New Delhi: The alumni and faculty of Indian Institute of Technology, Kharagpur, say they are done waiting. Partha Pratim Chakrabarti, chosen by a HRD ministry-constituted search committee for the position of Director, IIT-Kharagpur, over a year ago is yet to take charge as he awaits clearance by Central Vigilance Commission (CVC). Following a hunger strike by students and faculty members at Kharagpur, the alumni association’s chapters in Delhi, Kolkata and Bangalore are taking their protest outside the campus. About 1,200 of IIT-Kharagpur’s alumni based in Delhi took part in a ‘silent march’ at Jantar Mantar on Saturday.

“The institute has been without a full-time director for over a year and is suffering because action can’t be taken and decisions can’t be made on a number of important programmes,” said Arjun Malhotra, IIT-Kharagpur alumnus and one of the founders of HCL Technologies. He added that he has filed as many as 20 RTIs and received replies from both MHRD as well as IIT but not from the CVC. “The convocation is on July 29 and the minister will be there. We are assuming that’ll be the impetus to try and get this cleared but if that doesn’t happen, we’ll have to work out how to continue the agitation,” said Malhotra.

After Saturday’s march, alumni members plan to submit petitions to the President (also Visitor of IIT-Kharagpur), prime minister, HRD minister, secretary MHRD and the lieutenant governor of Delhi. Malhotra argues that leaving IIT-Kharagpur without a director is “tantamount to treason.” “It is taking a world-class institution and making sure it loses some of its shine.”

The alumni want to know why the CVC is withholding judgment on the matter and not clearing Chakrabarti for promotion. Chakrabarti, as the dean of sponsored research and industrial consultancy (SRIC) at IIT-Kharagpur, had become embroiled in a controversy involving a project commissioned to IIT-Kharagpur by Coal India. An investigation by the Central Bureau of Investigation was initiated and by the end, Chakrabarti was let off with a “minor penalty.” The alumni have also furnished a 2007 letter from the CBI to director, IIT-Kharagpur, which says the enquiry report “would not be cited to be relied upon documents in the departmental enquiries.” Chakravarty was also cleared by the IIT-Kharagpur’s board of governors (BOG).
No takers for IIT seats

Time to add pure sciences courses?

It is a matter of great concern that more than 300 seats are going unclaimed in the nation’s best institutes — the Indian Institutes of Technology. A majority of those seats are not from any of the new IITs, which may be viewed by students as not carrying the same prospects for gainful employment by corporates. Most seats are vacant at the Madras and Delhi branches of the gateway to technical knowledge that is recognised around the world as the host of study courses of excellence. The HRD ministry is already aware of the problem and a rethink is being done about the changes effected to the exam system for admission to the current academic year. The dons must introspect not only on whether school marks should be made to count for so much as to sideline even those who have done well enough to get through the IIT entrance exam.

Also, whether it is time the technology institute also raises its horizons and opts to include courses in the pure sciences that seem to take the fancy of students more these days. The way forward may also lie in not complicating the issue of admissions to the premier institutes and looking at the larger picture of modern-day India offering far more than just technical jobs in the estimated $100 billion IT sector. To invest so much in the IITs and not see the seats taken is a national waste.

The Asian Age, July 19
Drainage revamp plan remains stuck

Atul Mathur
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NEW DELHI: The Indian Institute of Technology-Delhi, which was assigned the task of preparing a drainage master plan for Delhi, is awaiting relevant data from the Delhi government to help it complete its work.

IIT-Delhi was appointed the consultant for the project in June 2012 and was given 18 months to submit the report. The Delhi government had promised the institution 3-D digitised maps prepared by Geo Spatial Limited. But 13 months later, the IIT is still waiting to hear from the departments concerned.

“When we were appointed as consultants, we were told that they have digitised data that will be released soon. We are now being forced to go and seek the details from each department,” said professor AK Gosain, department of civil engineering, IIT-Delhi.

“Once we have complete the data, it should not take us more than six months to simulate it and look at the issues and come up with a new plan,” Gosain added.

While Delhi’s population has gone up from 62 lakh in 1981 to 1.67 crore in 2011, the city’s drainage system is based on the master plan finalised in 1981. No wonder, the drainage system is not able to cope with an almost three times increase in population and extensive urbanisation. There are about 5,000 drains - big and small - in Delhi and the majority of them are too old to be repaired or revived.

“IIT-Delhi has been tasked with revamping the system by keeping the existing the drainage system in mind. It will suggest which drains need to be widened, where do we need to construct new drains and how to connect the drains to ensure that storm water is channelised properly and the possibility of waterlogging is eliminated,” said a senior irrigation and flood control department official.
Elephants dying on tracks; govt sanctions IIT research

NEW DELHI: In a bid to prevent elephant deaths on railway tracks, the government has sanctioned research by IIT, Delhi to develop an “electronic intelligence surveillance” that can emit warning as the animal approaches the tracks. In an affidavit filed before the SC, railways ministry has approved ₹1 crore for the project.
MONEY MATTERS
ItzCash Card Ltd, a non-banking payment solutions company, announced the launch of ‘Power to Pay,’ a semi-closed campus payment solution, exclusively for IIT Bombay, in association with RuPay (NPCI) and Canara Bank. This revolutionary NFC tag based solution will enable students, faculties and employees of IIT-B to make cashless payments in stores located within and around the campus. The tag will be issued to the current batch of IIT-B at the time of enrolment/admission and is valid up to five years from the date of issue. It is convenient to use and merely requires a student to paste it on the back of his mobile or ID card or carry it in his wallet to make payments. The user can load a designated amount ranging from a minimum of Rs 50 up to of Rs 5000 with maximum transaction limit of Rs 10,000 monthly.
‘जलदबाजी में हुए जेडी में बदलाव’

नियम की गलत व्यख्या

मानव संसाधन विकास मंत्रालय (एमएमएचआईडी) की अभी भारतीय प्रीडोगिकी संस्थान (आईआईटी) की संपूर्ण प्रेस रिपोर्ट (जेडी) में बदलावों की समीक्षा पर फैसला करना है, लेकिन आईआईटी संस्थानों ने अपना फैसला सुना दिया है कि बदलाव जलदबाजों में किए गए हैं और इससे परिशोध जताना हो गई है।

आईआईटी-पुल्लात्तो के निदेशक गोरख खानें सहित, 'हम शुरू से ही सुझाव दे रहे थे कि इस ई-प्रेस रिपोर्ट से 2014 से लागू किया जाना चाहिए, लेकिन ऐसा नहीं किया गया। भले ही बोर्ड परिषदों के अंजों को आईआईटी में प्रवेश के साथ जोड़ा जाना एक अच्छी पहल थी, लेकिन नए प्रवेश कंपनी ज्यादा विचार किए बिना जलदबाजों में लागू किया गया है।'

आईआईटी-बंदी के निदेशक देवधर खर्च अध्यक्ष कहते हैं कि आईआईटी जेडी के नए निर्णयों के पूरी प्रेस प्रकरण को जोड़ता बना दिया है।

पिछले साल मानव संसाधन मंत्री कृष्णा सिद्धान्त ने जेडी को और मुख्य एडवार्ड में कराने के प्रारंभ को मंजूरी दी थी। आईआईटी के लिए आवेदन करने वाले छात्रों को जेडी-मुख्य परिषद में शामिल होना होता है। मुख्य परिषद में होने वाले छात्रों की संख्या लगभग 1,50,000 है जो जेडी-एडवार्ड में शामिल होने मूल वाले होते हैं। जेडी-एडवार्ड के आधार पर 16 में से तीन भी आईआईटी में प्रवेश के लिए छात्र ने किस भी बोर्ड से 12वीं की परीक्षा दी है, उसे उसके शीर्ष 20 फौस्टों में आना होगा।

जेडी-मुख्य परिषद सबसे अधिक समय करता है जबकि जेडी-एडवार्ड आईआईटी-दिल्ली।

कोषिंच संस्थाओं ने कहा कि नै नियमों से योग्य छात्रों के लिए प्रवेश पाना मुश्किल हो गया है। आईआईटी के एक वरिष्ठ अधिकारी ने कहा, 'हमें भारतीय सांख्यिकी संस्थान (जिसने इस प्रौद्योगिकी को तैयार किया था) के विशेषज्ञों के साथ यह पर चर्चा करने की जरूरत है कि असल मुदा क्या है और कैसे यह इतनी बड़ी समस्या है। विश्लेषण के बाद ही प्रक्रिया में कोई बदलाव किया जा सकता है।'

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Boost for IIT Bombay graduates with new alumni forum

HT Correspondent
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MUMBAI: The IIT Bombay Alumni Association (IITBAA) has launched an entrepreneurship forum and an annual Global Alumni Business Forum (GABF) to get successful alumni from the institute to mentor fresh graduates in business skills.

The forum was launched at IITBAA's three-day global business summit in Goa, which ended with IITBAA and SINE (Society for Innovation and Entrepreneurship) collaborating to begin the forum. Participants described the group as "a structured forum" to strengthen support to IITB's students, faculty and alumni entrepreneur community.

"SINE has established itself as a role model for other business incubators in academia across the country. Through the association, we hope to connect the vast alumni network spread across the globe with fresh graduates. The successful and already established alumni can offer guidance and funds to the younger ones by sharing their experiences," said Bakul Desai, chairman, IITBAA.

Desai added that GABF would aim to generate actionable ideas to transform the country's education system into a flexible and inclusive one, with a corridor to jobs and further learning.

The forum also saw Anurag Singh, core team member of Idea force, a company which develops portable unmanned aerial vehicles (a prototype of which was used in rescue operations in Uttarakhand) showcase the model to Goa chief minister Manohar Parrikar, also an alumnus of IITB, who expressed the desire to use it in the state.

"For a small state like Goa, with a high Human Development Index, education and skills are areas that top the agenda. IITBAA, by creating a business forum which brings experts to a single platform, with a focus on both skills and education, has taken a step in the right direction," said Parrikar.
आईआईटी मदरसे के दायरे में भारत में आयोजित है। इसके बाद, जब राममुंडा ने जब पहली बार यह खुले नहीं, तो वह पहले गया। उन्होंने मुज्जा सुरेश को आईआईटी मदरसे के दौरान बोधिनायक में भाषण देने और यहाँ 4 दिन बिताने के लिए नामांकन किया। जब राममुंडा को 1 अटल ने अमेरिका को कार्य कराने के मुख्य युद्ध में प्रेसिडेंट की पहल की थी। आईआईटी में कोई दूसरा अंकनिक किया नहीं।

नवीन दुर्गा की दूसरा जीवन में उन्होंने उन्हें भारत के भारत याज्य का सपना निकाला पाया? राममुंडा ने बताया, ‘जैसे ही मैं उनके अभ्यास की खुशी देखी, मैं उनसे भारत दौर के बारे में पूछा।’ हालांकि, सुरेश ने अपनी यात्रा निभा। वह भारतीय युवा के पहले गुरु हैं, जिनके कार्य को प्रेसिडेंट बनाया गया है। उन्होंने जेनियस को भारत में अभ्यास की दूर्दा की। उन्होंने टॉप गुरुओं ने प्रेसिडेंट की हर यात्रा के पाठ को हस्ताक्षर किया है।

उन्होंने इस प्रकार से लागू युवाओं को इसका सन्दर्भ दिया। वह युवाओं को भारत में अभ्यास की दूर्दा की। वह नेतृत्व में मोदी को दिन दिन की अपनी यात्रा का संदर्भ दिया। उन्होंने अपना जीवन में अपने प्रेसिडेंट को प्रेसिडेंट की हर यात्रा को हस्ताक्षर किया है। उन्होंने इस प्रकार से लागू युवाओं को इसका सन्दर्भ दिया। वह युवाओं को भारत में अभ्यास की दूर्दा की। वह नेतृत्व में मोदी को दिन दिन की अपनी यात्रा का संदर्भ दिया। उन्होंने अपना जीवन में अपने प्रेसिडेंट को प्रेसिडेंट की हर यात्रा को हस्ताक्षर किया है। उन्होंने इस प्रकार से लागू युवाओं को इसका सन्दर्भ दिया। वह युवाओं को भारत में अभ्यास की दूर्दा की। वह नेतृत्व में मोदी को दिन दिन की अपनी यात्रा का संदर्भ दिया। उन्होंने अपना जीवन में अपने प्रेसिडेंट को प्रेसिडेंट की हर यात्रा को हस्ताक्षर किया है।
When Carnegie Mellon President Kept His Date with Indian Roots

Indian Connection

Subra Suresh, who on July 1 became first Indian-origin Carnegie Mellon University president, has had many firsts in the U.S academia. A profile.

HARI PULAKKAT (CHENNAI)

Bhaskar Ramamurthi paraded when he first boarded the plane to the US. He was so nervous a few days before that Subra Suresh didn’t give it a second thought. The Carnegie Mellon University president, US, on July 1, can accept that he was a little apprehensive about his new role. The Asian American, who is the first native-born Indian-American chief executive officer of a US university, was expected to hit the ground running on his first day.

Suresh kept his word, his latest illustrious first as an Indian and Asian in American academia. He has been in top positions for many years and is known for his research in nuclear physics. He is also the first to hold an appointment at a top US university.

Suresh left for the US on July 2 after spending four days at IIT Madras, leaving behind the University in India. His new appointment at the University of Texas at Austin is a major achievement for the university. He was chosen for the role from a field of 14 candidates.

Suresh is the first Indian-origin president of Carnegie Mellon and also the first to come from the Institute of Technology. The appointment has been eagerly awaited by the Indian community, both in India and the US.

INDIAN ACADEMICS ON TOP

Prominent Indian academicians who have headed at least a major school in the US universities:

PRADEEP KHOSLA
Chancellor, Univ. of California, San Diego

NITIN NOHRIA
Dean, Harvard Business School

SRIKANTH KAZHEE
Dean, Management School, Univ. of Minnesota

SOMITRA DUTTA
Dean, Cornell Univ. Business School

A lot of the challenges facing humanity are not individual country challenges. I give the example of an infectious disease that is only an airborne flight away from anywhere to anywhere. You cannot say, ‘I am a developed country and you are a Third-World country.’

SUBRA SURESH, President, Carnegie Mellon University.

A Bund of Traditions

The first academician of many firsts

Subra Suresh, the first Indian-origin president of Carnegie Mellon University, has had many firsts in the U.S academia. A profile.

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SUBRA SURESH, President, Carnegie Mellon University.
IIT-Kharagpur alumni to approach PMO today

NAVEED IQBAL
NEW DELHI, JULY 21

OVER the delay in the appointment of Prof Partha Pratim Chakrabarti as the Director of IIT Kharagpur, the institution’s alumni association has decided to submit a petition to the Prime Minister’s Office (PMO) on Monday.

The alumni association on Friday had forwarded a petition to President Pranab Mukherjee. Mukherjee is also a visitor at the institute. The petition said that for over a year now the institute does not have a full-time director. This, the petition read, was affecting the growth and reputation of the institute. The institute’s alumni association has held silent marches across three cities protesting the delay in Prof Chakrabarti’s appointment.

Prof Chakrabarti was recommended for the post in July 2012 but his appointment ran into trouble when the CVC sought action against him for his role in the coal-net scam. Arjun Malhotra, an alumnus of IIT Kharagpur, said the association has decided to wait till July 29 for the HRD Ministry to announce the appointment. Otherwise, they would approach the court, Malhotra added.
SC's NEET logic contrary to constitution bench rulings

Dhananjay Mahapatra | TNN

New Delhi: The Supreme Court quashed the single-window admission system for all medical colleges by faulting the Medical Council of India-prescribed National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Examination (NEET) on three grounds.

The majority judgment, authored by former CJII Altamas Kabir and agreed to by Justice Vikramjit Sen, held that NEET violated the legal canons of public interest litigation, in terms of Articles 21, 226 and 30 of the Constitution, which guarantees a citizen a freedom to practice any profession and gives freedom to religious and linguistic minority groups to manage their religious affairs as well as educational institutions.

The bench said neither the Medical Council Act, 1956 nor the regulations framed thereunder empowered the MCI to formulate and enforce a single-window admission process for medical colleges. The court also said NEET could not ensure a level playing field given the disparity in educational standards in different parts of the country.

Since the Unnikrishnan judgment [1993 (1) SCC 645], the Supreme Court has been peppered with petitions by private medical colleges whose counsel look for interim orders just before admission time every year either for grant of permission from MCI to admit students or to step around the rules.

The issues dealt by Justices Kabir and Sen were touched upon by large benches which decided important questions of law. In the Unnikrishnan case, a constitution bench had said education could never be considered trade or commerce under Article 19(1)(g). “We are certainly of the opinion that such activity can neither be a trade or business nor can it be a profession within the meaning of Article 19(1)(g). Trade or business normally connotes an activity carried on with a profit motive. Education has never been commerce in this country,” it had said.

A decade later, a 11-judge bench in T M A Pai [2002 (6) SCC 461] dealt with the subject of ‘capitation fee’ and whether imparting education could be a trade or business.

It had said, “We, however, wish to emphasize one point, and that is that in as much as the occupation of education is, in a sense, regarded as charitable, the government can provide regulations that will ensure excellence in education, while forbidding the charging of capitation fees and profiteering by the institution. Since the object of setting up an educational institution is by definition ‘charitable’, it is clear that an educational institution cannot charge such a fee as is not required for the purpose of fulfilling that object.”

It also had hinted about regulating admissions to private colleges. “Excellence in professional education would require that greater emphasis be laid on the merit of a student seeking admission. Appropriate regulations for this purpose may be made keeping in view the other observations made in this judgment in the context of admissions to unaided institutions,” it said.

In the Inamdar case [2005 (6) SCC 637], a seven-judge bench had said a common entrance test (CET) for admissions to medical colleges, including minority institutions, would be ideal and should be conducted by a credible agency preferably the state machinery. It had also said that a test of this nature, akin to the quashed NEET, would not violate Article 19(1)(g) or the religious rights conferred in the fundamental rights chapter of the Constitution.

“CET is necessary in the interest of achieving the said objectives and also for saving the student community from harassment and exploitation. Holding of such common entrance test followed by centralized counseling or, in other words, single window system regulating admissions does not cause any violation of minority unaided educational institutions to admit students of their choice. Such choice can be exercised from out of list of successful candidates prepared at the CET without altering the order of merit inter se of the students so chosen,” it had said, articulating a vision for transparency sans profiteering in medical education.

It had said that despite repeated rulings against the single-window system and court against capitation fee, private colleges were indulging in it with impunity and felt that CET could curb this evil.

“If capitation fee and profiteering is to be checked, the method of admission has to be regulated so that the admissions are based on merit and transparency and the students are not exploited. It is permissible to regulate admission and fee structure for achieving the purpose just stated,” it had said.

If that is the position of law crystallized by the seven-judge bench, then how could Justices Kabir and Sen ask, “But where does it take us as far as those cases concerned which derive their right and status under Articles 19(1)(g), 21, 26, 28, 30 of the Constitution? Can rights guaranteed to individuals and also religious and linguistic minorities under the said provisions of the Constitution be interfered with by legislation and that too by way of delegated legislation?”

The majority judgment’s view that MCI had no jurisdiction to devise and enforce NEET also stands on doubtful legal grounds as a five-judge constitution bench in Dr Preeti Srivastava case [1999 (7) SCC 130] had clearly held that regulations framed by the council were binding on states.

Can it be said that MCI, set up to ensure transparency and merit into the process for intake of students? Lastly, the majority judgment in the NEET case said, “In single-window competition, the disparity in educational standards in different parts of the country cannot ensure a level playing field.”

Well, if that is the logic, then the court must consider scrapping the Civil Services Examination which through a single-window test chooses officers for IAS, IPS, IFS and other central services.
Deeply flawed verdict
Supreme Court wrong to reject common test

The Supreme Court's 2:1 decision to quash the National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test to medical colleges goes against the interests of the student community. With the apex court declaring the test to be unconstitutional, aspiring medical students will have to go back to taking multiple entrance examinations. This is undesirable for several reasons. First, it means there will be more forms to fill, more money to be paid in application fees even as students travel all over the country to take different examinations. This is an expensive and time-consuming process that discriminates against those from weaker socio-economic backgrounds. Second, after the tests have been taken, students who crack more than one examination block several seats till the last moment, at the cost of others. These seats are later sold at a premium by private medical colleges, again causing disadvantage to poor students. Third, NEET sought to ensure greater transparency in the medical education system since all aspirants would have to take the same examination administered by the Medical Council of India. But now there is no telling how private medical colleges, who are known to have 'sold' seats on a free-market basis, will admit their students. Finally, because NEET covered all medical colleges, it gave students access to the entire pool of medical seats available through just one examination. Now, students will be back to taking more number of examinations to compete for fewer seats through an opaque process.

At the crux of the apex court's judgement is the assessment that NEET, administered by the Medical Council of India, impinges on the rights of private colleges and minority institutions (especially those which receive no Government aid) to decide on their individual admission processes. This unfettered right to admit students without state interference, as a corollary of the constitutional right to establish and administer institutions, was first endorsed by an 11-judge Bench of the Supreme Court in the 2002 TMA Pai Foundation case. In effect, it ties an institution's administrative 'autonomy' to Government aid, thereby making it difficult to have any kind of control over such private or minority-run institutions. Also, such institutions, in a bid to retain their 'autonomy', pass on the cost burden to the students, with students paying huge sums for a degree that may not even be recognised.

According to the apex court, NEET also failed on two other legal grounds. One, it compromised the States' constitutional freedom, as education is a Concurrent List subject. The common test, State regimes said, made it difficult to implement State-specific reservation policies — an argument also reiterated by the minority institutions. But this is a specious contention as both States and minority institutions could have had their pick from the national pool of eligible students. Finally, the Supreme Court also decided that NEET went beyond the mandate of the Medical Council of India. It ruled that the MCI only had the authority to set "minimum standards in medical education" and that the entrance examination did not fall within that ambit. The Government must contest this ruling, both on legal grounds and in the students' interests.
Higher education must be upgraded

The government has an important policy-making and infrastructure-providing role to play in guiding the country's education sector. But the wider society and other organs of the state cannot disavow their responsibility if we want India to scale up to the next level of development with properly trained and qualified manpower.

The recent judgment of the Supreme Court striking down the common entrance test conducted by the Medical Council of India for all medical colleges in the country, public and private — which was the last for former Chief Justice of India Altamas Kabir — is retrograde. It can raise doubts that the judiciary is not cognisant of the issues at stake and has focused too narrowly on the right of private and minority educational institutions in the country to manage their affairs.

That, in fact, was hardly the point at issue, whatever the colouring. Private institutions in other educational fields, or minority bodies, have had no occasion so far to complain of having to cede ground. This should have alerted the bench led by the CJI as to the game behind private medical colleges going to court against the idea of a centralised entrance test for all medical colleges.

In any case, the apex court should have kept both considerations before it — ensuring that the province of the private and minority bodies is not rendered insecure (if that is indeed happening, although the suggestion is open to serious doubt) while permitting no dilution by design in medical education — from the entrance stage to the final examination and award of the last degree.

In the case of doctors, this has an especial meaning as the lives of millions of patients is in their hands on an everyday basis. Rough calculations suggest that about 20 per cent of doctors finishing from our medical colleges each year may have bought their entry to medical schools by paying hefty capitation fees at a large number of private institutions, and have not been tested in a standard all-India way for quality. The apex court judgment encourages the production of such doctors through mushrooming medical colleges that don't have the faculty and infrastructure. It's a scary thought. The sooner the government seeks a review of the regrettable judgment the better.

With hundreds of students this year declining admission at the older and world-famous IITs, and choosing to go to lesser known institutions in search of their preferred field of study, it is clear that IIT seats (and also at other institutions) are too few. Major upgrading is called for without loss of quality. Important areas of higher education in science and technology seem to be heading towards a crisis.
Universities without boundaries

The concern for increasing the enrolment rates in higher education in India has been gaining attention for a while now. India's current GER of higher education is 18.1% with 62% of the students in the 18-34 age group not having access to higher education. The country which boasts of demographic dividend has a long way to go before it catches up with the developed countries like the USA and the Netherlands at 39% and 34% respectively. In India, the Planning Commission of India is targeting to take the GER to 50% in the next seven years with 1.2 million students to have access to higher education through open and distance learning.

In order to achieve this ratio, a multi-pronged approach to enrolment in higher education is being pursued. Thereby announced National Vocational Qualifications Educational Framework (NVQF) is yet another positive step in this direction which would facilitate the vocational and formal education system to get integrated and through this process support the technical and industry-centric capabilities to evolve over a period of time. Some of the other measures include permitting the current institutions to double their enrolment with the common infrastructure, permitting private universities to come up and providing autonomous and deemed university status to well established institutions.

The last decade has seen a significant rise in the number of private universities as well as the institutions being granted autonomous or deemed university status. Out of the 842 universities, around 100 are private universities whereas 700 institutions have received the status of deemed to be universities. However, not all these institutions are able to meet the GER target and the further scaling of GNER would not gain momentum unless the associated issues around the expansion process are addressed. The key issues include the huge investment required for setting up the universities, the quantity and quality of faculty and other resources required for graduate education, the overall cost of education and the affordability factor, making education content relevant to the industry and keeping it contemporary to societal needs and the focus on developing the young minds to become responsible citizens of the country.

Therefore, along with the need to expand universities, it is also very important to think about addressing some of the key issues highlighted above with some key policy changes that may be necessary in the Indian context. The typical norms specified for universities include the minimum physical space and infrastructure that is required for them to function. The functioning of universities is normally restricted to the territorial jurisdiction mandated by the licence. Further, universities are permitted to offer distance learning programmes only after a minimum of five years of their existence. The policy for offering technology based programmes under distance learning programmes in India is still fuzzy and most institutions are yet to incorporate these programmes in their portfolio of offerings.

In the context of the need to increase the enrolments in higher education and provide easy access to contemporary programmes with industry relevance and enable larger numbers of students from remote locations to benefit, it would be imperative to scale up the current policies around some of the issues highlighted. The universities of tomorrow would have to be conceived very differently from the universities created in the past because of the role technology would play. We need a fundamental rethink on the concept of education programmes and how they would be designed and delivered.

We now have the advantage of building a new paradigm in education—anytime, anywhere, anyplace, anywhere and this opens up exciting opportunities to tap into the best of expertise wherever it exists in the world to be customised and made accessible to the learners. The collaborative power of communities is creating new knowledge which cuts across the boundaries of geography and faculties. The speed, the ease and the cost at which it is possible to acquire new learning is opening up new avenues for educators and the learners. Take the case of Coursera which is a great example of breaking the geographic barriers and the restrictions of faculty to a specific university and has opened up amazing avenues for people around the world to acquire knowledge based on their interests.

Probably for the first time in the history of mankind, the time for assimilation of knowledge created in the research laboratories and the think tanks of universities and their practical use and application in the industry and society is shrinking. Similarly, the opportunities are ripe for academicians to work for real-time knowledge creation through blending of the academic knowledge with industry practices.

We have been attempting to transform the brick and mortar educational institutions through technology interventions for a long time but the universities of tomorrow would have to be conceptualised very differently and would have technology at their core. Hence, there is an urgent need to review the current policies and approaches to higher education to facilitate institutions of higher education to be nurtured without the constraints of space, infrastructure, geography and the facility to be bound to specific institutions. Hyper University model is being experimented in a good initiative in this direction.

Freeing up institutions from some of these constraints does not mean dilution of quality or compromises in learning standards. We need effective governance and benchmarking processes to ensure the new models are superior to the current models not only in terms of making it possible to increase the enrolments but they have significantly superior and more transparent assessment methods leading to better throughput—be it employability, research or innovation. Trusting redefining the format and boundaries of universities, faculty, researchers and students would find themselves creating new identities for themselves as they discover new formats of knowledge.

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