Shevgaonkar Rejoins as IIT Delhi as Director


Amid the controversy surrounding his resignation, IIT Delhi Director R Shevgaonkar today joined duty and met a couple of senior faculty members who are understood to have pursued him to reconsider his decision.

Shevgaonkar had gone on leave soon after he tendered his resignation late last year but it has not been accepted by the HRD Ministry.

He remained non-committal during his meeting with the faculties and preferred to wait till he receives some kind of communication from the ministry, sources said.

Members of IIT Delhi Faculty Forum are also expected to meet him soon, they said.

In its resolution passed last week, the forum had said it "unanimously and unitedly extends full support" to Shevgaonkar.

"We vehemently protest the malicious allegations and the politicisation of issues in the press and media," it said.

Shevgaonkar, whose resignation had triggered a controversy, has attributed his decision to some "unforeseen situations".

"Towards the end of the year... Some unforeseen situations developed and I had to decide to step down from my position," he had said in his mail to the faculty and students after he stepped down.

Shevgaonkar, however, did not elaborate on the factors that had led to his decision to quit.

Sources in the HRD Ministry have indicated that faulting the director on the issue of the setting up of an extension research campus in Mauritius would prove counter-productive as it had approval of the Ministry itself and an MoU in this regard was signed in Mauritius last year in the presence of the then HRD Minister M M Pallam Raju.

An enquiry is already underway about the MoU which has been at the centre of the controversy ever since Shevgaonkar quit.
HRD minister pans UGC chief's clarification on foreign trip


NEW DELHI: Reacting to UGC chairperson Ved Prakash's clarification that he had taken permission from then HRD minister Pallam Raju for his visit to Mauritius last year, sources in the HRD ministry said that getting clearance from the minister without the knowledge of the ministry was not the right process, adding that a note prepared by the ministry faults the route taken by Ved Prakash on this count.

This note says, "Normally, the request for going abroad is required to be submitted to the ministry which would examine it on file bringing therein all the perspectives for a judicious decision by the minister. The records of the concerned Bureau in the ministry do not bear out processing of any such approval. Therefore, such an approval cannot be construed as due approval." However, no action has been taken on this note so far.

Ministry sources added that government functionaries going abroad in official capacity are required to take clearance from the Ministry of External Affairs. HRD and MEA records don't "bear out any political clearance having been sought or obtained by UGC chairman."

CHIEF OF DRDO SACKED; HE DOES NOT KNOW WHY

Hindustan Times (Mumbai)

NEW DELHI: The government on Tuesday sacked Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) chief Avinash Chander, putting up the exit order on the Department of Personnel and Training website, even before informing him. “I am hearing this from you. It has come as a shock to me. I haven’t received any order from the government,” Chander told HT exclusively.

The appointments committee of the cabinet (ACC) approved the termination of Chander’s contract with effect from January 31, a good 16 months before it was to end. Strangely, the ACC order was taken off the DoPT website later in the day.

The sacking was first reported by HT on its website www.hindustantimes.com. “It is the government’s decision to end my contract, but I had no indication this was coming. No idea why it has happened,” the 64-year-old said.

The reasons for Chander’s unceremonious exit could not be immediately ascertained but the DRDO had in August come in for sharp criticism from Prime Minister Narendra Modi over delays and cost overruns in key military programmes. Modi had said India had the potential to be a world leader in the defence sector but was being held back by a “chalta hai” attitude. In another snub to him, the NDA government had last year turned down a DRDO request for grant of extension to four senior scientists who had attained the age of retirement. Chander had retired on November 30, 2014 but was to hold charge till his contract expired on May 31, 2016. This was in line with his appointment order issued on May 31, 2013. The government had even issued an order on November 27 last year saying Chander would “continue to be in operation” for the next 18 months — making his sacking on Tuesday all the more unexpected.

As chief of India’s premier defence research agency, Chander also held the posts of scientific adviser to the defence minister and secretary, department of defence R&D. He is credited with shaping India’s strategic missile programme. The DRDO was set up in 1958 to develop indigenous military technology and cut back on arms imports. But India holds the dubious distinction of being the world’s largest weapons importer, sourcing 70% of its requirements from abroad. A search panel headed by the cabinet secretary will pick Chander’s replacement.
Ticket to the IITs, NITs

NEW PROCESS

Common counselling for IITs and NITs can address the issue of vacant seats and offer ‘best choice seats’ to candidates

Gauri Kohli

While the confusion over common counselling for IITs and NITs is clear, it is important to know how the process will work. Education experts have been calling for a common counselling process to address the issue of vacant seats during admission to the IITs and NITs. The Delhi High Court passed an order in August last year which directed the human resource development ministry and the IITs to initiate a common counselling process for the new academic year.

The HC order was passed after a petition was filed by IIT Kharagpur professor Rajeev Kumar who had put forth suggestions before the court on implementation of counselling plans. For facilitating common counselling, Kumar has recommended setting up a single empowered authority, a common board for admissions to IIT and NITs, for admissions. “The IIT and NIT Councils should resolve for creation of the common board. The board must be composed of representatives of the HRD ministry, IITs, NITs, CBSE, and the implementing agency like the Centre for Advanced Computing (C-DAC) or the National Informatics Centre (NIC). Candidates who qualify in JEE (Advanced), are given ranks and are eligible for admission in IITs must be automatically registered by the common board for participation in the admission process. Similarly, candidates who qualify in JEE (Main) and are given ranks must be automatically registered by the common board,” says Kumar in the petition, a copy of which is with HT Education.

As per Kumar’s suggestions, candidates should submit a common preference list of their choices through the web-portal maintained by the common board. Candidates eligible for admissions to both IITs and NITs will be able to enter their choices across these institutes. Those who are eligible for admission only to IITs and only for NITs will submit a list of preferred courses only to those institutions.

The choices will be entered by the candidates in the order of their preferences. The common board will ensure that the candidate gets the best choice in the order of the candidate’s preference. The common board will allocate the seats following admission norms of the IITs and NITs. However, a candidate who can get two seats – one each from the courses offered by IITs and NITs based on the ranks in the two examinations – will be allocated a single seat based on his preferences as given in the entered list of choices, says Kumar in his list of suggestions.

Seat allocation will be done strictly in accordance with the admission norms, as decided by IITs and Central Seat Allocation Board (CSAB)/NITs independently. The common board will issue a single admission offer to each eligible candidate for admissions to IITs or NITs, instead of issuing separate letters for admissions to IITs by an IT, and admission to NITs by the CSAB.

The candidates have to accept the admission offer or withdraw from the allocated seat. In case of NITs, candidates have the option of locking the institute or locking the course, allowing no sliding of the allocated seat. The common board will carry out seat re-allocation, sliding up of the allocated seats for seats remaining vacant because of candidates not accepting these seats. However, instead of independent multiple counselling rounds for IITs and NITs, seat allocation can be done online.

Implementation will be a challenge

Gauri Kohli

Implementing common counselling for IITs and NITs admissions has its challenges. “One challenge is to use two separate merit lists of JEE (Main) and JEE (Advanced) and do an allocation that is optimal for each candidate. An increased level of coordination is needed between the NITs and IITs. New software needs to be developed to permit online entry of choices by the candidates, etc. Work is progressing on schedule on all these fronts and all the challenges are being addressed satisfactorily,” says an IIT Bombay spokesperson.

The court has ordered IIT Bombay to be the organising institution that will implement common counselling. “Common seat allocation will prevent a candidate from accepting more than one seat, which was possible in the earlier system (one in an IIT and the other in an NIT). Consequently, we expect some of the vacant seats to be filled by the new process, since each candidate can accept just one seat. However, this will not solve the problem entirely since students can opt for admission in an educational institute other than NIT or IIT after accepting admission in an IIT or NIT,” says the spokesperson, adding that there is a robust algorithm, vetted by computer science experts, that guarantees an optimal allotment of a seat for a candidate appearing in different entrance exams, based on choices of the candidate. “It offers all candidates to get best choice seats and all institutions to fill all their all seats. The technical committee served in on ‘deferred seat allocation’ algorithm that can amicably resolve seat allocation over two different merit lists (of IIT and NIT) through common counselling window,” says Professor Dhiren R Patel of NIT Surat.
Plea for a common IIT-NIT exam

Rajeev Kumar, professor at IIT Kharagpur, had taken up the issue of a common examination with the human resource development minister in January 2010 along with several other JEE reform proposals. ‘Due to objections in holding a common examination by a small set of people having vested interests, the then minister of HRD along with the Councils of IITs and NITs resolved in June/July 2012 in favour of two separate streams of examinations, namely, JEE (Mains) and JEE (Advanced), for admissions to IITs and NITs. The main objections against a common examination were that the IITs were against factoring of Class 12 examination marks in merit ranking for admissions to the IITs. The IITs favoured a descriptive format for JEE (Advanced) for admissions to IITs. The IIT Council imposed a cap of a total of 1,50,000 candidates in IITs’ JEE (Advanced). This was felt necessary to avoid evaluation of a large number of descriptive answer scripts manually within the available short span of time,’ says Kumar in a recent letter to the HRD minister.

Some of the reasons that enabled Kumar to write to the minister are his observations that ‘non-standard’ Class 12 marks are ‘one of the criteria for admission to IITs’ in 2015. For example, the eligibility criterion for 2015 admissions includes a requirement of 70% marks or above (for general category candidates), or top 20 percentile ranking in Class 12. “Also, the JEE (Advanced) is in multiple choice question (MCQ) format. A cap of 1,50,000 candidates is also unnecessary for an MCQ format examination, which does not need manual evaluation. While the ministry is carrying out an exercise of common counselling for admissions to IITs and NITs, it would be in larger public interest to consider the pending proposal for a common examination for admissions to IITs and NITs,” says Kumar in the letter. He has requested the HRD ministry and the Councils of IITs and NITs to consider this proposal which could be extended to include other Centrally Funded Technical Institutions as well.

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अब आईआईटी में प्रवेश नहीं होगा आसान

आपस्र कंवादत्ता, भिवानी : देशपर के बारहवीं के विश्वासियों के लिए अब आईआईटी ज्बाउट एंट्रेस टेस्ट (जेईई) पास कर पाना आसान नहीं होगा। केंद्रीय माध्यमिक शिक्षा बोर्ड ने अपने पैटर्न में बदलाव किया है। इसको लेकर बोर्ड ने स्कूलों को एक पत्र भी जारी किया है।

आईआईटी में प्रवेश पाने के लिए अब सामान्य, ओब्सीवी एंव एससी-एसटी के विद्यार्थियों को सीनियर सेकंडरी में और मेहनत करनी होगी। सामान्य व ओब्सीवी वर्ग के विद्यार्थी कम से कम 75 फीसद नंबर लाने के बाद ही आईआईटी में दाखिला पा सकेंगे। साथ ही एससी व एसटी और निश्चित अभ्यर्थियों को बोर्ड परीक्षा में 70 फीसद नंबर लाने जरूरी होगा। बता दें कि बोर्ड द्वारा देश की 16 आईआईटी में दाखिले के लिए चार अप्रैल, 2015 को ऑफलाइन व 10 से 11 अप्रैल को ऑनलाइन परीक्षा आयोजित की जाएगी। इस बार जेईई मुख्य परीक्षा में सात राज्यों के विद्यार्थी भाग ले सकेंगे। हरियाणा, ज्वारात, महाराष्ट्र, मध्य प्रदेश, उत्तराखंड, नागालैंड और उड़ीसा से लाखों बच्चों परीक्षा में बैठेंगे। इसमें सक्षमता पाने वाले ही आईआईटी संस्थानों में दाखिले के लिए जेईई एड्वांस परीक्षा में बैठ सकेंगे।
SHORTFALL Old IIMs mentoring new ones can be effective only if the problem of faculty crunch in the existing IIMs is addressed

The government’s plan to set up more Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs) under the mentorship of the old ones is likely to aggravate the faculty crunch in the existing IIMs.

As a mentor institute, the faculty members from older IIMs are supposed to travel to the new IIMs, conduct classes there and fly back to their home institutes. Given the fact that these new IIMs start operating with no faculty members of their own, on an average the mentors need to share a minimum of 18 faculty members, depending on the number of courses in the first year. “Though we need to handhold the new IIMs for a brief tenure, the centre should address the faculty crunch that we are already facing, before they get more IIMs on board,” says Professor Rishikesha T Krishnan, director, IIM Indore. Each new IIM would be requiring about 12 faculty members to start with and about 20 in a year, he adds.
The mentor institutes are supposed to share faculty members with the new IIMs till the new ones are self-sufficient. Unfortunately, the prescribed ratio of 1:10 is not fulfilled by most of the older IIMs. For instance, IIM Indore, which had to mentor IIM Raipur and later IIM Udaipur, has 74 faculty members and 1,450 students on campus. Similarly, IIM Calcutta houses 90 faculty members and nearly 1,150 students; IIM Lucknow has about 1,200 students and 82 faculty members. IIMs Ahmedabad and Bangalore with 1,000 odd students and 107 and 101 full-time faculty members, respectively, and IIM Kozhikode, with 64 full-time faculty members and about 700 students, are doing slightly better.

This shortfall leaves no scope of interaction between the faculty and students beyond classrooms in both the mentor and mentee institutes. “The faculty members are not available when they are needed in mentoring institutes. In mentee institutes, too, students cannot reach out to the faculty members to seek guidance on projects and extracurricular competitions. Faculty should be able to guide students beyond the classrooms. Most IIMs launched in the second round are still dependent on mentors. In a way, the concept of a fully residential programme is been violated,” says an IIM source. With the HRD ministry’s proposition of setting up six more IIMs in Odisha, Bihar, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Punjab and Himachal Pradesh, fighting faculty crunch could worsen, given the problems faced by existing IIMs in recruiting and retaining faculty. The IIMs in Rohtak, Ranchi, Raipur, Trichy, Kashipur and Udaipur set up during 2010-11 started without bare minimum facilities of a campus and faculty members and had to be dependent on older IIMs for support. After five years of existence, these IIMs have been able to recruit 30 faculty members each, on an average. IIM Kashipur and IIM Ranchi have less than 20 fulltime faculty members. Retaining faculty members in Rohtak is a problem because of lack of proper schools and colleges available here, “therefore leaving no scope of settlement of faculty members with their families,” says Professor P Rameshan, director, IIM Rohtak. Faculty recruitment is an on-going process, but basic land and a director should be there before they start a new IIM. Recruiting a few faculty right at the beginning would be a boon, he adds.

“To attract good faculty, an institute should have the capability to offer good consultancy work for them, which we couldn’t, because of the locational disadvantage. Even paying the faculty members was a challenge. The board did not approve extra pay for conducting classes for the executive programmes. We got 50% of our faculty members from our mentor (IIM Calcutta) and the rest from other institutes,” says Professor MJ Xavier, former director, IIM Ranchi. Faculty members from mentor IIMs get ` 10,000 per hour for conducting classes at the IIMs, he added.

To add to this, travelling to any of these new IIMs is an ordeal. This does not only affect mobilisation of industry interaction for students, but is also a time-consuming task for faculty members who need to take classes in two different IIMs simultaneously. “The faculty members are overworked and left with no time for research and upgrading of their own knowledge. They still need to continue as the institute has agreed to mentor a new IIM,” says the IIM source. A considerable amount of the mentor institute’s allocated budget is also spent on travel and boarding of the visiting faculty members. “If they cannot sustain the existing IIMs, why do they have to get newer ones? On financial grounds, the ministry had promised an additional amount of more than ` 100 crore to a few newer IIMs, but with these new institutes opening it has to be seen if the money will come in,” says a highly-placed IIM source.

As per recent developments, IIM Bangalore is set to mentor the IIM to come up in Andhra Pradesh, IIM Calcutta will handhold IIM Odisha, IIM Indore will mentor IIM in Bihar, IIM Lucknow will look after the IIM in Himachal Pradesh, IIM Ahmedabad will take care of IIM in Maharashtra and IIM Kozhikode will be mentoring the IIM in Punjab. “We usually offer support from the admissions process to curriculum design to helping new IIMs set up systems in the first few years apart from, of course, having our faculty teach there too. It is expected of us as an older IIM and we are glad to do this,” says Professor Devanath Tirupati, dean-academic, IIM Bangalore. On similar lines, Prof Saibal Chattopadhyay, director, IIM Calcutta says, “Even our own resource might be a constraint but it is a national call and we will try to mentor them to the best of our ability.”
And, as per talks, the new IIMs coming up in these states are far from city limits with proposed cities including Sambalpur in Odisha, Bodh Gaya in Bihar, Visakhapatnam in Andhra Pradesh, Nagpur in Maharashtra, Amritsar in Punjab and Sir maur in Himachal Pradesh. The issue of connectivity remains an issue. The locations however, are yet to be finalised.
UGC credit scheme is ‘FYUP in 3 years’

Teachers Fear Bigger Debacle, Flay Deadline

Making UGC Guidelines Simple

Definitions

Credit-based semester system: Each is equivalent to 90 days of actual teaching. Award of degree, diploma/certificate determined by number of credits.

Credit: Unit by which coursework is measured. One credit equivalent to one hour of teaching or two hours of practical work per week.

Letter Grade (Index of performance): O (outstanding), A+ (excellent), A (very good), B+ (good), B (above average), C (average), P (pass) and F (fail).

Credit Point: Product of grade points and number of credits for a course.

Semester Grade Point Average (SGPA): Ratio of total credit points secured in various courses and total course credits taken in a semester.

Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA): Ratio of total credit points (over all courses and all semesters) and sum of total credits (all courses and all semesters).

Transcript/Grade Card/Certificate: Grade certificate will be issued to students after every semester. It will display course details, SGPA for that semester and CGPA earned till that point.

Type of Courses
- Core, Elective, Foundation Course (compulsory and elective)
- University can adopt either consider marks obtained by all students or absolute grading (convert marks to grades)
- For non-credit courses, students will get ‘satisfactory’ or ‘unsatisfactory’
- 50% of core course assessment of theoretical component at end of each semester should be by external examiner
- For practical component of core courses, half the examiner should be external
- Project reports, thesis should be evaluated both internally and externally.

New Delhi: The spectre of the four-year undergraduate programme is back to haunt its detractors in Delhi University. Teachers are worried that the University Grants Commission’s letter to vice-chancellors asking them to implement the Choice-Based Credit System from 2015-16—within about six months—will lead to another FYUP-like debacle, this time on a national scale.

“It’s startling how quickly we forget,” says Abha Dev-Habib, teacher-activist and Executive Council member. “The government is refusing to learn from mistakes.”

In December, following MHRD’s instructions, DU formed a committee to create a ‘discussion paper’ on introduction of CBCS. That’s not ready yet. “They should put forth a proposal and invite feedback,” says Dev-Habib. “UGC is assuming the semester system is working,” she adds.

UGC has posted guidelines on CBCS. Teachers commenting online say that, with core, elective and foundation (compulsory and optional) courses, it’s essentially “FYUP in three years”. Teachers are wary of “buffet system” in higher education will mean constant fluctuation in workload and fewer permanent appointments—you can’t predict what students will choose.

But the biggest objection to FYUP was the speed at which it was implemented. Everyone complained of structural problems (the infamous ‘exits’ that made curriculum-design a nightmare), no infrastructure and sub-par courses.

“The UGC cannot give such a dikta,” states M Michael.

Teachers are wary that a ‘buffet system’ in higher education will mean constant fluctuation in workload and fewer permanent positions.

Arunabha, president, Madras University Teachers’ Association. “First, teachers should understand the concept—most of them have been awarding marks all these years—and then visit a few universities.” Madras University already has both semesters and CBCS—introduced in stages. They started in the 1980s.

Aruldhas, president, Madras University Teachers’ Association. “First, teachers should understand the concept—most of them have been awarding marks all these years—and then visit a few universities.” Madras University already has both semesters and CBCS—introduced in stages. They started in the 1980s through the aided colleges switched over to CBCS a couple of years ago. “We first had semester, then choices and choice-based credits. Then the Tamil Nadu state council for higher education brought a template,” says Aruldhas.

It may lead to massive upheaval at Calcutta University. It has 171 affiliated colleges—some in remote areas—and admits one lakh into its undergraduate programmes every year (DU admits 64,000). The semester system is there only in science, tech courses at postgraduate level. “The credit system will benefit students but we don’t have the capacity to introduce it for undergrads,” says vice-chancellor Suranjana Das, adding worriedly. “We have 3,000 undergraduate students, the student-teacher ratio is very poor and we need infrastructure and much more support from government.”

“This will only help students who want to go abroad or join twinning programmes. Within India, we have to work with marks,” continues Dev-Habib. “When there are so few seats, there is no choice. Schooling grades are converted to marks at time of admission. We even have negative marking to help us eliminate. What will you do—admit all candidates who’ve got an A?”
At present, the education system of developed nations is facing a storm created by a new process of delivery of education. It is truly a way of imparting mass education through mega-classes. Colleges and professors are trying this latest form of online teaching known as 'massive open online courses' or MOOCs. Such classes are taught online to a large number of students, with minimal involvement by professors. Typically, students watch short video lectures and complete assignments that are graded either by machines or by other students. That way, a lone professor can support a class with hundreds of thousands of participants.

However, the idea of online courses is not new. In the fall season of 2008, three professors in the US and Canada, namely David Wiley of Utah Brigham Young University, Alec Couros of University of Regina and Stephen of national research council of Canada, launched online courses on different topics to anyone who participated in an open-education course. Presently, those who desire free education can find several sites offering information about MOOCs.

One must realise that there has been access to free online courses on the internet for years, but now the quality and quantity of courses has drastically changed. Access to free courses has allowed students to obtain higher level of education from anyone anywhere, that many could only dream of in the past. This has also changed the face of global education, per se. In a New York Times article entitled "Instruction for Masses Knocked Down, Campus Walls", author Tamir Levin stated, "in the past few months, hundreds of thousands of motivated students around the world, who lack access to elite universities, have been embracing them as a path toward sophisticated skills and high-paying jobs, without paying tuition or collecting a college degree."

Although MOOCs are the latest trend, not everyone agrees that colleges and universities should offer them. Joshua Kim's article in Insight Higher Ed entitled "Why Every University Does Not Need a MOOC" noted that offering free material may not make sense for the individual university. There may also be some issues for students who lack motivation. Since a MOOC is voluntary and there is no penalty for dropping the programme or lagging behind, there may be issues with course completion. Although a student may have received excellent education, there will not be a corresponding diploma or degree.

Indian education system is also caught in the 'MOOCs effect'. The government desires to roll out MOOCs very soon, which would be called Swayam Bharat programme. As expected, IITs and IIMs are quick to pick up funds from the MHRD regarding the same. IIT-Mumbai and IIM-Bangalore have announced the launch of MOOCs with overseas partners. IIT-Kanpur is even developing its own platform called MOOKIT to replace international MOOCs platforms like edX and Coursera. While IIM-Bangalore plans to launch courses on the edX platform in 2015, IIM Indore and IIT-Gandhinagar desire to switch from broadband distance learning programmes to running some courses on the MOOCs platform. IIT-Kharagpur is working on software to grade assignments in MOOCs programme. Professor Mangala Sunder and his team at IIT-Chennai has developed the PRSG online certificate programme which is slightly different from the MOOCs offered courses by renowned universities all over the world. It thus, becomes evident that the Indian education system is struggling to be in tune with this massive change taking place the world over.

However, we must also consider the issues faced by India's higher education system. We are responsible to educate a huge number of students but the most alarming thing that we need to remem-
With rapid digitisation, the education system in the country is going through a change. The challenge, however, is how fast the students and the educators can adapt to the teaching, learning and assessment methods. YOGESH AGARWAL tells you that all this can be made easy with proper planning.

**Education in digital era**

There's no denying that the Internet has dramatically changed the state of education over the past 20 years or so. It brings primary sources into every classroom and allows for more open and rapid communication between teachers and students, among other things. But we've only seen the beginning.

The way to reach out to a great future still has to be thought about. Our challenge is to find ways to change our education system so that the students as well as the educators can take advantage of this rapidly moving digital present, consciously and reflectively.

How do we meet this challenge? Depending on how the educators address the fundamentals of delivering education in their schools and how the added digital age demands a changed mindset about schooling, learning, teaching, and assessment.

At present, a number of our schools suffer from a low-quality education delivery, primarily due to inefficient infrastructure, tiny classrooms and lack of teachers. There exist many activities and processes that schools invest a lot of time and resources in, for example, time-table generation, fee collection, student information management and result generation to name a few.

Digital age is gradually helping overcome the challenges students had been facing for centuries. All these activities have become much easier to be accessed through digitalisation. All these activities can be now automated using ERP software. An ERP automates all such activities and drive efficiencies higher by allowing the schools to divert resources previously being wasted on repetitive and mundane activities.

With this, students can easily access their daily timetables and daily activities. Moreover, it has increased the level of transparency between teachers, parents and their children. Now parents can easily access the daily activities of their children and report cards.

In the Indian education landscape, technology is often considered as an invitation to huge investments in computer peripherals and their maintenance. Schools and institutions are making great efforts to keep up with the new technologies available. However, cloud-based services have made the path relatively easier than to spend a bomb on technical machines. With having cloud technology, educational institutions don't have to invest in any server or other peripherals. All they need is a computer with a web browser and an internet connection. This enables them to upload relevant data on the website and students can easily access the same being at home and while travelling during vacations. Could computing is a permanent aid to all the problems and precisely it has added extreme convenience to students, teachers and parents.

The most useful thing teachers can do to engage students in this digital ecosystem is to provide them a technology enhanced learning experience. This can be done through online lesson planning tools, online homework submission, online assessment, e-books etc. Traditionally, lesson planning is done on paper in the form of teacher's diaries. It also required the teachers to either carry the diaries around or be present at the school premises. With e-lesson planning facility, teachers can define lesson plans for various subjects along with the number of periods required to complete the course material—from anywhere and at any time. On-demand access to lesson plans for parents can lead to better communication and well-managed education delivery.

Cloud computing usefulness and efficiency is beyond our imagination. Working on homework assignments has become extremely convenient for students. The teachers just need to upload the homework assignments on an online portal from anywhere, anytime. The students can work online, cooperate with team members and share knowledge, and be sure that they won't leave behind their homework assignments when they go to school.

Since they are on the web, they can access them. Since technology has been a constant part of our lives, online educational tools are a great way to teach a generation that has been raised on computers. It can ensure that the present 'factory' model of education disappears from the system. This new generation can learn new things and in new ways that those of us who are now adults could never have dreamed of. Cloud technology has indefinitely created a hassle-free environment for everyone which will keep enhancing every day.

(The writer is CEO at Applane Solutions)
Chandrayaan-2 among new ISRO chief’s challenges

Kiran Kumar, who has been appointed head of Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) for the next three years, is known to be unassuming, soft spoken and keeping a low profile. He holds a PhD in physical engineering from Bangalore-based Indian Institute of Science. He has been an ISRO head since completing his higher education in 1975 and is presently the seniormost scientist of the space agency. Kiran Kumar will also be chairman of the space commission and secretary of the department of space replacing Shailendra Nayak.

In ISRO, he is highly regarded for evolving an observation strategy — encompassing land, ocean, atmospheric and planetary studies — first as an associate director at the SAC and subsequently as its director since 2012. The new ISRO chairman has been an important contributor to technologies used by the agency in its satellites and missions — including from the Bhaskara TV payload in the 1980s, the Terrain Mapping Camera and Hyperspectral Imager payloads on the Chandrayaan-1 mission in 2017 and three instruments on the ongoing Mars mission.

According to an ISRO statement, Kiran Kumar has contributed “to the design and development of Electro-Optical Imaging Sensors for Airborne, Low Earth Orbit and Geostationary orbit satellites” as the head of Electro-optical Systems Group within ISRO. He has been involved in the creation of communication, navigation, microwave and remote sensing capabilities on ISRO satellites from the stage of conception to realization.

Kiran Kumar’s contributions to remote sensing technology have won him the Indian Society of Remote Sensing Awards in 1994 and 2007. He has also won the ISRO Individual Service Award in 2006 and an ISRO Performance Excellence Award in 2008. Among his seminal contributions to space science are the study of moon following the maiden Indian moon mission — leading to publication of a research paper documenting the detection of water on the central peak of the Jackson crater using a Moon Mineralogical Mapper. He has represented ISRO at international forums like the World Meteorological Organisation and Committee on Earth Observation Satellites.

As he takes charge, the responsibilities facing Kiran Kumar are realisation of Chandrayaan-2 mission where India will attempt to land an indigenous rover on moon, development of the heavy lift GSLV Mk III rocket and filling up the shortfall in communication transponders for satellite television and communications.

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Worms on ISS offer clues to keep astronauts healthy on space trips

Help Understand Muscle, Bone Loss In Microgravity

Washington: A tiny millimetre-long roundworm may hold the key to keeping astronauts healthy on long-duration space missions, NASA scientists say.

Two Japanese Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA) investigations on the International Space Station (ISS) aim to help researchers find clues to physiological problems found in astronauts, by studying the roundworm Caenorhabditis elegans.

The results could lead to new treatments for bone and muscle loss in astronauts living in space. Findings may also be beneficial to people on Earth suffering from muscle and bone diseases.

“Spaceflight-induced health changes, such as decreases in muscle and bone mass, are a major challenge facing our astronauts,” said Julie Robinson, NASA’s chief scientist for the International Space Station Programme Office at the Johnson Space Center in Houston. We rely on gravity to develop stronger muscles and bones. When gravity is greatly reduced — as in spaceflight — we don’t use those muscles to resist the force of gravity, and muscles and bones can slowly start to deteriorate.

One investigation, scheduled for launch to the station on the SpaceX’s sixth space station resupply mission in 2018, is called Alterations of C elegans muscle fibres by microgravity. It will look into the muscle fibres and cytoskeleton of the roundworm to clarify how these physiological systems alter in response to microgravity.

The space station crew members will grow these worms in microgravity, as well as another batch in one-g (the level of gravity on Earth) using a centrifuge.

This will simulate the force of gravity while the C elegans remain physically in orbit, allowing a direct comparison of the effects of different gravity levels on organisms in space.

A different JAXA investigation currently on station is taking a much closer look at C elegans by examining their DNA.
My resignation is a mark of protest against anarchism: Jadavpur University VC


Kolkata: Jadavpur University Vice Chancellor Abhijit Chakrabarti on Tuesday while addressing a press conference in Kolkata said that his resignation was a mark of protest against anarchism.

Chakrabarti took on the media, for presenting a wrong picture of his. He also blamed a section of teachers of the university for conspiring against him. "I have always taken a soft take, not allowing the police inside the campus. The hope was shuttered by some students and teachers as a mark of protest," he said.

VC Chakrabarti cleared that he had decided to resign not in any political pressure but purely because of the protest that was happening. The VC stressed on the importance of discipline stating that the university and students had become a victim to the political scenario.

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#kolkata #west bengal #jadavpur university #vice chancellor

Chakrabarti moved on to criticise some of the university teachers who according to him had misguided the students not adhering to their real duty. "The situation in JU is gravely intense as the person connected to the university who are agitating do not have an alliance to the constitution of India," said Chakrabarti.
Chakrabarti made it clear that he had no wield against anyone associated with Jadavpur University.

Abhijit Chakrabarti’s resignation from his post came after West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Monday met the agitating students of the university and told them that the vice chancellor had expressed his desire to resign.

Twelve students were on an indefinite hunger strike clamouring for Chakrabarti’s removal since September 17 when the university authorities ordered a police crackdown on a sit-in by students who were demanding an independent investigation into the alleged molestation of a female student inside a hostel.

Mamata met the students who were on hunger strike and first told them that the vice chancellor had expressed his desire to resign. Soon after, she made the announcement that Chakrabarti will resign. This sent a wave of celebration among the students on the campus.

**Intellectual nuptials? IITs, IIMs trend on matrimonial websites**


**Hyderabad:** Apart from marriages based on caste, community, religion apart from financial factors, a new category has now been added to these, one’s professional degree and the institution one comes from.

Some matrimonial platforms and websites only allow alumni of premier institutions like IIT, BITS Pilani, NALSAR, ISB etc. to register, so that the professional clients wont have to plough through thousands of unwanted profiles that are found in traditional matrimonial websites.

“For working professional like me, the academic background and educational qualification of a life partner matter a lot. It is mainly about finding a partner with better understanding,” said Ashima Saxsena, a graduate from Jaipuria Institute of Management (JIM).

“Here the filtering process to find a partner is better as the academic background and profession come before other factors,” said the 27-year old graduate, who got her profile activated on a matrimonial website.

Meanwhile, for an Indian Institute of Foreign Trade (IIFT) graduate, it is about the educational credential of the life partner they are looking for.

“Besides coming across alumni of targeted colleges, we can be assured of the educational credential of the profiles. When I registered with the website, my educational certificates and other documents were sought before activating my profile.”

Meanwhile, the charm of the NRI groom had seen a decline in India since the economic slowdown of 2008, but things are looking up now, say matrimonial experts.

“During the economic slowdown, there were cases when Indians as well as NRIs discreetly mention in their wedding profiles that they were not interested in NRIs, the remaining wouldn’t put ‘NRI’ as one of the options in the preferences. But the demand for NRI grooms, which fell by over 20 per cent after the 2008 global financial crisis, is rising again,” said an official with a website.

These days Indian parents are not averse to “liberal” NRI grooms for their daughters, he added.
Subject expert Sudheer Allam said, “Due to the cases of frauds involving NRIs, some prefer India-based grooms. However, the demand for NRIs will always exist as there are many who want to live in a foreign land.”