Newspaper Clips
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IITs to share expertise with Finland

Finland is actively involved in setting up a joint IT hub in Otaniemi with the support of Indian Institutes of Technology and National Institutes of Technology.

In an attempt to take the Indo-Finnish education cooperation a step further, Finland is planning to set up an IT hub in its Aalto University campus with the help of the IITs in Bombay, Gandhinagar and Roorkee and the NITs in Jaipur and Bhubaneswar to facilitate further cooperation and staff mobility. Plans are also afoot to pattern a similar Finnish venture in India. These efforts are being supported by the Finnish ministry of education and culture and the Indian ministry of human resources development.

An IIT delegation visited Finland and took part in the Finnish-Indian higher education cooperation seminar in September 2013 at Aalto University. Last month, a delegation from Aalto University and other Finnish universities visited IIT Bombay and made further commitments for deepened cooperation in the fields of research, higher education, design, innovation and entrepreneurship, reveals Kristi Kiiro, minister of education and communication of Finland.

Elaborating on the plans, Mari Anna Suurmuus, head of international relations, Aalto University, says the Indian MHRD delegation that visited Aalto University in September included three directors from the IITs and two from NITs. The institute hosted IITs in Bombay, Gandhinagar, Roorkee and NITs from Jaipur and Bhubaneswar. Anush Sharma, additional secretary from MHRD led the delegation.

“The overall goal of the visit was to explore possibilities for enhanced cooperation both between IITs and Finnish universities at large and from our perspective, between Aalto and the IITs – a possibility to establish an IIT hub for Cranemore was discussed, but it was agreed that we will first seek to intensify collaboration between our institutions and revisit the issue later if the established collaboration would support such a development,” she explains.

In early April, a delegation of 14 from Aalto University visited IIT Bombay for a two-day seminar. Workshops were organised on themes such as health, design, management, energy, mathematics and construction and potential for further academic collaboration was estimated to be very good by both sides. Towards that end, IITs have suggested a consortium agreement between IITs and Finnish universities, especially to support research cooperation and academic and student mobility, she says.

The Finnish ministry of education and culture will organise the so-called Second India Round Table where work on a consortium agreement will begin, she says. “We hope to have an agreement ready next fall, so we can revisit the issue as things proceed. We have discussed student and staff mobility as well as forms of research collaboration as topics to aim for. We will only start the drafting after the second round table. The number of institutes involved is still open at least for the Finnish side,” she adds.
‘Research and citations helped us become a top global institute’

Antara Sensupat

Last week, the Indian Institute of Technology Guwahati (IIT-Guwahati) made it to the ‘100 under-50’ list of new global institutes compiled by China’s Tsinghua University’s rankings. The institute was ranked 81st based on their credible research work, and citations by its faculty. Speaking to HT Education, Gautam Biswas, director of IIT-Guwahati, discusses the journey from a ‘young’ institute to being one of the top global colleges.

What were the parameters of the rankings? Successful research output and citations helped us make it to the top 100. Some faculty members demonstrated substantial intrinsic merit of their research. We took industrial problems and produced viable solutions to them. Overall, high-quality teaching, an international outlook, industry income and citations helped us perform well.

What was the procedure? Did they conduct a campus visit? They asked for data and details, supported by documentary evidence.

Why do you think most Indian institutes fare poorly in global rankings? The problem is that we do not collect and collate our data carefully, let alone reporting it professionally. It is essential to provide accurate data to the judging agencies to understand where we stand with respect to other institutes. Moreover, we lag behind in certain parameters, such as the number of international students in undergraduate programmes, number of foreign faculty members on the payroll and so on. If these limitations are overcome, I believe we are on par in terms of our teaching-learning methods and research at the premier institutes of the country.

How do you plan to overcome these limitations? Will you welcome more international students on campus? We plan to admit more international students at the PhD level.

Now that IIT-Guwahati has been ranked as one of the world’s best universities, what are the college’s future plans? The paradigm of engineering research is on the verge of a third industrial revolution. It is becoming increasingly clear that in the future, machines and devices will be guided substantially by the principles of life-sciences. These days, many new bio-inspired interdisciplinary subjects are emerging, such as bio-nanoelectronics, microfluidics, bottom-up fabrication, bioenergetics, etc. The emerging research paradigm has to be handled by forming multiple interdisciplinary research groups. Research-based exchange programmes within the IIT system and well-known universities worldwide should have to be introduced at the undergraduate as well as postgraduate levels.

Creativity is the most important component in education. This is because it alleviates fatigue. We try to enhance creativity in our campus. Some of our faculty members are creative designers. One of them, in fact, designed the famous ‘globe’ symbol. We will strive hard to make our department of humanities and social sciences take part in enhancing creative activities through creation of more verticals, such as creative writing, liberal arts etc.

Another issue that requires immediate attention is tackling academic fatigue. A section of undergraduate students is losing interest in academics, caused by the years of gruelling teaching they face before entering the institute, followed by four more years of gruelling studies. They are then unable to manage time between extra-curricular activities and mainstream education.

Another major hindrance is computer addiction, where teachers have to intervene to make them understand the harmful effects of this. We have to focus on the development of an effective student care system, which is unique in terms of activating the dormant capacities of poor performers.

We are working on designing a mechanism of ‘hand-holding’ studies by the well-performing students. The faculty members are also putting in sincere efforts to attract students who seek the best science and engineering education.

What do you think are the major challenges with the other newer IITs, such as those at Roorkee, Bhilai, Kharagpur, Indore, Jodhpur and so on? As per my knowledge, all the IITs are getting excellent students. I admit that there is an old and prevailing phenomenon of students opting for better students in other well-known institutes such as the National Institute of Technology (NITs) and other prominent technical institutes. This can be one of the reasons for vacating at the newer IITs.

Faculty is a major challenge for any new campus at the evolution stage. Similar was the case with IIT-Guwahati when we began operations in 1994. Many of these newer IITs, for instance IIT-Kharagpur, are operating out of ‘make-shift’ establishments and this has discouraged several students from joining them. The entire flavour of IIT is residential education. We give major importance to student-teacher interaction.

Another important aspect is the quality of faculty in these institutions. Although they are hiring qualified faculty members, these are fewer in number; for reasons not known to me. But the management has taken a note of it and these newer IITs are now hiring retired professors from older IITs and NITs.

If IIT-Guwahati, we have also been through these challenges in the past and have now overcome them to feature in one of the most reputable world rankings. I am sure these institutions will keep up the academic fervour of brand IIT too.
HERE’S TO THE FUTURE: What has IIT-Guwahati been doing right to secure 87th rank in the Times Higher Education list of promising young institutes under the age of 50?

Anucha Banerjee

It’s young, dynamic, and in the news. The Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Guwahati, which has made it to the Times Higher Education (THE) 2014 list of 100 of the world’s top universities under 50 years of age recently, is just 20 years old. Set up in 1994, it is ranked 87 with the New University of Lisbon, Portugal, and the University of Western Sydney, Australia.

On why IIT-G fared better than other “young” IITs in Mandi, Patna, Jodhpur or Indore, Phil Babu, editor, THE, says the institute “stands out” because of its very high research impact. The papers it has published are highly influential and cited by other scholars around the world. “The fact that it made to the top 100 is because its research output is starting to influence global research, pushing boundaries of knowledge and being disseminated around the world community.” It has also done relatively well on the teaching indicator and has good indicators for faculty student ratio,” Babu adds.

Contacted before the release of the THE list and unaware of the ranking, Professor Gantan Biswas, director, IIT-G, which gave India its 8 symbol (it was designed by D Udaya Kumar of the design department), said he had been focusing on breaking the “glass of rankings.” Faculty members and students, he said, were being motivated by being repeatedly reminded that the country had produced great scientists like CV Raman, Sir JC Bose, Satyendra Nath Bose and Dr Har Dayal Bhabha. “IIT faculty members are very keen to perform and publish their work in top-tier journals,” Biswas adds.

IIT-G has key focus on path-breaking collaborations. The faculty of the department of electronics and electrical engineering has made significant advances in the area of smart grids and is participating in a project with the Assam Electricity Grid Corporation Limited. Another group has been interacting with the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) to try and develop high power microwave-waves. The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) is in the process of setting up a space engineering centre on campus. Faculty members in mechanical engineering have been able to create efficient biomass reactors for fuel conversion process. A significant contribution has been made in the field of computational fluid dynamics (science of fluids in motion—the eddies of which include aerodynamics and hydrodynamics). A programme is also being created for the Bhabha Atomic Research Centre. Work is also continuing on the development of new generation cancer gene therapy vectors.

For an international reach, IIT-G has tied up with Gifu University, Japan, in advanced manufacturing processes and plant biology. Other student and knowledge exchange programmes are being worked out with universities in Australia. Professor Babu adds.

Since Assam has a number of refineries, the chemical engineering department is working with the petroleum industry on a number of interesting projects, including energy-based research, conversion of biomass into fuels, and helping develop new combustion technology.

Babu says that the institute is the only one in the top 100 that is from the North East of the country. “This list of top 100 universities shows the future is more bright and there is cause for optimism that the young institutes can make an impact. Hopefully, the other young universities will make an appearance in the not too distant future,” he concludes.
Ratan Tata gets top UK award

Kounteya Sinha | TNN

London: Ratan Tata on Monday became the first Indian to be awarded the Knight Grand Cross of the Order of the British Empire (GBE) since India became a republic in 1950. British high commissioner to India James Bevan conducted the ceremony. He presented Ratan Tata with the GBE on behalf of Queen Elizabeth II.

Speaking at the ceremony, Bevan said, “Ratan Tata’s leadership, vision and integrity will remain the gold standard for generations of aspirational British and Indian business people. His contribution to the deep ties that exist between the UK and India has been invaluable.”

Tata said, “I am deeply touched and feel honoured to receive the recognition so graciously bestowed on me by Her Majesty. It has been a privilege to have our enterprises contribute to the growth of the UK. I am deeply appreciative of the support we have received personally from David Cameron and his government through good and bad times. This support and faith have been of immeasurable value.”
Indian docs at higher lay-off risk in UK

In Past 5 Years, 1 Out Of Every 250 Desi Medics Have Lost Job, Says Report

Kounteya Sinha | TNN

London: The maximum number of doctors sacked in the United Kingdom over the last five years is from India, Britain's General Medical Council (GMC) has revealed.

In the past five years, one out of every 250 doctors of Indian origin has lost their job. According to latest figures, Indian doctors are at least four times more likely to be struck off from practising in the UK than medics who are trained locally.

Since the year 2009, 117 doctors trained in India and Pakistan have been barred from working in Britain, India is followed by Pakistan, Egypt and Nigeria. The figures add up to around 1 in 1,000 doctors who are trained in UK being struck off during that period as against 1 in 250 of those trained in India, and 1 in 500 of those from Pakistan.

In 2013 alone, 75% of doctors who were struck off came to the UK from foreign shores. In total, 436 doctors have been barred from working in the UK in the past five years.

The findings come days after British researchers called for making tests taken by foreign doctors who want to work in the NHS to be made harder to pass as half of all foreign doctors in Britain do not have the necessary skills to work here.

The University College London said that they have found a performance gap between international and UK medical graduates and has suggested raising the pass mark from 60 to 75%.

More than 95,000 foreign-trained doctors work in the UK, making up a quarter of the total number, majority of them being Indians.

The revelations are being seen as further proof of discrimination within the system by the British Association of Physicians of Indian Origin (Bapio). The association had recently dragged both, the Royal College of General Practitioners which conducts the exam and the General Medical Council which is accountable for ensuring a fair process, to court alleging that the UK based trainee GPs from Indian background were four times more likely to fail this assessment. They also alleged that international medical graduates were 16 times more likely to fail the examination than their white counterparts despite having successfully completed the same stringent training process up to this point.

Bapio lost the case.

Most recently, health education England revealed a programme to recruit at least 30 trainee doctors via video-link interviews from India to tackle shortages in the country’s accident and emergency department.

(With input from agencies)

London University’s Delhi centre invites applications for undergraduate programmes

HT Education Correspondent

An affiliate centre of the University of London (UoL) with academic direction from London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE) is inviting students to apply for its three-year full-time undergraduate honours degree programmes in BSc economics, BSc economics and management and BSc business and management.

Applicants, who have passed the Class 12 examination conducted by CBSE/ISC state board/International Baccalaureate/GCE A-levels (by May 2014), are eligible to apply. All applicants for this degree should have demonstrable proficiency in English and mathematics.

Candidates applying for BSc economics need to have proof of competency in mathematics (equivalent to Grade 12). For other programmes, candidates should be able to demonstrate ability in mathematics (equivalent to Grade 10).

For students from the CBSE/ISC/state boards, selections are made on the basis of an entrance exam (IMET-ISEBF Mathematics English Test) and personal interview.

IB and A-level students are exempted from the entrance exam (per application basis). Selections are made on the basis of a personal interview.

Visit www.applytoisbf.com for application details. The application fee is ₹2,500. The deadline is May 20, 2014. The entrance exam is scheduled for May 21, 2014.

Limited scholarships worth ₹1.4 lakh are available for meritorious students. For more queries, send an email to ukeb@isbf.edu.in. The centre’s campus is in New Delhi.
जे.ई.ई. एडवांस में छात्राओं को फीस नहीं

■ प्रोत्साहन देने के लिए
 फीस नहीं ली जा रही
■ रजिस्ट्रेशन प्रक्रिया
 ऑनलाइन है

नई दिल्ली, ६ मई (ब्यूरो):
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 एडवांस में छात्राओं को प्रोत्साहन
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 के छात्रों को जहां २००० रूपए बताते
 फीस देने हैं। वहीं एस.एस.सी. और एस.टी.
 के साथ विकलांग नंबर डिटेक्टर के लिए
 फीस एक हजार रुपए गई है।

लेकिन आई.आई.टी. बोर्ड ने कहा
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 के लिए रजिस्ट्रेशन प्रक्रिया ऑनलाइन
 है और किसी भी प्रकार का डाक्टरमेंट
 पोस्ट से नहीं भेजना है।

छात्रों को सर्टिफिकेट की स्केल
 एमजे अध्ययन करनी होगी, जिसके लिए
 खास निर्देश दिए गए हैं। एमजे साइज
 ५० से ३०० के बीच के बीच होनी
 चाहिए। छात्रों से १०वीं, १२वीं के
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छात्रों को पेमेंट के लिए डेबिट क्रेडिट
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 जे.ई.ई. ने सुरक्षा के लिए कड़े निर्देश
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 कहा है।

४ मई से शुरू रजिस्ट्रेशन प्रक्रिया
 ९ मई तक चलेगी। २५ मई को
 एडवांस की परीक्षा होनी है।
Privatising professional education

Professional education can now be left to the private sector to provide education to those who can pay for it. Else, government scholarships can be provided.

Sanjay Hegde

Both Satya Nadella, who succeeded Steve Ballmer at Microsoft in February, and Rajeev Suri, who was appointed as Nokia's new Chief Executive Officer this month, are alumni of the Manipal Institute of Technology, now being called "the other IITs."

While Indian engineers from institutes other than the Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) are going to places where no IITian has been before, ITIs like Arvind Kejriwal and Ashok Khemka, whose education was funded by Indian taxpayers, are redefining Indian politics and administration. Even IIT's poster boy, Nandan Nilekani, is attempting to make a foray into politics, therefore proving that many from the institute, educated at the public's expense, have abandoned their core training as engineers and doctors. On the other hand, engineers like Mr. Nadella and Mr. Suri, whose education did not burden the taxpayer, are attempting to redesign software and cloud computing on a global scale. Others whose education has been privately funded continue to remain true to the disciplines that they were trained for. They are the backbone of India's technical prowess.

Privately funded institutions

India may have come to a stage where it needs to invest in upgrading its school education. Professional education could, on the other hand, be largely privatised, and public-funded higher education could be made available to the talented poor in the form of scholarships and monetary assistance. There may be no need to create new taxpayer-funded institutions.

Privately funded professional educational institutions started as an unintended consequence of two social evils: dowry and caste/community-based reservations. The home of capitation fee, Manipal, was earlier part of the Madras presidency. Madras' caste/community-based reservations date back to the British period. Faced with a strong self-respect movement, British administrators decided that all communities should be represented in educational institutions.

At that time, the Brahmins and Bunts of South Canara were allocated only one medical seat per year. However, doctors in the Bunt community were highly valued in the dowry market and this demand and supply mismatch needed to be rectified. The solution to this problem was provided by Dr. T.M.A. Pai of the Academy of General Education. Rather than waiting for the government to create and fund more medical colleges in which seats could be increased for such communities, Dr. Pai said a college could be successfully founded and run if professional education could be paid for by parents of aspirational professionals.

In 1953, Dr. Pai placed an advertisement in leading newspapers inviting applications for admission to a medical college. He said these were to be accompanied by a bank draft for the then huge sum of Rs. 5,000. On June 30, 1953, Kas- turba Medical College came into being with 100 students. There is anecdotal evidence that many of the bank drafts accompanying the applications were sent by prospective fathers-in-law. The medical college was a resounding success and is the foundation of a world class university today. The Manipal Institute of Technology followed in 1957 to replicate the same formula of creating privately funded students.

This brings me to the question of whether it is time for the government to seriously consider withdrawing from funding higher education at the professional level and leave it entirely to the private sector, except for a certain percentage of seats. In 2002, an 11-judge Bench of the Supreme Court, in the aply titled TMA Pai Foundation case, opened the door to privatisation. Chief Justice Karpal, who was speaking for the majority, wrote: "It is well established all over the world that those who seek professional education must pay for it. The number of seats available in government and government-aided colleges is very small compared to the number of persons seeking admission to the medical and engineering colleges. All those eligible and deserving candidates who could not be accommodated in government colleges would stand deprived of professional education. This void in the field of medical and technical education has been filled by institutions that are established in different places with the aid of donations and the active part taken by public-minded individuals." Subsequent benches of the Court have struggled to reconcile this logic, with governments continuing to regulate the professional education sector. The broad consensus now is to give management a free rein in admissions in the management quota, but insist on adherence to clear and transparent evaluations of merit at the entrance stage. This consensus has, from time to time, been sought to be legislated upon by governments who use the "mark is meritorious" argument to control admissions to institutions where their financial contribution is zero. The concept of management quota and governmental control of admissions has now crept into primary education with the Right to Education Act.

Legislation at the central level

A new government may need to look at the issue afresh with a focus on maximum governance and minimal governmental control. A good beginning would be to reduce legislation on education at the central level and encourage States to follow suit. A uniform policy at the central level should focus on access to higher education and not on any "right" to education. The rights-based narrative should be confined to universal primary education alone, a fundamental right. Higher and professional education can now be left to the private sector to provide education to those who can pay for it. Else, government scholarships can be provided on a merit-cum-need criteria. Student loans at subsidised rates of interest will take care of those who do not have family resources or government funding. India's path to economic development will be best achieved by creating policy incentives in education so that the middle class, which can afford education need not rely on the government in this area.

(Sanjay Hegde is a Supreme Court lawyer.)
Highest number of doctors barred from practice in UK qualified in India

Prasun Sonwalkar
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LONDON: Indian doctors in the National Health Service (NHS) on Tuesday reacted with dismay and irony as new figures showed that the highest number of foreign doctors barred from practising or suspended from work following complaints were those who qualified in India.

According to regulator General Medical Council (GMC), 93 Indian doctors were struck off the medical register following ‘fitness to practice’ hearings, while 88 more Indians were suspended following complaints and similar hearings during the last five years.

The figures were released amidst steps by Britain’s medical authorities to recruit 50 doctors from India this week to meet acute shortages in accident and emergency departments in hospitals across the country.

“The NHS and the policymakers need to make up their minds since it is ironic that on the one hand Indian doctors are being criticised and on the other hand they are being courted,” said Ramesh Mehta, president of the British Association of Physicians of Indian origin (Bapio).

Mehta told HT: “There is institutional racism in NHS. We have often raised the issue that Indian and other foreign doctors here are given far harsher punishment than the locals for the same mistakes. Fewer local doctors are referred to the GMC, who also get off lightly”.

GMC figures have previously indicated that there has been a major decline in the number of Indian doctors coming to the UK since 2004.

Niall Dickson, GMC chief executive, said: “International medical graduates make a huge contribution to healthcare in the UK and the vast majority of them provide excellent care for their patients.”
Is American MBA losing its allure?
Big B-Schools Boom Even As Modest Institutes Struggle, Says Report

Chidanand Rajghatta | TNN

Washington: Ratan Tata and Rahul Bajaj have it and so have the Brothers Ambani. Bankers (Naresh Keyal, Meera Sanjay), business tycoons (Anand Mahindra, Aditya Mittal), and even those who have streamed into politics (from P Chidambaram to Sachin Pilot) have been through the mill.

But questions are now emerging about whether the American MBA is all that it is drummed up to be.

A recent survey in the Economist reveals that America, dubbed the "spiritual home of the MBA", still leads in the business of business schools. Eight of the Economist's Top Ten business schools are in the United States and it is not until the 15th place that an out-of-country entity (Canada's York University)'s makes an entry.

The Top Five are University of Chicago's Booth School of Business (alumni include Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella, and RBI governor Raghuram Rajan taught there); Dartmouth College's Tuck School of Business (PIOs Neil Katyal and Dinesh D'Souza); UC Berkeley's Haas School of Business; University of Virginia's Darden School of Business; and Harvard Business School (HBS), alma mater to many distinguished Indian alumni, including Ratan Tata, Rahul Bajaj, and Anand Mahindra.

While Harvard just about makes the Top-Five cut, there are others in the Top Ten who rank higher in terms of prestige and price. For instance, every one of the 245 professors who teach Wharton's 1,600 MBA students is said to hold a PhD. Wharton, which is ranked 10th in the Economist listing and whose Indian alumni include Anil Ambani, Aditya Mittal, and Sachin Pilot, is also the priciest. The two-year tuition fee at Wharton comes to an eye-popping $130,000 — some 15% higher than Harvard's $112,000.

The highest-paid MBAs in America graduate from Stanford, which is ranked 7th in the Economist list and whose Indian alumni include Mukesh Ambani and Vinod Khosla. These can expect an average basic starting salary of around $130,000. Stanford also sets a high benchmark for qualification with an average GMAT score of 728/900. In fact, of the 16 schools at which the average GMAT score is over 700, 14 are American.

But while big B-schools are booming, the Economist suggests that storm clouds may be gathering for the modest, middling ones. Life is getting tougher for American schools lower down the pecking order, the publication reports, citing reasons ranging from an oversupply of schools to a falling return on investment (as growth in the salaries students can expect fails to keep up with tuition fees) and competition from online learning.

"In a globalised world of business education, residing in the spiritual home of the MBA will not be enough," warns the journal.

In fact, the trope about an MBA (not just American) being a passport to success in life is something that has been challenged lately. In a book titled "Beyond The MBA Hype: A Guide to Understanding and Surviving B-Schools", author Sameer Kamat outlines as a "Cliché" the belief that "The MBA changed my life". What it really means is: "A fantastic career; a great social life; and a healthy bank balance...three of the things I had before I started the programme."

B-schools have also had their share of black sheep — Raj Rajaratnam is a Wharton graduate (as is bad-ass hotelier scion Vikram Chatwal), while his co-conspirator Rajat Gupta graduated from HBS. Warren Buffett, on the other hand, is a Wharton dropout.

Still, Indians continue to make a bee-line to American B-schools. By some estimates, more than 5,000 students from India come to the US each year for an MBA degree from among tens of thousands who take the GMAT, the Graduate Management Admission Test that provides the qualifying score. According to a survey by Open Doors, of the nearly 1,000,000 students from India in the US, 13.7% were enrolled in business schools — third after engineering (35.6%) and math and computer science (23.1%).

The overall trend internationally seems to be tilting towards the MBA degree minted in the US. In 2013, 22% of international students came for business and management studies followed by 19% for engineering and 10% for math and computer science. Overall, 64% used personal, and family funds. International students contributed $24 billion to the US economy, and Indian students, who constitute about 12% of the international student group, are estimated to have forked out about $3 billion to the US education industry.

The Economist report raises important questions for thousands of Indian students who make a bee-line to the US each year for the coveted American MBA: Whether to fork out $100k-plus to get into a prestigious, top-ranked business school, or settle for a middling one with dimmer prospects of a good placement in an increasingly competitive environment? Or perhaps even get an MBA from the growing B-school industry in India?
Tihar inmates get 100% placement

Raj Shekhar | TNN

New Delhi: For some time, Raju, an inmate at Tihar Jail, was a worried twenty something. He was going to be released from jail in a few months and didn't know how he would earn a livelihood. On Tuesday, though, he had reason to cheer: he got placed in a well known company as assistant manager, with a monthly package of Rs 35,000. He had graduated in social work from IGNOU during his prison term.

Raju wasn't the only one: there were 65 others who received job offers during a placement drive in the jail. Altogether 31 companies turned up at the drive, inaugurated by Tihar DG Vimla Mehra. “This initiative boosts the reformation process and helps us strive towards the betterment of inmates,” Mehra said, adding that Tihar recorded 100% placements this year.

The placement interviews were carried out at central jail number 3. Tihar’s chief public relations officer, Sunil Gupta told TOI that 66 prisoners had been shortlisted for application for jobs on the basis of their conduct in the jail.

“The salary ranged from Rs 8,000 to Rs 35,000 per month. The posts offered to the inmates ranged from drivers to business development managers. A majority of inmates got very good packages – above Rs 2 lakh per annum,” Gupta said. The candidates were groomed for the interviews by an expert. “Things like facing an interview, answering a question and the way to dress were some of the things the inmates learnt. They were also taught to write impressive resumes,” Gupta added.

With this year’s placement, 400 inmates have landed jobs since 2010. While the placements have doubled from last year’s 30, the highest placements were recorded in 2012 with 142 jobs.
How brain injury turned man into a maths genius

Subodh Varma
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New Delhi: Scientists have made some progress in figuring out how a man who received severe brain injuries suddenly became a mathematical genius. They say that an area behind the crown of the head, known as the parietal cortex, appears to have become more active, according to a report in Live Science. This region is known to combine information from different senses.

Jason Padgett was an ordinary furniture salesman in Tacoma, Washington, US. In 2002, he was assaulted by two men outside a karaoke bar resulting in severe concussion and an injured kidney. As Padgett recovered, he suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder. As he progressed, Padgett realized that he was seeing the world differently — everything looked like it was made up of geometrical shapes. He saw a circle as made up of overlapping triangles. He could draw complex geometric shapes. He saw shapes when shown mathematical equations.

One day a physicist saw him making these shapes in a mall and was struck by Padgett's abilities. He persuaded Padgett to join college, where he is studying number theory.

As his abilities and how he acquired them got known, brain scientists got interested in finding out what had happened in his brain.

Berit Brogaard, a philosophy professor now at the University of Miami and her colleagues used functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) to study Padgett's brain. The scans showed that the left parietal cortex lit up the most, while areas involved with visual memory, sensory processing and planning also showed activity.

Using transcranial magnetic stimulation the scientists zapped specific areas with a magnetic pulse which either activates or inhibits the area. When the parietal cortex was thus zapped, the synesthesia faded. According to Live Science, Brogaard has earlier shown that when brain cells die, they release chemicals to increase activity in surrounding areas. This may have happened in Padgett's case. It appears that abilities like Padgett's may be dormant in every brain and they got released after the injury.