Newspaper Clips
March 14, 2012

Hindustan Times ND 14/03/2012  HT Education

Event: CIMA Global Business Challenge

National champions:
IIT Delhi has won the India finals of the 2012 CIMA Global Business Challenge. The team will now represent India and compete with teams from countries such as Australia, Bangladesh, Mainland China, Ghana, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Iran, Pakistan, Ireland, Malaysia, Middle East, New Zealand, Philippines, Russia, Sri Lanka and UK in the global finals to be held in Colombo, Sri Lanka in June this year.

Dainik Jagaran ND 14-Mar-12  P-3

आईआईटी छात्र मामले में डीआईजी ने दाखिल किया जवाब

कानून : दिल्ली आईआईटी छात्र के मामले में डीआईजी ने संगठन को आदेश में अपना जवाब दाखिल कर दिया। इसके बाद छात्र के अधिकारी ने युक्ति में जुड़ी चार अन्य दस्तपत्र तत्त्व करने की मांग की। दिल्ली आईआईटी के छात्र सुनीदा भोक्तियाँ की कल्याणपुर पुलिस ने छात्र के अपहरण व दुर्भिक्ष के आरोप में गिरफ्तार कर जेल भेजा था। छात्र के अधिकारी ने आदेश में दलिल दी थी कि उच्च न्यायालय से गिरफ्तारी पर रेस के बावजूद पुलिस ने छात्र को गिरफ्तार किया, जबकि न्यायालय के आदेश की प्रति फूबा के जरिए डीआईजी को भी भेजी गई थी। इस पर विशेष पुलिस एजेंसी एचएसपीटी अरुण प्रकाश ने डीआईजी को संदेह दिया के आदेश दिये थे। संगठन को डीआईजी की ओर से पेपर प्रिंट में 11:13 बजे आँकी गई भेज वॉल के ऊपर पहले
IIT-Delhi to help restore Harmandar Sahib sheen

SAURABH MALIK
TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE

CHANDIGARH, MARCH 13
The Golden Temple in Amritsar will soon get back its sheen. Dulled by pollution to an extent, its gold will get back its glitter with New Delhi-based Indian Institute of Technology carrying out a study in this regard.

As a petition based on a letter to the Prime Minister on the matter came up for hearing, the Bench of Chief Justice Ranjan Gogoi and Justice Mahesh Grover was informed by the Punjab Pollution Control Board that the IIT was being consulted on the issue.

The board, in its status report dated March 12, said it had consulted the IIT “for studying” the problem. “The IIT has agreed to undertake the study and suggest ways and means to restore the sheen”, the report said.

Taking up the affidavit, the Bench observed: “We have also noticed that the IIT has estimated that a period of six months will be required to undertake the study and submit a report”.

Fixing July 18 as the next date of hearing, the Bench added the progress “as may have been made by the IIT” be intimated to the court.

“...The havoc that environmental pollution is playing on the Golden Temple had come under judicial scanner about a year ago with the court calling for putting in place a mechanism to check pollution in the temple vicinity.

The matter was placed before the Bench after Justice Ranjit Singh took suo motu cognizance of the letter written by one Gursewak Singh to the Prime Minister, with a copy addressed to him.

Justice Ranjit Singh asserted: “One Gursewak Singh has addressed a letter in Punjabi to the Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh...

“I have received a copy of this letter through post, which is enclosed in original. The letter says that industry in and around the area is causing pollution to the gold plates fixed on the domes of Gurdwara Sahib.

“There has also been discolouration of the white marble... some invaluable mural paintings are also getting spoiled.

“Considering the importance of the issue, I thought it appropriate to place it before the Chief Justice for taking notice in public interest, if considered appropriate”.

TAKHT HAZUR SAHIH BOARD ELECTIONS SOON

Amritsar: Following directions of the Maharashtra Government to hold elections to Takht Sachkhand Sri Hazur Abchalnagar Sahib Gurdwara Board, the management of shrines associated with Takht Sri Hazur Sahib, Nanded, has been handed over to District Collector Dr Srikar Pardeshi. Management Committee Superintendent DP Singh said the date for the polling would be announced soon. The board has a tenure of three years, but it has been over a decade since elections were held. After dissolution of the board in 1998, the charge was handed over to the District Collector. — TNS
There is an urgent need for an institutional mechanism to deal with plagiarism and other violations of academic ethics.

Rahul Siddharthan

A few months ago, I helped to organise a workshop on Academic Ethics at the Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore. It was a well-attended meeting, with many eminent participants from sciences and social sciences, including the heads of some of our leading institutions. Over two days of talks, several themes were emphasised relating to various forms of academic misconduct. An issue of our leading scientists has hit the headlines over plagiarised text in some of his own publications, it seems time to revisit this issue and discuss it more widely.

It was widely reported in mid-February that an apology had appeared in the December, 2011 issue of the journal Advanced Materials, by the authors of a paper that had been published in that journal in June, 2011, for incorporating verbatim text from an earlier paper by a different set of authors. The newsworthiness of this arose from the identity of the last author: it was C. N. R. Rao, former director of the Jawaharlal Nehru Centre for Advanced Scientific Research, Bangalore, fellow of the Royal Society (UK), scientific advisor to the Prime Minister of India, and one of the most celebrated Indian scientists.

How it unfolded

The initial reaction of many scientists, including myself, was that this was a non-story: the plagiarism was existing in the literature, probably committed by a junior author inadequately schooled in the ethics of writing, and unnoticed by the senior authors; it was a short passage that did not affect the reported results in the paper, and, once alerted to this transgression, the authors quickly issued a statement. And there the issue should have ended.

In fact, the senior authors (Rao, who was the last author, and S B Krupanidhi of IISc, Bangalore) did three other things. They both publicly blamed the first author, a graduate student of Krupanidhi. They both denied that it was plagiarism. And they also acknowledged that he had had little personal involvement with this paper. Suddenly, many topics discussed at the ethics meeting appeared starkly relevant.

Some major issues that came up for discussion in the meeting were plagiarism and data manipulation; authorship issues; and institutional mechanisms for dealing with reported transgressions. (Numerous related matters were discussed, including adequate citation of scientists, gender issues, and perspectives from scientific funding agencies.) It was observed by many speakers that students have a limited understanding of what plagiarism is, and the importance of the system, which encourages ethical behavior and verbatim reproduction of answers from previous papers. Suddenly, many topics discussed at the ethics meeting appeared starkly relevant.

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Rao and colleagues were undoubtedly aware of the previous paper, since they plagiarised from it; yet they cite it only once, briefly and without discussion, in the introduction. Not only do they fail to compare their results with a very relevant prior publication: they nowhere even hint to the reader that such work exists.

Issues of authorship

Rao’s response to journalists, essentially passing the buck to Krupanidhi and his student, also raises questions of appropriate authorship. There is a widespread convention in the experimental sciences that the student who does the hard work is the first author; the student’s advisor, who plans and conceives the experiment, is the last author; and anyone else who contributes appears in the middle of the author list. In this case, by Rao’s own account, the work was primarily that of Krupanidhi and his student, yet Rao is the last author (which is usually the case in Rao’s papers). To claim “senior authorship” and then disclaim the paper in this manner is rather unsatisfactory.

Other cases

Though media attention has focused on just one paper (for which an apology was published), an anonymous comment on my blog has given four other examples of papers authored by Rao that contain plagiarised text; none of these have, I believe, been apologised for. One paper, published in Applied Physics Express in 2010, is notable in that it does not include the aforementioned student as an author; the three authors are Rao’s own co-authors, Krupanidhi and Rao. It lifts the first part of its abstract, much of its introductory paragraph, and some text elsewhere, from a 2008 paper by Mathew et al, published in Applied Physics Letters. Both papers deal with scattering from gold nanoparticles in silicon photovoltaic devices (in addition, Mathew et al consider dielectric silica nanoparticles, while the Rao paper considers metal-oxide nanoparticles); the figures in both papers deal with I-V characteristics and photocurrent response. Rao and coauthors refer to Mathew et al only once in the results section, despite substantial similarity in their works.

Another paper from Rao’s group, published in Journal of Luminescence (2011), borrows text from a paper by István et al in Nanotechnology (2009), has scientific similarities with that paper, but does not cite it at all.

Ethics body

So the Advanced Materials paper cannot be dismissed as a one-time incident, and it seems inappropriate to blame it entirely on one student. This does not, of course, invalidate the work that Rao has earned respect for over the decades. Rao is a prolific scientist—he has over 1,500 published papers, an unthinkable number for a scientist. Five questionable papers may seem a small number in comparison, but they should not be ignored. A scientist of Rao’s stature needs to ask himself some hard questions, and then share his answers with the scientific community.

There was widespread agreement among the participants at the ethics meeting on the need for institutional (and perhaps governmental) mechanisms to deal with cases of lapses in academic ethics in an impartial manner, without fear of influence or conflict of interest. Rao himself has previously urged the necessity of such a body. It is a pity that he is now demonstrating, in word and deed, the need for such a mechanism. (Rahul Siddharthan is with the Institute of Mathematical Sciences, Chennai.)
The death of Anil Meena

MERIT is important — students have to go through grueling entrance tests to prove their worth before joining any educational institution to become doctors, engineers, scientists.

In 2010, Anil Meena, from a tribal family of agriculturalists, a school topper with 75 per cent marks in 10+2, covered the distance of over 500 km from his village in Baran district, Rajasthan, to Delhi. He had again proved his merit in one of the toughest medical entrance exams to become a doctor at one of the country’s prestigious educational institutions — the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS).

However, within two years of his stay at this prestigious institution, on March 3, 2012, he hanged himself. The reasons, according to the AIIMS administration, are that he was “depressed”, developed “psychiatric” problems because of his inability to cope with the rigorous academic environment combined with his lack of skills in the English language. Anil was 22 years old.

It’s mere coincidence that on the same day, March 3, in 2010, Balmukund Bharatia, a Dalit student at AIIMS, committed suicide in similar fashion, but this coincidence does not end with the date. A son of a Class III employee, a native of village Kundeshwar, Tikamgarh district, Benselyhwar (MP), one of the most backward regions of the country, Balmukund was also a school topper from Navodaya Vidyalaya and possessed many certificates of academic excellence, including one from the president of India, before getting admission into AIIMS after proving his merit in its entrance exam.

We are told that he was also “depressed” and committed suicide by hanging himself in his hostel room due to “his inability to cope up with academic performance” demanded by the institution. Balmukund was 25 years of age, and was just a couple of months away from becoming a doctor from AIIMS, something his parents say has not happened in the surrounding areas in the last 50 years.

AIIMS is not a lone institution. There is a long list in the recent past that includes almost all premier educational institutions — various IITs, Indian Institute of Science (IISc) Bangalore, University of Hyderabad and many more, where otherwise brilliant Dalit and Adivasi students, school and college toppers, gave up their hopes and chose to commit suicide.

The conventional wisdom is that these students got admission through reservations with “lesser merit” and gave up their lives unable to match the academic expectations of these premier educational institutions. And the definition of this “merit” is defined strictly in terms of marks at the entrance level, conveniently discounting various other factors like social background, family, medium of instruction in school, the rural-urban divide that play a major role in the performance of the students.

So a student from an urban-based upper-caste/upper-class background with both parents literate and from much better schools, most often elite private English-medium ones, is considered more “meritorious”, more “deserving” with her 85 per cent marks, than those “quota” students with their 75 per cent marks scored fighting against all their debilitating social realities. This perceived “lack of merit” among Dalit and Adivasi students and their admissions through “quotas” breeds so much resentment among other students, faculty of rejection that they experience from these institutions that forces them to take this extreme step.

With their brilliant academic performances in schools, these students enter professional institutions with immense self-confidence and faith in the system that promises a bright future and fair treatment solely based on their academic performances but in reality judges them, from Day One, on their social identities and family background without giving them the chance to prove their merit. That is what shatters them.

In 2006, the Indian government constituted a three-member inquiry under the chairmanship of Professor S.K. Thorat, the then UGC Chairperson, to look into the complaints of Dalit and Adivasi students of AIIMS. The first of its kind to probe into caste discrimination in institutions of higher learning, the committee came out with a detailed report and brought out the horrors of caste discrimination suffered by “quota” students on this campus that included physical assaults, boycott by fellow students, deliberate failing by faculty members and total insensitivity shown by the AIIMS administration.

The committee also gave various recommendations like establishing equal opportunity cells, transparency in grading, stronger punishment for caste discrimination. But the AIIMS administration, rather than engage in introspection, declared the report biased and refused every allegation of castism on the campus and even threatened to sue the Thorat committee for bringing “disrepute to the institute that promotes excellence and is engaged in the service of the nation.”

If one visits the illiterate parents of Senthil Kumar, a PhD student in physics from Tamil Nadu, who committed suicide on February 24, 2008, at the University of Hyderabad, the first thing they produce for the visitors are his certificates that bore the testimony of his merit and his efforts, making him the first from his pig-rearing pannangi caste, the lowest caste hierarchy, to enter the portals of higher education.

Along with the certificates you can find a diary where Senthil wrote: “I want to bring Nobel prize for my country.” If you flip through its pages, you will also find a picture of A.P.J. Abdul Kalam from a newspaper cutting, with a title in Senthil’s handwriting: “My Role Model.”

These students came up by beating all odds and proved their merit in more than one way. Do our premier educational institutions, AIIMS, IITs and universities, have the required merit and efficiency to be able to teach such brilliant students?

Suicides by Dalit and tribal students is a story of discrimination

ANOOP KUMAR

The writer started Insight Foundation, a platform for Dalit and Adivasi youth, focused on higher education issues express@expressindia.com
T HEY N EED HEL P!

AIIMS has set up a committee to advise on 'academic and welfare enhancement' of students.

Get support when you need it.

Let's get talking.

Don't keep everything bottled up. If you feel stressed, feel free to talk to your family members, friends, teachers, or anyone else who you feel comfortable talking to.

The 21st century has made lives more complex for students because of parental, peer, and performing pressure. While most find an outlet talking to friends and extended family members about their problems, others hold up their feelings, creating all sorts of complications which can impact their health as well as academic performance.

Guilt, helplessness, hopelessness, frustration are just some of the feelings that can flow an individual to seek support from someone else. When people feel they are not able to face the problem on their own, they may feel that it is an issue that needs to be discussed with someone.

Dr Wagner, a clinical hypnotherapist in Nadi, explains, "It is a fact that mental health problems are associated with suicidal tendencies and depression. It is one of the major causes of attempted or completed suicide. Consulting a well-trained mental health professional would be of definite help."

Wagner adds, "There is the right time for someone to consult a specialist. When you feel that you are unable to attain your goals on your own, it is time to seek help. Everyone is vulnerable to things around them, and frustration takes time to understand that you are stuck in a rut. Consulting a professional can also be a useful tool for the elderly in their family (like grandparents/seniors) or students."

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HT Education

WILL THIS PANEL ON STUDENT WELFARE HELP?

The panel was set up by AIIMS, the All India Institute of Medical Sciences - AIIMS recently, the authorities are stressing on the solutions that can set the students free of the stress, fear, and anxiety that aspiring doctors may have. The students, both from rural and urban areas, are facing a lot of pressure from the society and family.

For the students, the panel was a light at the end of the tunnel. The panel was set up by AIIMS, which is known for its excellence in teaching and research, to provide support and guidance to students facing academic and personal problems.

The panel is chaired by Dr. R. K. Mehrotra, the vice-chancellor of AIIMS, and includes faculty members and students from various disciplines.

The panel's main objectives are to:

1. Provide academic and psychological support to students facing difficulties.
2. Address the concerns of students facing harassment, discrimination, or any form of bullying.
3. Provide counseling and guidance to help students overcome stress and anxiety.
4. Promote mental health and well-being among students.

The panel has been well-received by the students, who have expressed their gratitude for the support they have received. The students have also appreciated the panel's efforts to create a safe and inclusive environment for all students.

The panel has also been praised for its efforts to address the concerns of students facing harassment, discrimination, or any form of bullying. The panel has been successful in creating a platform for students to express their concerns and receive support.

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Remedial classes, fee waivers, English training...
IIM-A has ‘good lines of defence’

Many students at the Indian Institute of Management - Ahmedabad need assistance in adjusting to the demands of a demanding course like theirs. For this and other issues, the institute boasts several lines of defence. Gopal Balakrishnan, general secretary, Students’ Affairs Council, 2012-2013, IIM-A, tells us about the services for students in need:

One important point is that IIM-A students do not have to disclose their category status — whether general, SC, ST, OBC or any other. This information is not available to students. For those who find it difficult to cope, the assistance provided is:

Moneywise: The institute is needs blind. No one is denied education on financial grounds. There are various fee waivers/ scholarships/ financial packages, some especially for SC, ST and OBC candidates and for those who cannot afford the fee.

Prep’em up: Some students are identified by the faculty (at the interview stage) and asked to join a preparatory course in communication skills and MS Office and Excel. With about 10% of the batch enrolled, it is quite substantial and runs for a month before the regular course begin. This is again not on the basis of categories but for promising candidates who would need this extra bit of help because of their professional or educational background. This also takes care of candidates from the vernacular medium.

Peer tutoring: Students hold remedial sessions for each other. This is usually done two or three times every slot (each year is divided into six slots of exams and courses). These sessions are the best ways to brush up on every lost bit of topics. Since it’s being administered by students there is no pressure and no one feels inhibited asking questions. These can last for an hour or three to four hours per session.

Student mentors: More than 50 second-year seniors are linked with first-year students. Each mentor is responsible for eight or 10 students. The first-year at IIM-A is rigorous and student mentors are usually the best way to navigate through this. The mentors are a point of contact for any and all situations and usually are assigned as soon as the admission letters are rolled out. The mentors remain so after graduating from the institute.

Development cell: The institute also has a Students’ Personal and Career Development Centre (SPCDC) for individual cases. The centre has a professional counsellor. The students’ council works makes sure that the facility and its benefits is well-known throughout the student community.

Dorms, too, help: There are 19-39 friends who share their lives. A dorm representative and a group of friends are always available for any student, and can usually detect the first signs of trouble. In each of these steps, the students’ council is the enabler.

— Rahat Bano

Sibal moots tougher fines for bogus univs

Responding to BJP president Nitin Gadkari’s letter expressing concern over bogus universities and colleges, HRD minister Kapil Sibal on Tuesday said that the ministry was aware of the problem and had even drafted a legislation to bring in stringent punishment. TNN
How to keep that IIT dream alive

Hindustan Times (Mumbai), Pravin Tyagi, md, litian’s PACE

Starting this week, we take a look at how you can ace the last of the current IIT-JEE version. Here are three things to remember while you prepare

For every engineering aspirant, getting into IIT is a dream. Lakhs of students every year (Approx. 5 lakh in 2011) compete for few thousand seats (9,800 in 2011). The competition is intense.
Begin your preparation here, with some tips that will go a long way in these final stages of preparation. 1. You will be hearing of how students completed preparing for the JEE at younger ages, or feel shaky because you didn’t score as well in mock tests. A lot of students start giving up at this stage. It is imperative to remain confident. Believe in yourself and keep going. 2. No one, till date, has scored 100% marks in IIT JEE. In fact, the IIT topper scores around 80% marks. If you score around 55 %, you are still in the top 1000 ranks in the country. The cut-off is as low as 40% marks! So even if you have not finished the full syllabus, you still can make it. You will not be solving all the questions on all the topics so one can safely skip a few questions and still be a top ranker. 3. Understanding the dynamics of peer expectations and family role will be important for the student. The IIT JEE preparation itself gets you a semi-celebrity status, putting you in the spotlight for your friends and family. So much attention adds to anxiety and nervousness. Avoiding is impolite and updating...
everyone about whole preparation is a task in itself and loss of energy. Switch off your cell phone and let Facebook rest for a while. Avoid meeting too many people and focus all your energy on preparing for the exam.

Legislative delay holds up degrees of 1,800 students

14 Mar 2012, The Times of India (New Delhi edition)

New Delhi: With their future in limbo, around 1,800 students of the Institute of Technology, Banaras Hindu University, have written to HRD minister Kapil Sibal urging the government to pass the legislation giving their institute legal sanctity. The ‘Institutes of Technology (Amendment) Bill 2011’ has been pending before the Rajya Sabha for almost a year.

The students of 2010 and 2011 batches have been waiting for their degrees for a year now thanks to the legislative delay. “As the bill is getting delayed in the Rajya Sabha, it is creating serious problems for our future careers. The uncertainty over the conversion of IT-BHU to IIT-BHU is also creating an unhealthy atmosphere in the campus,” the letter said. The communication has been signed by all the students.

The move to upgrade the institute to an IIT was made after several rounds of consultations and discussions with HRD ministry officials and was passed by the Lok Sabha in March 2011.

The bill seeks to amend the Institutes of Technology Act, 1961, which declares certain institutes of technology to be institutions of national importance and to add eight new IITS in Bhubaneswar, Gandhinagar, Hyderabad, Indore, Jodhpur, Mandi, Patna and Ropar. It also seeks to integrate the IT-BHU within the ambit of the Act and is likely to increase its functional autonomy.

Speaking in Lok Sabha, Sibal had assured agitated BJP members that Banaras Hindu University would not be bifurcated in the process of giving IIT status to its Institute of Technology. The legislation is also expected to address issues of shortage of staff and quality faculty.