New Delhi: HRD minister Kapil Sibal announced here on Friday that a network of universities, forming a meta-university, will allow students to pick courses from across disciplines from different institutions from the coming academic session (2012-13).

He explained that this would reinterpret the concept of a university as not just a traditional, physical space of learning, but as a repository of knowledge and information that can be delivered in multiple ways and can be accessed from anywhere and anytime.

Addressing a conference on 'One Globe 2012: Uniting Knowledge Communities' organized by US-India Business Council, Sibal said: "The 21st century meta-university will be a network and an ecosystem rather than a single brick and mortar space. Though internet and technology are fundamental to the conception of meta-university, at the crux is not a new technology but a 'new pedagogy' that is more in tune with the requirements of the society of the 21st century."

Referring to the PM's announcement on formation of a meta-university with the broadband backbone linking institutions of excellence in specific fields of knowledge, Sibal added: "To give this idea a shape we have mounted a National Mission on Education through ICT to link in 25,000 colleges and 2,000 polytechnics for enabling e-learning and content sharing."

The minister said there is a need to open doors to reputed foreign education institutions to usher in global competition in the higher education sector as well as to expand its base. He said the government is seeking to open up establishment of foreign colleges in India through enactment of a Foreign Education Providers' Act, which will allow for 100% FDI in higher education.
Needed Urgently: An Education Revolution

Kanti Bajpai

No country has transited from being poor and backward to being rich and developed without an education revolution. We in India are busy boasting about our economic growth rates and geopolitical rise but have lost sight of the deep weakness of our society. The results of the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2009+ test, in which Indian students from Himachal Pradesh and Tamil Nadu took, are an indication of the abysmal state of our education system.

Here are the results from these two states. In reading competence, of the 74 regions worldwide participating in PISA 2009+, Himachal Pradesh and Tamil Nadu beat out only Kyrgyzstan in Central Asia. In mathematics, the two states again beat only Kyrgyzstan. In science, the results were even worse; Himachal Pradesh came in last, behind Kyrgyzstan, while Tamil Nadu finished 72nd.

Of course, when we in India get bad news in terms of global comparisons, we have the usual reactions. The first reaction is to shoot the messenger: the person or organisation giving us the bad news must be anti-Indian or have a hidden agenda. The second reaction is to become methodological purists: question the nature of the test, the sample taken, the statistics used, and so on. The third and worst reaction is nativism and exceptionalism: India has its own way, its own genius and its own time horizons.

So I have heard responses to the PISA result that go something like this. Indian education is unique and is not geared to foreign tests. Indians are “essentially” clever and the tests don’t pick up the “jugaad” culture of India. There is a deep wisdom in the humblest Indian, and literacy, numeracy, comprehension and problem solving are not true education. Finally, it is too soon to pass judgment on Indian education. We in India do things gradually.

Perhaps this is all correct. Or perhaps we just don’t want to face reality. I have been in school and university education in India since 1989. And I can say, in all earnestness, that the PISA results do not surprise me at all even if they are not completely accurate (would it really make a difference if Himachal Pradesh and Tamil Nadu had ranked 60th out of 747?). Incidentally, there are Indian studies carried out by respected groups such as Pratham that bear out the basic conclusions reached by the PISA test.

Let’s face it. Our school system, vocational education (such as it is), colleges and universities are in a shambles. At independence, India would have ranked much higher in Asia. Today its education system has fallen massively behind. Our universities certainly were at the top of the pile in Asia in 1950. Today, not a single Indian university ranks in the top hundred institutions of the world while there are over a dozen Asian universities on that list. Even amongst Asian IT and engineering universities, India has only half a dozen out of the top 50 institutions – when India is the second most populous country in Asia and, on a purchasing power parity basis, the third biggest economy after China and Japan.

Why such a mess? The central government, committed to spending 6% of GDP on education, spends 4%. Then there is the quality of teachers. Finland, which tops the PISA rankings, recruits its teachers from the top 10% of its graduates (yet does not pay them exorbitantly); I shudder to think where we get our teachers from. Thirdly, there is the accountability problem. The government, pays their salaries, and cannot get them to perform. And this is when government teachers are paid twice the salary of private school teachers. Why the lack of accountability? The teachers’ unions are too strong, legal protections for teachers seem unassailable and the government just does not have enough to challenge either.

The problems of our colleges and universities merit a separate column altogether, but government interference in their workings is a large part of the problem. Having said that, the ordinary Indian too is to blame, especially those who are educated and well off. Until we insist on high quality education for all Indians, little will change. PISA 2030 will be the same story as PISA 2009.
Aakash Tablet
Dawn of a new era

Revolutionary as the Aakash tablet is, it is a means to an end—greater and more inclusive education. Of greater significance is the government's need to bolster rural internet connectivity to harness the full potential of the low-cost tablet.

Aakash has an intuitive, easy-to-use interface that helps in providing a user-friendly and enriching learning experience to students. Easy usability of the device helps rural students—those who have never had access to such computing devices before—who are used to traditional methods of learning. The device offers a computing experience that is familiar and comfortable for them.

With the affordable price, this initiative by the Government of India is aimed at providing students access to the latest technologies, which can dramatically improve their learning outcomes. The device is designed to be affordable and accessible to students from all walks of life, ensuring that everyone has equal access to quality education.

The Aakash tablet is equipped with a powerful processor and sufficient storage to run educational applications and access the internet. It can run all the necessary software tools and applications required for learning, making it an ideal tool for students.

The tablet has internet access, which allows students to connect to the vast online learning resources available. It can be used for research, accessing educational materials, and communicating with teachers and peers.

In conclusion, the Aakash tablet represents a significant step forward in providing access to quality education to students in rural areas. It is an innovative solution that addresses the need for affordable and accessible technology in education, thereby making a substantial contribution to the improvement of learning outcomes and overall development.

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Tailor-made IIT course to train engineers for metro rail
Sandeepa Somani

Chennai: IIT-Madras has started a postgraduate diploma programme in metro rail engineering and management in association with Chennai Metro Rail Ltd (CMRL). The first batch of students of this customised course will pass out in a few months and join CMRL.

"We need qualified people who can handle both the technical and management sides of the operations. The one-year course will help us get a talented workforce for the future," said a senior CMRL official.

The BTech graduates who are doing the course learn the nuances of contract management, including how to float tenders for projects. "There are a lot of management lessons and I am applying whatever I learn as soon as I start working," said S. Bhuvan, a student.

The technical aspects are equally important. "It is a highly specialised field that needs engineers who have a good understanding of civil, mechanical, electrical, and electronics and communication engineering," said R. G. Robinson, associate professor, civil engineering, IIT-M.

The course has been structrured so that students will learn more about these streams.

Apart from IIT professors, retired Indian Railways professionals have been roped in to provide training in signalling and station design.

The only other institution that offers a similar course is IIT-Delhi, which has been running a programme in association with Delhi Metro Rail Corporation for about two years.

"The first batch, which will pass out in July 2012, will work for CMRL for the next 18 months. Students find it attractive as it is an core engineering area and the metro system is being up in many Indian cities," said Robinson.

For more information, please visit https://www.chennai.merit.org

The author: Sandeepa Somani
Practice: TIMES GROUP
Indian student accuses Harvard of race bias

Washington: An Indian-origin student has leveled allegations of racial discrimination against two prestigious American universities — Harvard and Princeton — in their admission policy, prompting a probe by US authorities. The unnamed Indian-American student, who was among the top students in his California high school class and whose family originally came from India, filed the complaints against the two institutions. Acting on the complaint, the US education department is probing whether the Harvard and Princeton Universities discriminate against Asian-Americans in undergraduate admissions, Bloomberg reported.

The department’s office for civil rights is investigating a complaint it received in August that Harvard rejected an Asian-American candidate for the current freshman class based on race or national origin, a spokesman said. The agency is looking into a similar August 2011 allegation against Princeton as part of a review begun in 2008 of that school’s handling of Asian-American candidates, said the spokesman, citing department policy. The new complaints, along with a case appealed last September to the USCCS, challenging preferences for blacks and Hispanics in college admissions, may stir up the longstanding debate about whether elite universities discriminate against Asian-Americans, the nation’s fastest-growing and most affluent racial category, the report said. Harvard “does not discriminate against Asian-American applicants,” and doesn’t comment on the specifics of complaints under federal review, spokesman Jeff Neal said.

US mulls H-1B revamp to woo skilled workers

Amidst pending immigration reform, the US has proposed several steps — including changes in the F-1 and H-1B visas — to attract foreign skilled workforce, a move likely to benefit professionals from counties like India.

New habitable planet discovered

Washington: International astronomers said on Friday they have found a new potentially habitable planet outside our solar system with temperatures that could support water and life about 22 light-years from Earth.

The team analyzed data from the European Southern Observatory about a star known as GJ 667C, which is known as an M-class dwarf star and puts out much less heat than our Sun.

However, at least three planets are orbiting close to the star, and one of them appears to be close enough that it likely absorbs about as much incoming light and energy as Earth, has similar surface temperatures and perhaps water.

The new rocky planet, GJ 667Cc, orbits its star every 26.15 days — meaning its year equals about one Earth month — and has a mass at least 4.5 times that of Earth, according to the research published in Astrophysical Journal Letters.

“[This planet] is the new best candidate to support liquid water and, perhaps, life as we know it,” said Guillem Anglada-Escude who conducted the research. The theory about water, however, cannot be conformed until astronomers learn more about the planet’s atmosphere.

Other planets circling the same star — which is part of a three-star system — could include a gas-giant and an additional super-Earth with an orbital period of 75 days, but more observations are needed to confirm that.
दुनिया की नजर में पीयू है हाई इम्पैक्ट यूनिवर्सिटी
दुनिया में 380, भारत में आईआईटी और आईआईईसी के बाद तीसरे स्थान पर

आईआईटी कानपुर और इंतजाम इंटरनेट ऑफ़ साइबर कंपानी ही है।
पीयू का दर्जा आईआईटी रंगी, आईआईटी खड़कपुर और सुंदर से भी ऊपर है। आईआईटी मंदिर चौथे, रंगी पंचवे और खड़कपुर एवं सुंदर को छहवें स्थान पर रखा गया है। हाई इम्पैक्ट यूनिवर्सिटी में यूनिवर्सिटी अफ़ सीनीकेट को दुनिया की सर्वश्रेष्ठ साइबर इंटरनेट का दर्जा दिया गया है।

साइबरिक तर्क इंसान इंडिया ने बताया नंबर 1
साइबरिक तर्क इंसान इंडिया के करेंट ट्रेंड में पीयू को साइबर के शेख में नंबर 1 यूनिवर्सिटी का दर्जा दिया गया है, जबकि साइबर रंगी देक्कर टेकनोलॉजी इंटरनेट के क्षेत्र में काम का रंगी इंटरनेट इंटरनेट के क्रम में पीयू को देश में दूसरे स्थान पर रखा गया है।