and units dealing with life sciences (such as the one working on smart contact lenses that detects blood sugar level). Google’s investment arms, Ventures and Capital, will also be part of Alphabet.

A straight elevation for Pichai would have meant two of the world’s five largest companies by market cap would be headed by executives of Indian-origin — Pichai at Google, which is ranked 4th, and Microsoft, which is ranked 5th, helmed by Satya Nadella.

But it won’t be so straightforward. Page explained that Alphabet Inc will replace Google Inc as the publicly-traded entity and all shares of Google will convert into the same number of shares of Alphabet, with all of the same rights. Google will become a wholly-owned subsidiary of Alphabet, which Page will head.

Page: Google lucky, P22

Google’s lucky to have Pichai, says Page

Sundar Pichai’s elevation is a milestone for Indian-origin CEOs, of whom there are at least half a dozen in Fortune 500 companies, including Indra Nooyi at Pepsi (45), Aijit Banga at Mastercard (289), and Sanjay Mehrotra at SanDisk (422). There is a good chance that the third ranked Berkshire Hathaway too could be headed by a Pichai with Ajit Jain strongly tipped to succeed Warren Buffett. Apple and Exxon Mobil are the world’s number 1 and number 2 ranked companies respectively.

“We’ve long believed that over time companies tend to get comfortable doing the same thing, just making incremental changes. But in the technology industry, where revolutionary ideas drive the next big growth areas, you need to be a bit uncomfortable to stay relevant,” Page said in a blog explaining the rationale for the restructuring, adding that the “new structure will allow us to keep tremendous focus on the extraordinary opportunities we have ahead of us.”

Still, Google will remain the biggest piece of Alphabet. Explaining Pichai’s elevation, Page said he (Pichai) has already stepped up since October of last year when he took on product and engineering responsibilities for Google’s Internet businesses.

“Sergey (Brin) and I have been super excited about his progress and dedication to the company. And it is clear to us and our board that it is time for Sundar to be CEO of Google. I feel very fortunate to have someone as talented as he is to run the slightly slimmed-down Google and this frees up time for me to continue to scale our aspirations,” he wrote.

He said he has been “spending quite a bit of time with Sundar, helping him and the company in any way I can and, I will of course continue to do that.”

Road Ahead

Pichai’s top challenges

Will have to take on the challenge from Windows 10 and Bing Search to keep desktop search with Google

Will have to contredit with Apple’s planned search engines. Google earned 75% of its $47.1 billion from mobile search ads that came from iPhones and iPads

Will need to ensure that YouTube stays on top. Besides battling direct competitors like Vimeo, and OTT video subscription services like Netflix, Hulu, Amazon Prime, Pichai will have to deal with Facebook which in the mobile space is ahead of YouTube in smartphone app rankings

Times View

It is a cause for celebration that so many Indians have made it to the very top of some of the world’s most valuable companies. At the same time, however, it should make us pause and ask an obvious question — why is it that they make their mark in the US but not in the land of their birth?

Clearly, the conditions here are not ripe for the best entrepreneurial and managerial minds to achieve their full potential. This is where governments need to play the vital role of creating the enabling environment in which they can thrive and create value for themselves and millions of others.

Successful governments have promised much on this front, but sadly delivered at best a fraction of the promise.
**Incubators evoke little CSR interest**

There are multiple reasons for tepid corporate interest in incubators; among them is lack of awareness.

By Arundhathi Ramakrishnan

There is a list, officially called Schedule VII, which tells companies what they can do under corporate social responsibility (CSR) as prescribed by the Companies Act, 2013. Of the 10 possibilities, from eradicating hunger to promoting education, the pertinent item in that list is funding technology incubators attached to academic institutions. In the first year of implementation, few companies put CSR money into these incubators.

Incubators help start-ups survive in their very early stages when most of them rely on funding from family and friends. Incubators are valuable to start-ups because besides grants, they give them an office to work out of and act as a platform for networking. The grants to fledgling start-ups are anywhere between $25 lakh and $50 lakh.

There are about 100 incubators associated with academic institutions and many of them are funded by the department of science and technology (DST), the ministry of micro, small and medium enterprises and the Small Industries Development Bank of India (Sidhi). About 10-12 start-ups are incubated at each of these centres, and they could be involved in developing clean technology, healthcare solutions and creating information technology (IT) innovations.

Among the eight incubators we spoke to, five have received CSR funding of under $2 crore in total. So far, prominent incubators like the one attached to the Indian Institute of Management (IIM) Ahmedabad got a total of $75 lakh from Mahindra and Mahindra Financial Services Ltd. Take Solutions Ltd and Bajaj Electricals Ltd; the ones at Indian Institute of Science (IISc) and Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Delhi got $50 lakh each from two multinationals under a non-disclosure agreement; IIT Guwahati; and BITS, Hyderabad received about $5 lakh each from a software company and Sidhi Venture Capital Ltd, a venture fund run by Sibhi, from its own CSR funds.

Other well-known incubators associated with institutions like IIT Madras, IIM Bangalore and IIM Calcutta have so far not got any CSR funding. They said they are in talks with a few companies, and expect to sign a few memorandums of understanding. But all incubators admit the interest from companies has been tepid and the reasons for this are multifold.

Second, many companies find start-ups and get returns on that investment. But when they give CSR grants to an incubator, which in turn diverts some of that money into start-ups, they get no returns.

For instance, Cisco Systems Inc. has an investment arm called Cisco Investments, which will invest $40 million (around $241 crore) in early-stage firms under its India Innovation investment programme, and the investment arm typically takes a stake in these start-ups. For Cisco, these start-ups are a way to foster ideas, which will benefit its business too.

Necessary factor (Top and above): Start-ups incubated at the Centre for Innovation, Incubation and Entrepreneurship, IIM-A. These start-ups rely on incubators for not just funds but also a platform to network.

"CSR funding in incubators is an interesting option but may not be sustainable for building a start-up ecosystem for the longer term. That is better done by capital that will look for returns also, as that will ensure more competitive start-ups take root," said Alok Kundu, director, corporate development, Cisco.

"Not all incubators are profit-making firms. For them, funding is a way to diversify into a CSR activity or to tap into a market that they do not have," said Arvind Dada, former member, Centre for Innovation, Incubation and Entrepreneurship, IIM-A.

"Incubators are still developing and may need some support to achieve their goals. They have a limited number of start-ups, and this is not the same as corporate start-ups," said Murali, chairman, entrepreneur development, IISC.

This, even though DST lists 90 approved incubators on its website.

To tackle this problem, Dibrugarh, head, Centre for Business Innovation at the Indian Institute of Corporate Affairs, Delhi, the think-tank that drafted the CSR rules, said it is preparing a list of eligible incubators that companies can give their CSR funds to.

"Originally, incubators were included in the CSR list as they promote innovation. While the law does not specify if incubators should channel funding to start-ups, most have done so.

On their part, founders of start-ups are divided on whether CSR funding makes sense. Some like Nitin Gupta, founder of Sickle Innovations, a farming solutions company, believes CSR funding is valuable, especially for start-ups that are still getting their feet wet. The start-up, incubated by CIIE at IIM-A, makes farm implements that can be used by small farmers.

Gupta said even impact funds (funds that invest in social start-ups) don’t invest in the prototype stage. “You need to get to a certain level to get their attention.” So, CSR money is a much-needed source of seed funding. "With this money it will be easier to scale and build credibility and with that we can chase after impact investors," he said.

Sickle Innovations got $18.5 lakh in CSR funding from the $25 lakh grant Mahindra and Mahindra Financial Services made to CIIE. The company made another grant worth $23 lakh towards Sustain Earth, a start-up incubated by Villgro, a DST-approved incubator.

Piyush Jaju, founder of OnEnergy, which sells solar equipment to rural households, said it is difficult for incubators to get CSR funding. "Companies do not like to mix what they do for profit and what they do with a social motive. For CSR, companies are focused on charity. Changing that mindset is very difficult," said Jaju. "We can’t rely on this as a source of funding," he added.

OnEnergy got $20 lakh from CIIE as part of a $25 lakh grant from Bajaj Electricals.

Executive from Mahindra and Mahindra Financial Services and Bajaj Electricals said they are funding incubators as an experiment and if it yields results they will look to increase CSR funding to them.

Businesses can benefit from this, insisted Sanjay Kalwar, director, the fellow programme in management at the Indian School of Business, Hyderabad. He said using CSR to give to social enterprises can spark innovation that can stoke research and development (R&D) in their own companies. He called this a Responsible Business Framework.

"Companies anyway have to do CSR. If they encourage social enterprises in their line of business, through incubators, it could be a win-win situation," he said.

But to attract CSR funding, incubators will also need to show that they are accountable and producing results with their graduates, said Pooja Poole, managing partner, Initia Fund Seed.

"I do not believe CSR grants will be large enough to both support an incubator and flow through incubators in any material way to the organisations they train and support," Poole said.

In fact, consultants such as Noshir Dadwala, CEO of Centre For Advancement of Philanthropy, wondered why this criteria was included in Schedule VII in the first place. "No company has expressed interest in this. CSR funding in incubators sticks out like a sore thumb from the rest of the areas listed."

Also, the wording is very vague, Dadwala said. "As the law discourages CSR funding to any form of for-profit enterprise, funding incubators means encouraging for-profit enterprises.

He said the criteria needs wording and clarification from the ministry on its exact meaning.

Till then, few companies are considering this route.
अब तक बिना इमारत चल रहे आईआईटी-आईआइएम
वर्षों से चालू 36 शीर्ष संस्थाओं में सिर्फ सात की इमारतें तैयार

मुकेश केंद्रीवाल, नई दिल्ली

एक तरफ सरकार जहां आईआईटी और आईआइएम जैसे नए शीर्ष केंद्रीय तकनीकी संस्थान खाली हो रही हैं, वहीं अधिकांश में संसाधन बहुत खराब है। पिछले कुछ वर्षों के दौरान खाली गए ऐसे 36 नए संस्थानों में से अधिकता अभी तक बिना इमारत के ही हैं। इसी तरह कई नए संस्थानों में अध्यापकों की आधी संख्या से ही काम चलाना पड़ रहा है।

इस से सात लाख तक पुराने आईआईटी में सिर्फ पटना की ही परिसर पूरी तरह बन कर तैयार हो सकता है। इसी तरह वर्षों से चल रहे दस नए राष्ट्रीय तकनीकी संस्थान (एनसीएफआई) में से अधिक में जो अब तक कैप्स बनाने का काम शुरू भी हो नहीं हो सकता है। रायपुर और रांची के आईआइएम भी अभी तक जमीन की इजहार से पूरे नहीं पा सकते हैं। इसके बावजूद केंद्र सरकार ने इस साल पांच नए आईआईटी और छह नए आईआइएम खोलना का ऐलान कर दिया है।

केंद्रीय मानव संसाधन मंत्रालय में नए संस्थाओं के काम-काज पर नजर रखने वाली इकाई में उल्लिखित दस वर्षों के मुकाबले कुल 36 नए अकेमेंट के तकनीकी संस्थान (एनसीएफआई) संस्थानों में सिर्फ सात के कैप्स पूरी तरह बन कर तैयार हो गए हैं।

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बत्त लग सकता है।

इसी तरह चार नए, भारतीय सूचना प्रौद्योगिकी संस्थान (आईआईटी) को नए स्थायी परिसर में स्थानांतरित कर दिए गए हैं। मनो व्यवहार द्वारा किए जाने के वाक्यों में अभी विशेष लक्ष तक का काम चल रहा है। सात नए, आईआइएम में से रायपुर और रांची में तो अब तक चालू रहने वाले ही हैं। जबकि दो सेंचू भी अस्थायी कैप्स से ही चलने को मजबूर है। इनमें से उनसे संबंधित के कारीगर का आईआइएम गाना विकास आयुक्त के दफ्तर से चल रहा है तो रांची आईआइएम की पहली सूचना भवन से चल रही है।

ऐसे कई संस्थाओं में शिक्षकों की भी भारी कमी है। आईआईटी सूचनावर्ग में फैक्टरी के 170 पदो में से 71 खाली है। इसी तरह आईआइटी जोधपुर में 90 में से 42 पद खाली है। इसी तरह मंडी, रांची और राजस्थान के आईआइएम में भी 90-90 अध्यापकों के पद मजबूर होने के बावजूद यहां सिर्फ 23 ही उपलब्ध है। आईआइएम में 109 में सिर्फ 49 यां भी में से भी कम अध्यापक उपलब्ध हैं। यही हाल कारीगरीम का है, जहां 42 के बजाय सिर्फ 19 अध्यापक उपलब्ध हैं।
A first of its kind cyber security facility, the Centre for Cyber Security and Defence of Critical Infrastructure, would soon come up at the computer science department of the Indian Institute of Technology-Kanpur with help from two Israeli universities.

It would aim at saving critical infrastructure such as sensitive database of banks, railways, power industry, telecom and Aadhar from cyber attacks or hacking. The cyber security experts of IIT-Kanpur would assist the Central government so that the database of the country facing vulnerability from hackers in Pakistan and China does not fall in their hands or other foreign governments.

The experts believe that in the cyber age, threat from arms and ammunition is less in comparison to the cyber attacks.

IIT-K director Indranil Manna said, "The senate of the institute had last month approved the setting up of a cyber security centre, where a team of faculty members would be engage in cyber security research. The idea of setting up a cyber-security centre was proposed by Sandeep Shukla of computer science and engineering department."

"Any of the critical systems such as the financial system, power generation/transmission/distribution systems, railway system, manufacturing and logistics management system, air traffic control system are subject to cyber attacks and require measures in defending them, detecting on-going attacks, attribution of attack sources and prevention of attacks by taking preemptive measures. Protection of critical infrastructure from cyber attacks is matter of concern for most of the nations and same is the case with India. We would provide solutions to safeguard the sensitive data of national importance," said Shukla.

Citing example of July 30 and 31 in 2012, when entire North India, North East India and East India had plunged into darkness owing to malfunction in the grid, Shukla said that power grid had tripped, affecting a major part of the country but this had then happened due to technical glitches. "The same situation can be repeated by hackers and it could be an induced one and not a malfunction. They can actually hack the power generation/transmission/distribution network," he elaborated.

Citing another example of cyber attack on Iran, Shukla said that in 2009, Iranian nuclear plant was attacked by some foreign entity. As Iranians were not prepared for this worst scenario, they could not realise for a while that they have been cyber-attacked.

"Talks are on with National Critical Information Infrastructure Protection Centre in Delhi for assisting us in the making
the most advanced cyber security lab. Also talks are going on with Prime Minister Office (PMO), home ministry, department of science and technology about the importance of this centre and also for the funding. The centre is expected to start functioning in next 4-5 months,” Shukla said.

The cyber expert also mentioned that the Centre for Cyber Security and Defence of Critical Infrastructure at IIT-Kanpur will collaborate with Tel Aviv University and Bengurian University in Israel as they are experts in cyber security.

Senior professor of IIT-K Manindra Agarwal, who is also the part of the centre, said, "Cyber security and defence centre will undertake research in cyber security, educate and train students through undergraduate and graduate courses and also engage in consulting the critical infrastructure sector government."

IIIT student ends life in Andhra

KADAPA: A final year female student from the Edupulapaya campus of the Indian Institute of Information Technology (IIIT) here allegedly committed suicide by consuming pesticide, police said on Tuesday. V Bharathi, a native of Kurnool district and student of Computer Science and Engineering, took the extreme step last evening at her hostel room following which she was rushed to the doctor in the campus. PTI
We have a huge crisis in higher education in India

Jamboree, which started from a garage in Delhi, is now coaching 15,000 students across 14 cities in India a year for GMAT, GRE and SAT and also assisting students to gain admission in foreign universities.

Concerned at the growing exodus and lack of credible options in India, Jamboree’s co-founder and managing director, VINEET GUPTA, slowly got involved in Ashoka University as founder and trustee. He spoke to Anjuli Bhargava about the trends in overseas education options, the numbers and the lack of regulation for private universities in India. Excerpts:

Q&A

VINEET GUPTA
Co-founder and managing director, Jamboree

How many students leave India every year for higher studies overseas?
The English-speaking Western countries attract the chunk - so the US, the UK, Australia, and Canada remain big. Ireland and New Zealand have been later entrants. In the past seven to eight years, the big surge has been to Singapore, while Dubai and Middle East have also emerged as options. However, the numbers remain small. Singapore, for instance, has only three large universities and the seats are limited.

Of late, we have started seeing students going to mainland Europe. Both France (Ecole) and Germany have started various courses in English.

The other big change is that students are not restricted to Delhi, Mumbai and other metros. In smaller cities like Jaipur, we (Jamboree) train almost 700 students a year, of which 200-300 manage to get admission. Other small cities like Dehradun, Chandigarh (we coach around 1000 a year) have also come up. We are now in 14 cities in India.

As per our assessment, at the undergraduate level around 40,000 students leave a year. This was around 15,000 in 2008. This is of course a total change from the time when we graduated. In the early to mid-1990s, it may have been a couple of thousands. Affordability, loan availability, exposure and the inability to make it to universities here are some of the push factors.

At the undergraduate level for a certain socioeconomic lot, applying overseas is almost a back-up. It's a given. Our own system is to blame. What do you do with a student who gets, say, 91 per cent or even 85 per cent? The country has virtually no education to offer them. Then if the option is between, say, a Rajdhani college or Wisconsin or UC Berkeley, there is a stark difference in the education gained.

At the postgraduate level, the numbers are far larger. In my opinion, almost 120,000 Indian students leave every year. A large proportion of this go for management courses - I would say around 30,000 - and the rest are for master’s courses. Within the master’s, a substantial number are for higher degrees in computer science, electrical engineering and biotechnology.

At the master’s level, a lot of middle-class families take loans and send students since at this stage the vacuum in India is even higher. There are very few seats at the master’s and doctorate level. Also, rates of return for a masters in a technical field are very high. Students typically take a loan of ₹20 lakh (for a course that costs ₹30 lakh over two years) and when they gradu-