US assures India on TVU students

Washington: The US has assured India that hundreds of Indian students affected by the closure of a California-based “sham” university would be given “fair and appropriate” treatment and their interests would be carefully considered.

The assurance by secretary of state Hillary Clinton came in the form of a letter to Indian ambassador to the US, Meera Shankar.

“In the letter, Clinton emphasized that the US is proud to host over 100,000 Indian students and hopes to increase the numbers in the years ahead,” Shankar told reporters.

Nearly 1,500 Indian students were affected by the closure of Tri Valley University.
Maximum India unleashes its soft power on US

Chidanand Rajghatta | TNN

Washington: Some of Washington DCs cognoscenti still remember Bundu Khan Langa. With his brilliant smile and colorful safa, the oversized Rajasthani turban, the young folk singer would send titters through the audience, exhorting them to “shiliitt downshiliitt down,” so he could start his performance.

Once he began, the crowd on the grassy mall in front of the Capitol would end up spellbound, hushed by the soulful melodies that essayed from then 14-year old genius.

It was an event that made Langas and Manganiars, the Rajasthani desert singers, famous, and unleashed the cultural strength and variety of India on the US and the world five years before the term “soft power” was coined by Harvard University’s Joseph Nye.

Some 25 years after the great Smithsonian Institution’s Festival of India, it is now the turn of Washington’s other grand cultural establishment, the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, to host an India festival at a time the country and its cultural muscle and depth hardly needs any introduction.

Maximum India, a 20-day cultural extravaganza of Indian soft power, kicks off here on March 1 with scores of artistes set to enthral a capital where India is now looked on more favorably than ever before.

A recent Gallup Poll put India among Canada, Britain, Japan and ahead of China, and even Israel — as countries rated favorably by Americans. Indias strategic partnership with the US has much to do with it, but underpinning that is a cultural bonding that has come a long way since 1985 when America got a sustained taste of India.

In recent years, Kennedy Center has hosted a China Festival, an African Odyssey and an Arabian extravaganza even as memories of the great Festival of India had begun to fade. Fortunately, New Delhi responded with alacrity to Kennedy Center’s initiative to drum up the India beat again.

The result is a fiesta that will brighten up Washington DC’s cultural calendar in the fading days of winter.
381 get PhDs at DU convocation
139 Medals Awarded, Over 400 Parents Watch Webcast Of Event

New Delhi: Delhi University awarded 381 PhDs and 139 medals to meritorious students in its 89th convocation held on Saturday. It was also the first for professor Dinesh Singh as the vice chancellor of the university. Union minister for human resource development and telecom, Kapil Sibal, delivered the convocation address as the chief guest and urged those passing out of DU to work hard while keeping their ethics and values intact.

"Today commercialization of our education has not only lowered ethics and moral values, but it has also generated a plethora of problems which with the passage of time will hollow our system of education. Ironically the purpose of education has generally been reduced to merely acquiring a certificate or a degree which can help a person in getting a job with high income. The rush for short cuts to achieve economic prosperity has pushed moral values in the background," Sibal said.

He added education has become so commercialized that seats in many private institutions and colleges are literally for sale. "We have witnessed in recent times the fall of once large and proud international and national corporations, well-known personalities, politicians and sportspersons, due to their greed," Sibal said.

This time, more than 400 parents accompanying the graduates were seated separately in the university's conference centre from where they watched the live webcast of the proceedings in the Convention Hall of Vice Regal Lodge. Rakhi Chandel, who pursued BSc life sciences from Maitreyi College, received the vice-chancellor's gold medal while Divya Chauhan, who has completed MSc statistics from Hindu College, received five medals. Hindu College students led the pack with a total of 19 medals.

Google tweaks search to weed out drivel

Claire Cain Miller

In a tacit admission that web publishers are flooding its search engine with low-quality pages, Google has revised its methods to improve the usefulness of its results.

Google said the change would raise the rankings of high-quality websites and reduce those of lesser sites, affecting 12% of search queries. Sites known as content farms, which churn out sometimes mindless articles based on what people are searching for, have recently worked their way to the top of search results, frustrating some Google users. High rankings in search results are crucial because they allow Web sites to get more traffic and bring in more business, either through sales of goods and services or through advertising. "I haven't seen as much negative attention on Google's results as I have in the last month or two -- it's been fairly unprecedented," said Danny Sullivan, editor of search engine land and an industry expert.

Persuading users that it has the best results is crucial for the dominant player because its technology produced better results for users. If people begin to doubt the quality of its results, Google risks losing them to competitors.

While so-called content farms can provide useful information, many of their articles are of questionable value but achieve high rankings in searches. For example, an "How to make friends in college includes tips like "consider joining a sorority or fraternity" and "remember to have a good time, smile and laugh." NYT News Service
Feb. 26: Union human resource development minister Kapil Sibal expressed his concern over the maddening commercialisation which is fast sapping the moral values out of our education system. Addressing the 88th annual convocation of Delhi University here on Saturday, Mr Sibal exhorted the students to be educated in the true sense and not aim at merely earning degrees.

"The commercialisation of education has shadowed ethics and moral values and hollowed our education system. Ironically, the purpose of education has been reduced to merely acquiring a degree. Education has become a highly remunerative business and it thrives on raising the income expectations of students," he said.

"The greatest education is not only what you have learnt here, but in knowing how to learn. The degrees will help you to make a living but it is your education that will help you to find a life."

Mr Sibal asserted that the youth can change the image of the country from a nation of holidays to one of people who enjoy work.

"We need to become a nation of hard workers... Hard work not resources helped Japan rise up after the devastation of World War II. We need to change the perception of India being a nation of holidays to one of people who enjoy work," Mr Sibal said.

"The Indian economy is booming. India has the most favourable growth path with 50 per cent of the population below the median age of 25. The world has shrunk like never before and knowledge has acquired a new significance and intellectual capital has become the prime mover of organisations and nations," he said.

"Defending the government functioning, he said that the system works in a transparent manner, while critics may argue that we are most corrupt and irresponsible."

The function was presided over by vice-chancellor Prof. Dinesh Singh. Over 190 students were conferred medals and prizes. Over 384 Ph.D. degrees were given away on the occasion. The undergraduate and graduate degrees were conferred in absentia.
Beware of commercialisation of education: Sibal

381 students awarded degrees at DU convocation

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Union HRD Minister Kapil Sibal on Saturday said that young Indians should be on guard against the negative fallouts of commercialisation of education that was pushing moral values to the background. Addressing the annual convocation of Delhi University, Sibal also asked the students to become the agents of change.

"Education has become commercialised to such an extent that seats in many private colleges are virtually put up for sale; the students have failed to understand the real value of education."

Sibal said that never before was a time when things were so good, it is also a time of the most favourable demographic condition as greater than 50 per cent of our population is below 25 years of age. Sibal spoke after Vice-Chancellor Professor Dinesh Singh awarded doctorate degrees to 381 candidates from various disciplines including Humanities, Science, Medicine, Social Sciences, among others.

"Students need to understand the real value of education over and above its commercial value. Degrees will help you in getting a job but education will help you in leading a good life. This is a time when the country is facing turmoil and inequities, the challenges seem insurmountable. But with good education and good values, we can overcome that," Sibal, who was the chief guest of the occasion, said.

The gold medals were awarded to the university toppers at the graduate and post-graduate level. Sibal said, "We need to become a nation of hard workers. Hard work not resources helped Japan rise up after the devastation of World War II."

Once again proving that girls are not only at par, but are even ahead of their counterparts in academics, the ambitious and competitive young women bagged more gold medals than the boys at the 88th Annual Convocation Ceremony of Delhi University on Saturday. Of the total 188 awards including 139 medals and 49 prizes awarded to students at the ceremony, more than 120 awards went to the women students of the university.

Divya Chauhan who won five gold medals stood out from the rest. Divya said that the inspiration and driving force behind her achievement was the desire to fulfill her father's wish of her becoming a top officer. Having an impeccable academic career so far, she has always been amongst the top layer of students throughout her school and college days. Divya completed her graduation from Kirori Mal College in Science stream and is also a guest faculty at the Hindu College currently. Divya recently sat for an entrance test for Indian Statistical Studies and disclosing her future plans said, "It is very essential to perform consistently throughout the year. This is my success mantra. I just want to live my father's dream now."

Pro Vice-Chancellor Vivek Suneja, Dean of Colleges Sudish Pachauri, Director South Campus Umesh Rai and Dean of Students Welfare SK Vij were also present at the ceremony.
Easy wheels
An affordable electric wheelchair will soon be available in India for people with disabilities

SHEEHAN SADLER

An electric wheelchair that’s made in India and is affordable is also where given the Green Gables project at the Indian Spinal Injuries Centre (ISIC), Niraj Upadhyay had been working on for the last three years. We have done it up with the University of Pennsylvania.

A successful trial has already been held in India. “Even on the back of the UK, we’re thinking about our IIs and their approval, so it’ll finally reach India. With the help of the manufacturers, we’ll market it,” says 34-year-old Upadhyay, who also established engineering technologies and has been working with the Aeronaut Technology Department since inception. The wheelchair, which costs Rs 30,000, is designed in such a way that it can be used at home and in most areas as well.

There are no such wheelchairs available in India yet. The electric ones are imported from abroad and are available from Rs 10,000 onwards, which becomes exorbitant. The wheelchair weighs Rs 50,000, says Upadhyay. 

Upadhyay, along with a team, invented a designing innovation device for people who are affected by spinal cord injuries to help them become independent.

Upadhyay belongs to the Indian Institute of Design from Kanpur University. After that, I worked from 2004 to 2005 as an NID — the Indian Council of Arts and Literature — where I was an executive officer. I used to work there for the disabled and the elderly.

After working on this field, and started looking for professional success in the area.
BHUBANESWAR
IIT DIRECTOR
UNDER SCAM
SCANNER

Charu Sudha Kasturi
charu.kasturi@hindustantimes.com

NEW DELHI: The director of the Indian Institute of Technology Bhubaneswar is drawing on medical facilities from both his IIT and from IIT Kharagpur where he was deputy director till 2008, drawing allegations of misusing public resources.

IIT Bhubaneswar director Madhusudhan Chakraborty is arguing that he has not violated any norms, but top government officials told HT his claims were incorrect.

A senior professor at the Netaji Subhash Institute of Technology (NSIT) in Delhi has complained to B Muthuraman, the chairman, board of governors of IIT Kharagpur against Chakraborty for using IIT Kharagpur resources while heading IIT Bhubaneswar.

Documents sent with the complaint to Muthuraman show Chakraborty seeking specific medicines from IIT Kharagpur in his capacity as Director, IIT Bhubaneswar.

Chakraborty said he was drawing on medicines and consultation from IIT Kharagpur since “they know my medical history and are the best judge for medication administration.”

The IIT director argued that he also needed to use medicines facilities at IIT Bhubaneswar in emergencies when consultants were unavailable at IIT Kharagpur. Chakraborty claimed he was entitled to use medical facilities from both institutes. But top officials at the HRD ministry questioned his claim, dismissing his argument that an official can draw benefits from two institutions.
IIT-K bid to ensure healthy indoor environment

Lucknow: Indian Institute of Technology, Kanpur (IIT-K) is engaged in developing a technology to be used in formulating a device to clear indoor air pollution. The premier engineering institute aims at ensuring healthy indoor environment at economical rates.

Talking to *The Pioneer*, Head of the Centre for Science and Technology, IIT, Prof Mukesh Sharma said that most of the devices available at present to clean the air did not remove all pollutants. “Our focus is on to remove more carcinogenic pollutants that cause breathing problems. Once the technology is developed, we would like to produce it in a device form,” said Sharma, who was in the city to deliver keynote address at a national conference at Isabella Thoburn (IT) College on Wednesday. Talking about the surveyed data of selected cities and villages of Kanpur city, Sharma revealed it had surfaced that urban slum areas were more polluted than villages.

“More so, the indoor air in villages is more polluted than the air outside. The reason for this could be that food is still cooked on chulhas,” Sharma said. 

*PNS*
TARDY IMPLEMENTATION OF UPA GOVT'S CHILD CARE LEAVE SCHEME

DU authorities accused of gender bias

KRITI NATH JHA

NEW DELHI, 26 FEB: Delhi University authorities have been accused of gender bias because of the allegedly tardy implementation of the child care leave (CCL) scheme introduced a few years ago. The UPA government's CCL scheme allows women employees in all departments to avail of up to two years paid leave for looking after two children of the age of 16 on the basis of Commission recommendation. The University Grants Commission (UGC) followed suit, directing universities to implement the CCL scheme in letter and spirit immediately.

However, Delhi University (DU) appears to be scaling this provision of offering two years paid leave to female teachers in various colleges and university departments. Colleges were asked to ap- point substitute teachers in place of teachers whose CCL had been granted for the specified period but there is a reluctance by the authorities to do so. The UGC regulations on service conditions dated 30 June 2010 provide for replacement by part-time/guest teachers against women teachers taking CCL for a period beyond 45 days.

"But it is disturbing that the DU administration (through a letter by assistant registrar, establish- ment) had issued a communication dated 17/19 January, 2011 in violation of the UGC regulations, asking colleges to replace any replacement by part-time/guest teach- ers," said the president of Delhi University Teachers Association (DUTA), Prof Aditya Naranjan Misra.

The letter said to the head of the department of mathematics from the assistant registrar asked him to look into specific recommendations in order to consider the request for CCL by Dr Anupama Pan- dry, assistant professor in the same department. "The teaching work of the department would not suffer during the period of leave and no substitute would be appointed/provided against the CCL," read the letter. Prof Misra maintained that a noti- fication had already been issued on 15 January 2009 for compliance with the CCL scheme so there was no need for a fresh notification.

The DU registrar, Mr R K Sinha, said the university is not concerned with implementation of the provisions of CCL and set guidelines in this regard. "It depends on various colleges and university de- partments to grant the CCL to female teachers and appoint their substitutes or guest teachers," Mr Si- nha said.

"Besides, the CCL seems to exist only on paper. According to sources, colleges are making a mockery of implementation of CCL. Many women teachers were denied leave as their work could not be distributed among colleagues and the colleges expressed helplessness in getting guest teachers," said a DU insider.

"In fact, colleges and university departments show little or no interest in appoinding substitutes for teachers seeking CCL. It is nothing but gender bias against close to half the teaching force in the DU. Only colleges like St Stephen's, Hansraj and Sri Venkateswara are appointing guest teachers," added sources.

"We have appointed a guest teacher for one teacher who availed CCL a few months back. There is absolutely no problem of implementation of this special leave facility in our college," said the principal of St Stephen's college, Dr Yashon Thampu. The UCG chairman, Prof S K Thorat, was unavailable for comment.

Financial Express 27/02/2011 P-2

Globalise your business with a perceived core

Shomilt Sengupta

When you have money, you can go where- ever you want, but with a single brand it is tough. Do and customers know that L'Occitane/Le Joli/Oriflame/Orsal brands like Carter, Rosell, Van Gogh and Arpela. Planet, Mont Blanc are all part of a global business without believing in expanding their business in the established provinces. In global business, the core is that in India today, not driving with perceived care becomes a stigma.

Nobody prohibits an entrepreneur from entering multiple industries. The problem is that when you have a single brand, you have to make a change. Do and customers know that L'Occitane Le Joli Oriflame Orsal brands like Carter, Rosell, Van Gogh and Arpela. Planet, Mont Blanc are all part of a global business without believing in expanding their business in the established provinces. In global business, the core is that in India today, not driving with perceived care becomes a stigma.

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India Inc learns to teach

Whether it’s Gautam Adani’s infrastructure institute or Kishore Bhyani’s Future Innuvory, business houses seek to overcome manpower shortage in sunrise sectors by getting into niche business management education

Rajendra Prasad Nadda
Director, Indian Institute of Management Delhi

The NEXT FIVE YEARS ARE EXPECTED TO THROW UP FIVE MILLION JOBS IN THE TERTIARY SECTOR AT THE ENTRY LEVEL, WHERE WE‘LL NEED THOUSANDS OF TRAINED MANAGERS

As competition increases, the differentiation in management education will not only proceed in the direction of quality, but also sectoral or niche specialization

It’s not only the corporates who are entering the education arena to create niche management schools—specific to their areas of operations and expertise. Even Ignou has, in a novel initiative, set up a centre exclusively for niche courses catering to the requirements of inclusive India

Mukesh Banerjee
CEO, Patanjali Development

A lot of corporates are entering the education arena, leading not only to the corporatization of education, but also to the formulation of courses driven by the industry demand

Financial Express ND 27/02/2011 P-6
Google changes how it searches web to get ‘quality’

Google Inc said it changed the way the company ranks web searches to feature more “high-quality” sites, following criticism that its results favored information of little value to users.

The change to Google’s algorithms, which is relied on to discern what users want, was tested when they searched the web, affected 12 per cent of queries, the company said.

Google made the changes this week, aiming to give higher rankings to sites with original content, in-depth reports of “thoughtful” analysis. The update is designed to reduce rankings for low-quality sites — sites which are low-value added for users, copy content from other websites or sites that are just not very useful,” the company said in a blog posting late Thursday.

Google, which gets most of its sales from search-engine advertising, has received complaints that sponsors and websites game its system to receive prominent placement. The company has made other changes to recent months aimed at quelling concerns over so-called content farms, which tailor information in such a way that it takes precedence in results.

"People are asking for even stronger action on content farms and sites that consist primarily of copycat or low-quality content," Mountain View, California-based Google said in its blog last month.

**Demand media**

Companies such as Demand Media Inc, a content farm that uses an army of freelancers to generate material, needed Google to bring traffic to their sites, said Danny Sullivan, the editor-in-chief of search-analysis firm Search Engine Land. Demand Media’s initial public offering in January put a spotlight on content farms, and Google’s latest changes could affect their performance, he said.

"What it does mean for them is they are definitely on notice," Sullivan said. "If they have adver content, Google is going to try to take out that content. If they're getting some of the revenue — or significant amounts of their revenue — from adver content, then it’s going to go to their bottom line.

Larry Page, Google's executive vice president of media and operations, said Google's changes hadn't had a big effect so far on its content and media business. "It's impossible to speculate how those or any changes made by Google impact any online business in the long term — but at this point in time, we haven't seen a material net impact," Page said in a blog post.

**Stock reaction**

Demand Media's stock dropped as much as 7.8 per cent today following Google's announcement, before rebounding. The shares closed up 36 cents at $22.96 on the New York Stock Exchange. They have risen 33 per cent since their debut last month.

Google advanced $1.23 to $610.04 on the Nasdaq Stock Market. The shares have climbed 27 per cent this year. The company also has faced questions about retail sites boosting their search results. The New York Times reported earlier this month that J.C. Penney Co artificially increased its ranking on Google for a range of product categories. The retailer has since terminated its relationship with the consulting firm that worked on its search performance, said Darius Brossard, a spokesman for Penney.

Texas-based J.C. Penney, the company also has taken down more than 2,000 Web links that were set up to boost its results, she said. The links weren't authorized by J.C. Penney, and the site saw no financial benefit from the higher search results, Brossard said.

**Overstock.com**

The Wall Street Journal raised similar questions about Overstock.com Inc, saying Google was penalizing the e-commerce site by moving its links down in search results.

The site was enabling university webmasters to provide discount links to students and faculty, which Google didn’t believe should influence its algorithms. Overstock CEO Patrick Byrne said in an e-mailed statement.

The e-commerce company discontinued the program and worked aggressively to pull down or deactivate the links, he said.

Google also faces more competition from Microsoft Corp’s Bing search engine. Google's market share of US queries dropped to 65.6 per cent in January from 66.6 per cent the previous month, according to ComScore Inc. Bing accounted for 13.1 per cent of searches in January, up from 12 per cent.

Early this month, Google announced a feature for its Chrome Web browser that lets users block unwanted sites from search results. Feedback from that effort didn’t influence the latest changes, though the adjustment does appear to play down many of the sites that users were blocking, Google said in the blog posting.

"At this point, anybody providing content and making money from it is highly dependent on the traffic from Google," said Walt Whitman, an analyst with Stanford, Connecticut-based Gartner Inc. "Any content provider is reading that blog entry exhaustively."