Reduce entry barriers for foreign faculty, students, says Nobel laureate

Our Bureau
Chennai, Jan. 18
A liberal immigration law is required to attract foreign faculty and students to work and study at leading Indian educational institutes such as the IITs, according to Nobel Laureate Kurt Wuthrich.

Countries including the US and Switzerland have strong research base thanks to the large number of immigrants. In some of the leading universities in Switzerland, nearly 20 per cent of faculty are immigrants, he told newsmen.

Wuthrich was awarded the top honour in the field of chemistry in 2002 for developing ‘nuclear magnetic resonance spectroscopy’ for determining the three dimensional structure of biological macromolecules in solution. He contributed to significant advances in the technique of using NMR to study protein structure.

He was here to deliver the inaugural talk in L&T Construction-sponsored Nobel Laureate Lecture Series at IIT Madras.

B. Nagarajan, Deputy Registrar (Media Relations & ICSR), IIT Madras, agreed with Wuthrich that India needs a liberal immigration law to attract foreign faculty and students. Government rules and regulations make it difficult for them to come to institutes such as the IITs but private educational institutions can attract them.
IIT student found dead

Special Correspondent

VISAKHAPATNAM: A 26-year-old student of IIT-Mumbai was found dead under suspicious circumstances in a hotel room here on Saturday.

S. Sivateja came to the city a few days ago and checked into a lodge on January 16. He was last seen by the hotel staff when he came out of his room on Friday and asked for a water bottle. Though the hotel staff knocked on his door during lunch and dinner time, he did not respond. On being informed, the police broke open the door and found his body in the bathroom.
इंजीनियरिंग कॉलेजों की रैंकिंग होगी

अमर उजाला खुशी

नोएडा। इंजीनियरिंग में दर्शकों के पूरे कारण कर रहे छात्रों को राह आसान होने जा रही है। देश के बेहतरीन 1000 इंजीनियरिंग कॉलेजों की रैंकिंग तैयार की जायेगी। कारण यह है कि इस रैंकिंग की अमेरिका की 65 साल पुरानी विश्वसनीय संस्था रैंड कॉर्पोरेशन तैयार करेगी।

रैंकिंग से एक कदम आगे बढ़ते हुए इस पूरे प्रोजेक्ट को सर्व ईंजन की तरह भी इस्तेमाल किया जा सकेगा, जिसमें कॉलेज के एज्क्यूटिव फॉकस और एडमिशन से सुधार सही जानकारियों मुहैया कराई जाएगी।

दरअसल, रैंड कॉर्पोरेशन मानव संसाधन विकास मंत्रालय के साथ मिलकर भी काम कर रही है। कई देशों में इस संस्थान के एज्क्यूटिव सिस्टम एवं कई प्रोजेक्ट चल रहे हैं। अब देश की टेक्निकल एज्क्यूटिव में अपनी तरह की यह पहली विश्वसनीय रैंकिंग होगी। इस रैंकिंग का मानक, आधार और जिम्मा रैंड कॉर्पोरेशन का होगा जबकि नोएडा की सेंटर-2 फिल्ड 9डीटॉर मोडिया इसको पेश करेगी।

रैंड कॉर्पोरेशन के वरिष्ठ शिक्षा विभाग मंत्री भारतीय, 9डीटॉर के विद्यालय के मुख्य, मैनेजर सिद्धांत राजपाल ने अमर उजाला के साथ खास बातचीत में इस प्रोजेक्ट की बातें किया। इससे, एडु-रैंड रैंकिंग के नाम से जारी किया जाएगा, जो picker-college.com पर सर्व ईंजन के तौर पर देखी जा सकती है। साथ ही किताबों के रूप में छात्रों की उपलब्ध भी कार रहेगी। नए सेंसर के एडमिशन से पहले अप्रैल-मई में ये छात्रों के बीच होगी।

ऐसे बनेगी रैंकिंग

रैंड कॉर्पोरेशन ने बताया कि यह प्रोजेक्ट न सर्व ही न किसी व्यक्ति विशेष या बिजनेस से प्रभावित होगा। कॉलेजों की जानकारी वैधानिक रूप से जुटाई जा रही है। फॉकस, फिचर और ऐल्स्टेट के आधार पर रैंकिंग तैयार होगी। खास बात यह है कि ऐल्स्टेट के बाद छात्रों को दी जाने वाली जाब, उसका रत, पढ़, तथ्य और तर्क की भी इस रैंकिंग का आधार बनाया जाएगा।
Google eating into Wikipedia page views?

Sabadhi Varma | TIMES INSIGHT GROUP

Wikipedia, the free online encyclopedia used by millions around the world, lost nearly 10% of its page views last year. That's a decline of about 2 billion between December 2012 and December 2013. Its most popular versions are leading the slide: page views of the English Wikipedia declined by 12%, those of the German version slid by 17% and the Japanese version lost 19%.

While Wikipedia's managers think this could be due to errors in counting, other experts feel that Google's Knowledge Graph project launched last year may be gobbling up Wikipedia users.

Indian language versions of Wikipedia are bucking the trend. Hindi page views increased by a huge 34%, Bengali by an even bigger 46% and Malayalam by 32%. Lesser increases were seen in Marathi (4%) and Telugu (1%).

Launched in 2001, Wikipedia is created and edited by readers around the world. It is the world's sixth most visited website, with 533 million unique visitors last year, according to comScore, the independent tracker.

Wikipedia has not yet got its teeth into the problem. Jay Walsh, adviser to Wikimedia Foundation, a California-based non-profit that manages Wikipedia, told TOI that while page views have indeed declined, the data "may contain significant anomalies."

There is a possibility this fluctuation is due to how our servers record mobile traffic data, or how certain applications and services may be accessing our data. We will not make any conclusions about the cause of these page view fluctuations until a thorough review is complete," he said.

Some Internet observers have pointed out that the decline in Wikipedia's page views begins with the launch of Google's Knowledge Graph project in January 2013. Google searches now show summaries on the right hand side of the screen with links to similar topics and images. Those wanting a simple bit of information — say Sachin Tendulkar's date of birth — don't have to leave Google at all as the Knowledge Graph summary will show the date.
Mumbai: Mumbai University's management council on Sunday revoked the suspension order that had been served to economist professor Neeraj Hatekar on January 4 by vice-chancellor Rajan Welukar, exercising his emergency powers.

Hatekar told TOI he was happy and added, "I know I still have to face a departmental inquiry. But I hope that the points I have raised will be taken in a positive light for the better of the university."

At an 11-hour meeting from 4 pm on Saturday, council members discussed the 16 points Hatekar had raised with the media.

The points raised by Hatekar, because of which he was suspended, included the fact that learning material in vernacular languages was unavailable for distance education students, that remedial learning classes had been suspended after a National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) inspection and other administrative and infrastructural issues.

The meeting was called following chancellor R. Sankaranarayanan's order to resolve the issue "immediately". The university had accused Hatekar of "misconduct and moral turpitude". Hatekar moved the Bombay high court against the "arbitrary and illegal" suspension order. "The single-member fact finding committee made a presentation to the management council and on the basis of information and proof, it concluded that Hatekar's allegations were baseless," said a university press note.

"His allegation that salaries of teachers in the university's department were coming from the corpus fund of the university is untrue as salaries come from the joint director's office and the university has documentary evidence. His query on ad hoc appointment of the board of studies is being addressed," a member said.
UGC Should Review All Deemed Universities

By S Vaidhyasubramaniam

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The role of judiciary has shaped the operational contours of government, business, civil society, etc. The essence of jurisprudence tests whether a proposed or committed act by a person or institution is right or wrong as per the law of the land. If right, the court upholds it and if wrong the court strikes it down. The court has under extreme circumstances rightly intervened to put back to normal course various abnormalities. Some are branded judicial overreach and some judicial responsibility. It depends on which side of the fence you are.

Without being on any side of the fence, I have silently observed the judicial and executive proceedings in the battle between deemed universities and the Tandon Committee. The power of the Union of India to constitute the Tandon Committee is the central issue that is intensely litigated in the Supreme Court. Ever since this case was tagged with Vipalav Sharma vs Union of India (142 of 2006) during 2009, 23 interim orders have been delivered by the Supreme Court. Another one was orally pronounced on January 9, 2014, and when available in print format will complete the dual dozen for this long duel. Some more is in the pipeline.

The dispensation of justice has been in dual mode and, to put it in Senior Advocate K M Vijayan’s words, its either “adjudicative or accommodative justice”. The litigation before the Supreme Court in the case of Tandon Committee is still awaiting the court’s final adjudication on the issue whether the composition of the committee by the Union of India is ultra vires. Parliament has conferred University Grants Commission (UGC) the statutory powers to review deemed universities which is now outsourced to Tandon Committee by MHRD. Pending adjudication, the Supreme Court rendered accommodative justice on many occasions maintaining status quo after hearing various parties without adjudicating the issue on the merits of the case. The January 9 order of accommodative justice, in my humble opinion, missed an opportunity to cleanse the deemed university system.

During detailed arguments on January 8 and 9, the Supreme Court ascertained the statutory role of UGC to review deemed universities when it took cognisance of the fact that MHRD did not place the Tandon Committee report before UGC to seek its advice and that the UGC was by-passed. Finally, the Supreme Court ordered UGC to review the entire ‘C’ category deemed universities and while doing so, the Bench raised a valid point that was hijacked by the Additional Solicitor General (ASG), Indira Jaising. The court was concerned about the validity of the Tandon Committee findings as it was based on 2009 data and wanted UGC to do a complete review of all the 120-plus deemed universities. The ASG shot down the idea immediately with her legal ammunition and the opportunity to clean the entire deemed university system was demolished right under the helpless eyes of the UGC counsel.

The court was right. The Tandon Committee report is old and committee members are reported to have resigned. Deemed universities categorised as A are not eternally excellent nor those categorised B can afford to be in a long state of animated suspension. Similarly, those in C are not permanently disabled. No entity, including Tandon Committee report, can outlive its expiry date and the time has come to set right the various anomalies manifest in Tandon Committee findings. UGC’s power to conduct a review flows from its parent Act and it must take clue from the court’s observation to exercise its statutory duty and review all the deemed universities and sanitise the system.
IIT Madras students work on satellite to pre-empt quakes

By Hari Pulakkat, ET Bureau | 20 Jan, 2014, 03.41AM IST

BANGALORE: In spite of all the technological advances of the past few decades, accurate prediction of earthquakes has always been beyond the reach of science. Four years ago, a group of IIT Madras (IITM) students decided to give it a shot of their own. They also chose a method that is not yet proven in scientific and technological terms: send a satellite up to detect radiation from the earth prior to an earthquake.

The satellite-building has now evolved into a large multidisciplinary project involving 150 students and some professors, as well as mentoring from the engineers at the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO).

In a few months, ISRO will do a preliminary design review of the IITM student satellite. Once the design is approved and frozen, the students will begin integrating the satellite components. It will be launched - if ISRO approves the design and agrees for launch - by a Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV) sometime in the fourth quarter of 2015.

Once up in the sky, the 15-kg satellite will look for a sudden precipitation of charged particles -- ions -- that is supposed to be the signature of an impending earthquake. "The students are building something hands on and not just writing reports," says David Koilpillai, the dean and professor of electrical engineering at IIT Madras.

When complete, this will be the third satellite in India to be made in a university. The earlier two launches were challenging projects, but the IITM satellite is different in conception, and it will also try to test a theory not yet accepted by the scientific community. "It is good to work on a project that even industry finds hard," says Akshay Gulati, one of the students who began the project. He has since graduated and become a project staff.

The project began in 2009, after some students heard a lecture by Muriel Richard, an engineer at the Swiss technical university EPFL. "We figured out that no Indian satellite had looked at ions," says Gulati. Within a year, the students had identified the payload and shortlisted four instruments.

Some students went to the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research in Mumbai and watched them build an experimental satellite. But things did not go smoothly. At the end of 2010, two years into the project, many ideas were still not clear and only four students left in the project.

The students then went to David Koilpillai and requested assistance. IIT Madras then became involved at the institutional level and sanctioned 3 crore, most of it to be raised from the alumni. They also assigned some space within the campus for a lab. The students then did a feasibility study and started the design process. They designed some sub-systems, which Isro engineers reviewed. The project also got integrated with MTech thesis: 14 students have n

IIT-M, 5 Universities Tie up for Joint PhD

By Express News Service - CHENNAI

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Universities from China, France, Israel, UK and Canada came together for joint-PhD degree programmes with IIT-Madras recently. The five universities are Université de Technologie de Troyes, UTT of France, Technion – Israel Institute of Technology, National Tsing Hua University (NTHU) in China, University of Waterloo in Canada and University of Liverpool in the United Kingdom.

The joint PhD programme is aimed at developing research with a global flavour in multiple disciplines with doctoral faculty ‘intellectual go-between’ between countries.

UGC extends college principals' tenure from 5 to 10 yrs

New Delhi, Jan 19, 2014, DHNS: Deccan Hearld

Says it's not a mandatory rule but applies to fixed term posts

College principals can now have a 10-year fixed term in their offices with the University Grants Commission (UGC) approving a proposal to amend its regulations which had limited their tenure to just five years on appointment from 2010.

The decision, taken at a meeting of the higher education regulator here last week, has called for an amendment to the UGC (Minimum qualifications for appointment of teachers, other academic staff in universities and colleges and other measures for the maintenance of standards in higher education) Regulations, 2010.

“The commission approved the proposal to extend the tenure, wherever applicable, of the principal from 5 years to 10 years,” UGC sources said.

The decision follows recommendation of a committee set up by the UGC a few years back which favoured increasing the tenure of college principals from five to 10 years to allow states and universities recruit “young and dynamic” people to the position.

At present, principals are appointed for five years and are eligible to be reappointed for one more term.

“The basic objective is to allow states and varsities appoint more young people to the pivotal post. Those deserving should not be unduly excluded on the account of their age and experience, UGC sources added.

The 10-year term of college principals will not be mandatory for all institutions. “It will be applicable to those states and institutions where term of a principal is fixed. There are many states where there is no such concept. So it is basically for the states to decide whether they want to have 10-year term of a college principal or five-year,” sources said.

The UGC move is set to draw flak from the teaching community. When contacted, the Delhi University Teachers' Association (DUTA) vice-president said he was not sure whether any such decision was taken.
“DUTA has always been against such proposals and would continue to oppose it, if UGC has decided to go ahead (with fixed tenures for principals),” he told Deccan Herald. Reiterating The DUTA’s stand on the issue, he said a 10- year fixed term will be detrimental to the interest of colleges, their teachers and students.

“A fixed term of 10 years will make college principals more autocratic. We have always opposed such a suggestion. There was no need to do away with the five year term with eligibility for re-appointment on the basis of their performance,” he added.
Modi unveils ‘mission mode’ strategy for all sectors

Vows to nurture “five Ts,” build IITs, IIMs and AIIMS in every State

Vinay Kumar & Smriti Kak Ramachandran

NEW DELHI: In his address to the Bharatiya Janata Party’s national executive here on Sunday, the prime ministerial candidate, Narendra Modi, spoke of creating a “brand India” and of his plan for the country’s development.

Keeping his speech tightly focused on “good governance,” Mr. Modi said the BJP stood for balanced development in all regions, respected the federal structure in letter and spirit, and would do away with the “big brother” attitude of New Delhi towards States.

His development strategy is to go in “mission mode” in all sectors — industry, the next generation infrastructure, water and gas grids, bullet trains as in Japan, healthcare, education, agriculture, tourism, urbanisation, the setting up of 100 smart cities, and IITs, IIMs and AIIMS in every State.

For “creating a brand India,” he would nurture “five Ts” — talent, tradition, tourism, trade and technology. If nurtured properly, he promised, these would catapult India to the top in the comity of nations. His idea of India, Mr. Modi said, was based on truth, non-violence, service to the poor, respect for women, and was not confined to any one person or entity.

Taking his cue from the Aam Aadmi Party, he asked the cadre to go on a door-to-door campaign for funds, setting an outreach target of 10 crore families. “I am sure people will happily donate funds when you tell them that a ‘tea vendor,’ who has no possessions of his own, is contesting elections.”

Mr. Modi questioned the Congress for “flouting” parlia-

mentary, democratic traditions in naming Jawaharlal Nehru as Prime Minister when the party was unanimous in its support for Sardar Patel, then choosing Rajiv Gandhi as Prime Minister in 1984 after Indira Gandhi’s assassination, and in 2004 when party MPs chose Sonia Gandhi, who in turn nominated Manmohan Singh to head the government.

Criticising Dr. Singh, Mr. Modi said that in the past 10 years, only committees had been constituted for various problems, instead of solutions being found. “The country needs commitment, not committees,” he said, dubbing the UPA rule synonymous with price rise, corruption, lack of employment for youth and crimes against women.

‘New era’

Terming the general election the “dawn of a new era,” Mr. Modi declared: “It’s time to move from representative democracy to participative democracy.”