Thinktank: Govt using IIT research selectively

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: Centre for Science and Environment (CSE) on Monday alleged that the Centre resorted to “selective use” of studies by IIT-Delhi to argue that vehicles were minor contributors to PM 2.5 (fine, respirable particles) levels and that banning older diesel vehicles would not help in improving the city’s air quality.

The Union ministry of road transport and highways has so far submitted three scientific studies to substantiate their argument against the ban on old vehicles. Two of them are by Transportation Research and Injury Prevention Programme (TRIPP) of IIT-Delhi and another by University of Birmingham, Desert Research Institute, Reno and the Central Road Research Institute. The ministry has also tried to argue that the transport sector’s contribution to air pollution may have been overestimated by people. But CSE said two important issues have been hidden from the NGT bench—the impact of diesel fumes from vehicles in the breathing zone and the toxicity of diesel, which is graded as a carcinogen by WHO.

While resorting to number crunching to prove that vehicles do not contribute much to ambient PM2.5 levels, the IIT-study and the affidavits are silent on health risks from direct exposure to vehicular fume, especially diesel fume that is of bigger concern. While the NGT order covers all old diesel vehicles in both private and commercial segments across the NCR, this very small—only 6% of the total fleet, which contributes 1% to PM 2.5. “The emission load from diesel vehicles that are 11-15 years’ old and meet older emissions standards emit a lot more on a per vehicle basis than those that are between 1 and 10 years’ old. Compared to a BS-IV car; a 15-year-old diesel car emits 7.6 times higher particulate matter and 3.4 times higher NOx,” CSE added.

Emissions from one old diesel car are equal to that from four to seven new cars. “A 10-year old diesel car emits 2.4 times higher PM. Removing old vehicles will reduce direct exposure substantially. This benefit will be much higher if the old diesel trucks are also removed or bypassed,” CSE said.

“It is inexplicable why MoRTH has considered the estimates of only one study on the estimates of vehicles’ contribution to PM 2.5. The IIT-D study fails to highlight the health risk from the direct exposure to vehicular fume that is of serious concern globally. Vehicular emissions take place within our breathing zone,” the environmental think-tank said.

For example, studies by Health Effect Institute have shown that the influence of vehicular pollution is maximum up to 500 metres from roadside and more than half of Delhi’s population lives within this breathing zone, the statement said. CSE also said that IIT-D had not guided the government and NGT about the toxic risk and the fact that WHO and IARC have classified diesel exhaust as class-I carcinogen for its strong link with lung cancer.
Business Line ND  
26/05/2015  P-17

Dainik Bhasker ND  
26/05/2015 P-1

Centre cites more studies to oppose ban

NGT Stay Order On Polluting Vehicles To Continue, Final Hearing On July 13

Jayashree Nandi @timesofindia

New Delhi: The Union transport secretary on Monday once again referred to a couple of scientific studies to back his argument that vehicles were not a major source of PM 2.5 emissions. The ministry had submitted two studies by IIT Delhi during previous hearings as well to argue against the NGT ban on more than 10-year-old diesel vehicles.

Meanwhile, there was no news on pollution levels, with transport secretary Deepak Mundra reiterating that vehicles were not the major source of pollution. The ministry also cited studies from other sources in support of its argument.

Meanwhile, the ministry had also released a statement on Monday highlighting the importance of PM 2.5 in Delhi and its adverse impact on human health. The statement pointed out that PM 2.5 levels in the national capital were consistently higher than the national average, and that higher levels were associated with increased mortality risk.

Fixing blame

CSE finds scientific studies showing how transport sector contributes to emission air pollution in Delhi

- Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology study (2011) finds PM 10 contribution from transport sector at 66%, followed by residential sector at 27%, industries at 24% and power sector of 4%
- A 2014 study by IIT Delhi and National University of Colombia, Bogota, finds vehicles 80% of PM 2.5, 70% of NOx, 60% of CO and 40% of NO2
- A 2013 study by IIT Delhi on Monday cited studies by CSE which found that vehicles contribute 60% to PM 2.5 emissions in Delhi.

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आईआईटी में विदेशी शिक्षक जल्द शुरू

नई दिल्ली | मदन जैजा

केंद्र सरकार ने आईआईटी, केंद्रीय विश्वविद्यालयों से समेत तमाम केंद्रीय शिक्षण संस्थानों में विदेशी प्रोफेसरों की नियुक्ति प्रक्रिया शुरू कर दी है। इन प्रोफेसरों को महीने में 20 घंटे बढ़ाने के करीब साढ़े सात लाख रुपये मिलेगी, जो भारतीय प्रोफेसरों के वेतन से तीन गुना ज्यादा है।

मानव संसाधन विकास मंत्रालय ने कहा कि इस साल ऐसे एक हज़ार विदेशी शिक्षकों की नियुक्ति का लक्ष्य है। लेकिन अभी विभाग संस्थानों के लिए, 93 आवेदन मिले हैं, जिन्हें जांच जा रहा है। इसके बाद इन्हें अंतिम रूप दिया जाएगा।

उच्च शिक्षा सचिव एस. ए. मोहनी ने बताया कि ग्लोबल इन्साइटर्टिव फॉर एकेडमिक नेटवर्क (ज्ञान) के तहत विदेशी शिक्षकों की नियुक्ति प्रक्रिया शुरू की जा रही है। सरकार ने भारतीय मूल के अमरीकी गणितज्ञ मंजुल भागवत को इसके लिए ब्रांड अम्बेडकर बनाया गया है। भागवत और दूतावासों की मदद से नियुक्ति प्रक्रिया पूरी की जा रही है।

मोहनी के अनुसार जर्मनी, कनाडा और ब्रिटेन के शिक्षकों के आवेदन सबसे ज्यादा आ रहे हैं। ये भारत में कार्य करने के इच्छुक हैं। उनके लिए वेतन आदि भी तय कर दिया गया है।

12-14 घंटे पढ़ने के लिए उन्हें 8000 डॉलर (करीब पांच लाख रुपये) और 20-18 घंटे पढ़ने के लिए 12 हज़ार डॉलर (करीब 7.5 लाख रुपये) तय किया गया है। इसमें उनके आने-जाने का किराया भी शामिल है। लेकिन रहने-खाने की व्यवस्था संबंधित संस्थान को करनी होगी। विदेशी शिक्षकों की नियुक्ति आईआईटी, एनआईटी,
Learn curbing vehicular pollution from China: NGT to Centre

New Delhi: The National Green Tribunal on Monday asked Centre to learn from China in curbing vehicular pollution in the Delhi-NCR, as it extended till July 13 the stay on its order banning plying of over 10-year-old diesel motor vehicles.

“Why can’t you learn from China? Have you gone through the reports how vehicular pollution is controlled in Shanghai city of China,” a Bench headed by NGT Chairperson Justice Swatanter Kumar said.

The observation came when Additional Solicitor General Pinky Anand cited a report prepared by IIT-Delhi saying that up to 67 per cent of total Particulate Matter at 2.5 emissions from road transport was contributed by goods traffic (heavy and light duty commercial vehicles) alone, even though their share in total vehicular fleet in Delhi was only 4 per cent.

The bench then wanted to know what could be done to check this 67 per cent emission, with the ASG suggesting that long term measures should be adopted as short term measures would not suffice.

She submitted that age of the vehicle may not be the only criteria for curbing pollution and suggested that the Centre was also thinking about a single fuel policy.

The IIT, Delhi report said that Delhi was among the top 10 cities with worst particulate matter pollution, as per World Health Organisation (WHO) estimates for 2014.

The green panel has now listed the matter for final hearing on July 13 while asking the Centre and Delhi government to file their replies within three weeks on the reasons for non-compliance of its earlier order.

“Government of India, NCT Delhi both will file their reply as why NGT should not pass an appropriate order for non-compliance of its order withing three weeks. All interim orders will continue,” the bench said.

The Bench also asked the Central Pollution Control Board to file additional data in support of its report regarding pollution in the national Capital region (NCR).
Stay on ban of diesel vehicles extended

Akanksha Jain

NEW DELHI: As Delhi continues to reel under rising temperatures aggravated by increasing pollution, the National Green Tribunal (NGT) on Monday asked the Centre and Delhi government why its order banning 10-year-old diesel vehicles had not yet been implemented.

The Tribunal, however, extended the stay on its ban order till July 13.

On July 13, the NGT will take up the matter for final hearing, in which the Centre and Delhi government will furnish the reasons for non-compliance of its earlier order. “The Government of India and NCT Delhi both will file their reply as to why the NGT should not pass an appropriate order for non-compliance of its order within three weeks. All interim orders will continue,” a Bench headed by NGT chairperson Justice Swantaner Kumar said.

The Bench also asked the Central Pollution Control Board to file additional data in support of its report regarding pollution in the National Capital Region. During the last hearing, it had criticised the government for taking cover of an IIT-Delhi research that vehicles above 10 years give rise to only a “negligible” amount of air pollution.

“What is the basis of this report? IIT has no business to comment on this. This report is not comprehensive enough. They have not taken samples from any place. IIT could have done a better job. You have placed 100 pages without conducting any study. Merely because you are IIT, you can’t be always right,” it had said.

The Bench had noted that the study referred only to private vehicles. “Base data has to be correct taking into consideration all kinds of vehicles moving or stationery. You have not associated anybody with the research and have relied on old data. Don’t try to tell us our order is wrong. The whole IIT report is tilted towards proving that the ban order is bad. There has to be proper reasoning to what you are saying.”
Russian universities wooing Indian students

ACADEMICS
A growing number of Indians are heading to Russia for studies

Indo-Asian News Service

It is time to study in Russia. That is the message for students and others visiting the Russian Educational Fair which just ended in the Capital.

Twelve universities participated in the “It is Time to Study in Russia-2015” exhibition. These included the People’s Friendship University of Russia, Tver State Medical Academy, Volgograd State Medical University, Kazan State Medical University, Kazan Federal University, Russian International Olympic University, Ural Federal University, Far Eastern Federal University, South Ural University, Bashkir Medical University and Orenburg State Medical University.

At present, close to 5,000 Indian students study in Russia. The number of students travelling to Russia for the first time comprises almost 2,000, showing a growth of about 20%.

“This rate of growth is continuing and we are extremely satisfied,” said Sayed Kamruzzaman, Head of Russ Education (India), a leading organisation that sends Indian students to study in Russia.

Traditionally, up to 90% of Indian students go to Russia to study at medical institutions. This year, analysts have, for the first time, reported a growth in the popularity of other specialities. “These include IT, management, aircraft engineering, and oil and gas-related fields”, he said.

Kamruzzaman is convinced that Russian universities ‘are global leaders in terms of price and quality of education’.

At the same time, Europe, in his opinion, “as before, remains more popular from the point of view of students travelling there, expecting to find work and remaining there for life’.

“Less than 1% of graduates remain to live in Russia,” he adds. “In addition to salaries being lower than in Europe, Indians traditionally look for the presence of an Indian community in the area. There is no full-fledged Indian community in Russia, if you do not take into consideration the student community in Tver.”

Viktor Katuchkov, the pro-rector for international activities at South Ural State University, where 2,000 out of the 50,000 students are foreigners, said he has given himself the task of increasing the number of foreign students gradually from 5% to 10%.

“I believe that the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa) countries are very promising in terms of attracting students, and also, generally the idea of establishing a Network University for this group, which will provide assistance from leading educational centres from Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa,” Katuchkov said.

A decision has already been made to establish a BRICS Universities League, which the top five universities of each country can join.

Arriving in India for the first time, having come from Sochi where the 2014 Winter Olympics were held, the Russian International Olympic University (RIOU) is offering its new programme, master of sports administration, which was launched in 2013.

The educational institute already has one student currently enrolled in the programme from India and another who graduated last year.

“The programme is designed for 10 months,” said Ilya Makharadze, a senior specialist at the RIOU. “Our first graduate from India already works in New Delhi, and our student has already received a job offer from the United Kingdom”.

The main objective of this programme is to produce a new generation of effective sports managers with both strategic and operational skills.

The programme runs for 39 weeks (three semesters), with each week having five study days.
**Tough terrain**

Nasa Curiosity rover adjusts route in Mars

WASHINGTON: Nasa's Mars rover Curiosity has found a new route to some interesting rocks after its original path proved too difficult to traverse due to slippery slopes.

Curiosity climbed a hill on Thursday to approach an alternative site for investigating a geological boundary, after a comparable site proved hard to reach. The drive of about 22 metres brought Curiosity close to a target area where two distinctive types of bedrock meet.

The rover science team wants to examine an outcrop that contains the contact between the pale rock unit the mission analysed lower on Mount Sharp and a darker, bedded rock unit that the mission has not yet examined up close.

Two weeks ago, Curiosity was headed for a comparable geological contact farther south, Nasa said.

Foiled by slippery slopes on the way there, the team rerouted the vehicle and chose a westward path. The mission's strategic planning keeps multiple route options open to deal with such situations.

"Mars can be very deceptive," said Chris Roumeliotis, Curiosity's lead rover driver at Nasa's Jet Propulsion Laboratory, Pasadena, California.

"We knew that polygonal sand ripples have caused Curiosity a lot of drive slip in the past, but there appeared to be terrain with rockier, more consolidated characteristics directly adjacent to these ripples. So we drove around the sand ripples onto what we expected to be firmer terrain that would give Curiosity better traction. Unfortunately, this terrain turned out to be unconsolidated material too, which definitely surprised us and Curiosity," said Roumeliotis.

In three out of four drives between May 7 and May 13, Curiosity experienced wheel slippage in excess of the limit set for the drive, and it stopped mid-drive for safety.

The rover's onboard software determines the amount of slippage occurring by comparing the wheel-rotation tally to actual drive distance calculated from analysis of images taken during the drive.

**Times Of India ND 26/05/2015**

Created: First artificial molecular pump

Washington: Scientists have developed the first man-made molecular pump, which transports key proteins that cells need to function, that could be used to power artificial muscles. The new machine mimics the pumping mechanism of life-sustaining proteins that move small molecules around living cells to metabolize and store energy from food.

The artificial pump draws power from chemical reactions, driving molecules step-bystep from a low-energy state to a high-energy state — far away from equilibrium.

"Our molecular pump is radical chemistry — an ingenious way of transferring energy from molecule to molecule, the way nature does," said Fraser Stoddart from the Northwestern University. "The ring-shaped molecules we work with repel one another under normal circumstances," said Chuyang Cheng, first author of the study.

"The artificial pump is able to syphon off some of the energy that changes hands during a chemical reaction and uses it to push the rings together," Cheng said.

The tiny molecular machine threads the rings around a nanoscopic chain — a sort of axle — and squeezes the rings together, with only a few nanometres separating them. At present, the artificial molecular pump is able to force only two rings together, but researchers believe it won’t be long before they can extend its operation to tens of rings and store more energy.

Compared to nature’s system, the artificial pump is very simple, but it is a start, researchers say. They have designed a novel system, using kinetic barriers, that allows molecules to flow “uphill” energetically.
Nasscom Task Force to Make India Hub for Cyber Security Research

Task force will vet Indian cyber security ecosystem to ready action plan within 12 weeks

New Delhi: IT industry lobby group Nasscom on Monday launched ‘Nasscom Cyber Security Task Force’, which aims to make India the hub for cyber security-related research, training and products.

The development comes nearly three months after Prime Minister Narendra Modi exhorted the domestic IT industry and youth to help address the global cybersecurity challenge.

In March, Modi has said that the country’s IT industry should come forward to help the government achieve its goals for Digital India, and called for increased innovation and a wider focus on the global challenge of cyber security.

The task force, being chaired by NIIT chairman Rajendra Pawar, will come up with a comprehensive cyber security plan within the next 12 weeks. It aims to take the cyber security industry market share in India from 1% of the IT-BPM industry to 10% by 2025, with a trained base of 1 million certified cyber security professionals, as well as build over 100 security product companies in India.

“This task force will study the Indian cyber security ecosystem to identify issues and challenges and develop an action plan to address the priority issues,” said BVR Mohan Reddy, chairman, Nasscom.

“It will also identify possible intervention opportunities for the Indian IT industry in global cyber security space and bring together stakeholders from across the board to develop cutting-edge technologies and address the global market requirements.” The task force has proposed four working groups focused on industry development, policy enablement, technology development and skill development. Recommendations from these groups will enable the task force to come up with a comprehensive cybersecurity plan for the country.

The National Cyber Security Policy of India, announced in 2013, aims to create 500,000 skilled workers in the field of cyber security in India by 2018. Pawar said that while the number of cyber security professionals are increasing, quality of the talent available is a bigger area of concern. “The challenge is finding that ultra-specialised group of people (in cyber security),” he said.

“Cyber security is a multi-dimensional concept that includes many disciplines and fields. Nations have to take appropriate steps in their respective jurisdictions to create necessary laws, promote the implementation of requisite security practices, incident management, and information sharing mechanisms, and continuously educate both corporate and home users about cybersecurity,” said R Chandrashekhar, president, Nasscom.
Times Of India ND 26/05/2015  P-17

At UN meet, India holds fort for developing nations

New Delhi: India's intervention at the World Education Forum meeting in Incheon, South Korea, recently helped get two critical elements incorporated in Unesco's 'Education 2030' goals.

The Indian delegation, led by HRD minister Smriti Irani, argued that the Incheon declaration should include flexibilities for Unesco member-states. Widely supported by other countries, the declaration adopted by member-states can evolve strategy based on their national priorities, resources, capacities and challenges to attain the global benchmarks of Education 2030 in an incremental manner.

Now the new framework of action will respect the autonomy of member-states to plan and develop annual, intermediate and accelerated targets for meeting global education benchmarks.

The second Indian intervention was about funding arrangement for the goals. The delegation said there should be commitment from the developed countries to contribute additional resources as assistance to developing countries, especially the least developed ones. In the past, India has benefited from such aid, for example in the 'Education for All' programme.

Indian Express ND 26/05/2015  P-16

Neither Clarity nor Credit, C is for Confusion in new UGC system

RUHI TEWARI gives details of the Choice Based Credit System that the higher education watchdog wants. Critics fear another FYUP-like disaster

The Ministry claims CBCS enables students to opt for courses of their choice across disciplines, and pursue skills in accordance with their employability. While the grading system aims to facilitate seamless mobility of students across institutions, it provides students the choice to select from prescribed courses — core, elective, or minor or skill courses — and obtain the required number of credits generated for the degree they are pursuing. The system is based on assessment, and results in awarding grades rather than marks.

Who is this system applicable to?

As per the UGC, CBCS will apply to all undergraduate and postgraduate-level degree diploma and certificate programmes under the credit system awarded by the central, state, and deemed-to-be universities. According to the Commission's guidelines, it is desirable that the universities (higher educational institutions) move to CBCS and implement the grading system.

How is the new system coming into force?

UGC had asked all universities to adopt it from the current academic year. It also put out a public notice on 'Minimum Course Curriculum' for undergraduate courses under CBCS and sought feedback from stakeholders. It is unclear how things will unfold.

The University of Delhi, where the administration prepared the undergraduate courses begins this week. The university is to issue instructions to colleges on the adoption of the new system. Colleges say they have no idea of the syllabus, timetables or workload assessments the CBCS will entail.

What are the criticisms against this system?

To begin with, there is a lack of clarity on what the system will really mean for teachers, students and institutions. No one seems to know how the implementation of the UGC's guidelines will actually work on the ground. Opponents of the measure have complained that these top-down reforms are being thrust upon universities, rather than coming from the universities themselves.

There is also concern that the UGC's implementation of a common minimum syllabus with only 20 per cent flexibility to deviate, brings upon the autonomy of universities. The uniformity that the UGC seems to be seeking goes against the idea of critical thinking that education aims at. Critics also argue that CBCS will be in essence a new FYUP, which finds disruption, protest and controversy before ultimately being scrapped.
Smriti gives India a toehold on international blackboard

By Mail Today Bureau
in New Delhi

In the wake of the string of successful foreign visits by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Human Resource Development Minister Smriti Irani is following in his footsteps through ‘Education Diplomacy’.

The Union minister posted strategic victories at last year’s meeting of South Asian Association for Regional Co-operation (Saarc) Ministers of Education and Higher Education. Now, she has led the developing countries at the recently concluded World Education Forum (WEF) in Incheon, South Korea.

Organised by Unesco from May 19 to 22, world leaders met to draw up the World Education Goals (2015-2030) to provide education for all that is one of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) to be finalised by the United Nations in September 2015.

According to a press release by the ministry, the WEF expressed its vision to transform lives through education while recognising its important role as a main driver of development.

Irani played a crucial role in getting included India’s position on flexibilities for Unesco member states in the Incheon Declaration. India reiterated that member states had a contextualised strategy based on their national priorities, resources, capacities and challenges to attain the global benchmarks of Education 2030 in an incremental manner.

The framework agreed to respect the autonomy of member states to plan for meeting the global benchmarks. India won resounding support from majority of the countries as the proposal was duly adopted.

Irani also told the meet about India’s initiatives to integrate technology in the educational system for ensuring transparency and ease of delivery of educational services. She held several bilateral meetings on the sidelines of the conference. Her initiative saw consensus between E-9 (the group of the most populous countries), Saarc members and the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) group.

She also held strategic bilateral meetings with select countries with proven success in improving education such as Japan, Norway, Finland and Brazil.
IIT-Bombay is my target: Science topper


JAIPUR: It’s a double bonanza for Divyansh Pareek, a student of SMS School who scored 97.8% in class XII exam.

Pareek had scored 317 marks in JEE-Mains and now he has got the highest marks in class XII science stream as per the data available from the different sources.

He missed the cent per cent figure by just one mark in maths and physics. He, however, scored 100 marks in informatics practice.

He said, "As I was preparing for the JEE exam, so I was used to solve those questions which were considered tough by others. I think the CBSE should repeat such questions as its aim is to prepare us for tough competitive exams in India and abroad."

His interest in science developed after he appeared in the NTSE exam in class XII. He also qualified for Kishore Vigyanik Protsahan Yojna. While others may play games, watch TV or take a stroll to de-stress, Pareek prefers to interact with his parents every day and share his difficulties.

"I live in a joint family and love to interact with all my family members. While some may give you tips, others boost you morale.

Son of a chartered accountant, Pareek is confident of clearing IITs. "I am eyeing to study in IIT-Bombay. I have just appeared in the JEE-Advanced and I am sure to clear this exam," said elated Pareek who loves listening to music during his free time. Sharing his success mantra, he said, "I never made any attempt to learn anything new in the last days. I never curtailed my sleeping hours. This helped me in relieving stress."

New IIT-B code to curb pupil malpractice


The Indian Institute of Technology, Bombay (IIT-B) has decided to crack the whip and curb malpractices by students who bunk lectures, cheat on their assignments and resort to copying in exams. While in the past there were unsaid rules for the same, the absence of codified penalties resulted in errant students being let off. However, the code of ethics aims to address the issue and make students more disciplined.

According to the draft code of ethics, which was prepared last week, students bunking more than 80 per cent of lectures would be assigned a DX, which roughly implies failure. Penalties in the form of FR (failure rate) have also been assigned for students who mark the attendance of absent students. Stricter penalties like a semester failure, grade failure and zero marks have been assigned for cheating and copying in lab tests, assignments, projects and semester exams. The penalties for some other excesses by students involves community service that can range from 50-200 hours.

Speaking about the need for a code of ethics, Radhika Goel, an alumnus, said that it was a good move. “Students joining IITs are the smart ones but the freedom on the campus coupled with leniency shown by professors makes them resort to short cuts that harm them in the long run,” she said.
Faculties on the campus, however, had a different view and said that leniency was not aimed at encouraging students to do wrong but to ensure that they do not resort to drastic measures in the event of strict disciplinary action for the mistakes they commit. “Students tend to lose focus and get disinterested in the subject of their choice. If failed, they will not improve hence such students are given pass grades, but in no way are they allowed to resort to malpractices,” said a professor, who did not wish to be named. Techfest 2015 manager Anuraj Gupta said the code of ethics was needed. “Since last year, departments have started taking undertakings from students called code of honour so that they do not cross their limits in academic and social circles. As the undertaking is not binding and mandatory, students tend to become apathetic towards it as they progress,” said Gupta.