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IIT-Kharagpur lends cutting edge to the cuppa
Seven Manna, TNN | Oct 9, 2013, 07:31 AM IST

KOLKATA: Your morning cuppa is set to get a fresh zing, thanks to a new technology for tea production developed after four years' research by the Indian Institute of Technology, Kharagpur. What's more, tea produced through this new low-cost technology will not only bring smiles to the faces of tea drinkers, but growers as well, especially small players who will now have a more level playing field with the big players in the industry.

A team of scientists led by Prof Bijoy Chandra Ghosh of IIT-Kgp's agricultural and food engineering department has designed and developed a mini CTC (crush, tear and curl) manufacturing process. In August this year, the prototype was successfully tested and validated at the North Bengal Regional R&D Centre of Tea Research Association in the presence of Tea Board experts, scientists and big and small tea producers.

"With this series of non-polluting technologies, we have cut down on space requirement, energy consumption and overall production cost in each step of a conventional tea processing—withering, maceration, rolling, fermentation and drying. We have built a circular withering trough that can save 60% space and consumes less energy than the conventional one. Ditto for our new single-cut horizontal macerator prototype. Overall, we will be able to reduce cost, space and energy using the new machines," said Ghosh who, along with colleagues B Maiti, E V Thomas and others had embarked on the project in 2008. The Tea Board of India had approached IIT-Kgp with Rs 3.66 crore funding to develop low-cost next-generation machines that would reduce cost of tea production drastically to save the industry.

"In the new model," revealed Dilip Kumar Kushwaha, project scientist, IIT-Kgp, "the fermentation process has been standardized to control parameters like temperature and relative humidity for producing high quality tea. We are also working on the drying process to get high quality tea with small capacity machine suitable for small tea growers."

The new micro CTC machine can process 200 kg of green leaves per hour. According to Kushwaha, with the help of new machines, small growers can now produce quality CTC tea by controlling the size and shape of the tea grains. "About Rs 5 crore is needed to set up a conventional tea processing unit that requires to be handled by 20 to 25 people. But this same unit will cost Rs 25 lakh and can handle 1000-3000 kg of fresh tea leaves a day. The new model can be set up on 5-6 cottah plots and require just three to four handlers," said Bijoy Gopal Chakraborty, president of Cista, a small tea growers' body. Currently, India has over two lakh small tea growers - those with less than 25 acres of plantation - who account for 35% of the country's total tea output.
ITB to facilitate micro factories under STG's ownership

Debasis Sarkar, ET Bureau Oct 7, 2013, 05.02PM IST

Tags: STG | ITB | IIT Kharagpur | CISTA

SILIGURI: This may be a boon for the small tea growers (STG), almost 100% dependent on other's factories to process their green leaf yield. IIT Kharagpur has developed a small factory prototype suitable for STGs that can be installed at one tenth cost of usual factories. Indian Tea Board(ITB) has decided to provide high subsidy to STG's to set up this factory.

It is a landmark development and we welcome this," said Bijoy Sopah Chakroaborty, President of Confederation of Indian Small Tea Growers Associations (CISTA). Against a proposal of CISTA, the Indian Tea Board has decided in its 224th board meeting to provide 40% subsidy to the STGs intending to set this tiny factories.

As per ITB estimation, STGs contribute 35% to the total national green leaf production. With holding of maximum 10 ha of land, a STG can produces 1 lakh kg green leaf per annum. This translates to near 22,000kg of made tea per annum. But, this volume cannot justify a usual factory of 2.5 lakh kg annual made tea capacity with a need of minimum Rs 5 crore of investment. Naturally, the STG's remain dependent on other's factories.

In order to make the system friendlier to STGs, ITB funded the Tea Research Centre under the Agricultural and Food Engineering Department in IIT Kharagpur to design and develop a small tea factory. That has finally taken birth after four years of research. With 1/10th processing capacity of usual factories, this factory needs around Rs 40 lakh investment. It has capacity of producing around 20000 to 25000 Kg made tea per annum.

As decided, Indian Tea Board will provide 40% subsidy on actual establishment cost of this factory. In addition, with fast growing nationwide network, Small Growers Directorate under ITB will extend technical support and monitoring to all these mini and micro tea factories under the ownership of STGs.

However, "We want ITB to remain strict on keeping these factories restricted under true ownership of STGs only. Otherwise, purpose of the whole exercise will get lost," said Chakroaborty.
Today’s youth not as digitally native as we think

Globally, Only 30% Of People In The 15-24 Age Group Have Spent At Least 5 Yrs Actively Using Internet: Study

Erik Plesner

Everyone knows young people today are born with smartphones in hand and will skip to the internet from that time onward. Right? Well, not quite. Actually, fewer than one-third of young people around the world are “digital natives,” according to a report published on Monday and billed as the first comprehensive global look at the phenomenon.

The study conducted by the Georgia Institute of Technology and the International Telecommunication Union, shows that only 30% of people ages 15 to 24 have spent at least five years actively using the internet, the intentionality of defined digital natives. In many developed countries, more than 90% of young people are considered digital natives, with South Korea leading the way at 98.6%. But many developing countries lag far behind — all the way down to the Pacific island of Timor-Leste, where a mere 3% of 15-24-year-olds are digital natives.

A digital divide between rich and poor is nothing new; but the new study identifies an interesting trend on the phenomenon. It shows that in the developed world, there is hardly any generational gap anymore between internet users. Most people in wealthy countries are online — more than 94% of the total adult population, both young and old. In South Korea, for example, there is a very real first-generation gap in many developing countries. In countries like Barundi, Fiji and Vanuatu, young people are among three times more likely to be internet users than the overall adult population. In many other African, Asian and Latin American countries, the divide between digital natives and the rest of the population is also far more pronounced than in the developed world.

Michael Best, a Georgia Tech professor who co-authored the study and found some surprising parallels about the concept of digital natives, said that there is often a considerable divide between those who are online and their older counterparts in the same nation. He said that in most cases, older people are less adept at using the internet, even if they have access to it.

There are also striking differences among developing countries. In Malaysia, for example, there is a very large gap between the elderly and the young. In India, the elderly are more likely to be internet users than the young. The study also found that in many developing countries, the elderly are more likely to be internet users than the young. There are also striking differences among developing countries. In Malaysia, for example, there is a very large gap between the elderly and the young. In India, the elderly are more likely to be internet users than the young. The study also found that in many developing countries, the elderly are more likely to be internet users than the young.
Talk business with IIM Ahmedabad professors

"I think this is a great initiative," says Shivam Goel, 20, currently pursuing BCom (final year), St Xavier's College, Jalpur, one of the selected students. "It gave me the opportunity to discuss the role of social media in marketing with Dheeraj Sharma, a professor at IIM-A. This interaction gave me important insights into this field."

The entries received have been not only from students, but from working professionals, retired employees and professors from other institutes too. The next edition of FacConnect will be finalised soon. Details of the same will be posted on its official online channels. For more information, check https://www.facebook.com/pages/IIM-Ahmedabad/11024097665121.

You no longer need to crack the CAT and ace intensive interviews to interact in real time with professors from the Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad (IIM-A). As part of a new initiative called FacConnect, the institute opens virtual windows to the public, once a month.

Launched in August, FacConnect has had two sessions so far. The first session, on August 3, saw over 500 registrations, of which five entries were selected.

Professors speak personally to the five people selected about a pre-decided management topic, using Google Hangout, a video-conferencing social media application. The interaction lasts about half an hour. During this session, the students ask the professor questions that are related to the topic, and seek expert advice on management and business administration. A video of this session is then uploaded to YouTube, open for all viewers.

To apply, candidates have to write an essay and answer a few questions that are related to the topics chosen for the month. Past topics include determining success metrics in social media marketing, the effectiveness of social media in B2B marketing, competitive advantages of social media for small businesses, macro-economics and whether price discrimination is ethical.

This initiative will provide an opportunity for outsiders to interact and discuss issues and relevant topics with (our) reputed faculty for about 30-60 minutes," says Sarthak Phadke, media cell secretary, IIM-A.
US-bound Indian students top in studies, behind in money

Bhavya Dore
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MUMBAI: Indian students seeking to study in the US are financially not well off when compared to students from China and Saudi Arabia, two other countries that have large number of students going to the US, according to a new report.

This appears to be largely driven by the falling Indian rupee. The rupee touched its lowest ebb against the dollar in August, falling to 68.85, but has since mounted a recovery.

The report, prepared by World Education Services, a New-York based non-profit organisation specialising in international education and research, was released on Tuesday.

According to the report, 47% Indian students listed loans as one of two primary funding sources for financing their education in the US. In comparison, only 3% Chinese and 2% Saudi students listed loans as a funding source. Also, 32% Indians hoped for financial aid from institutions as against 21% Chinese and 10% Saudis.

“This aligns with middle class aspirations of many Indian students who have to rely on loans to fund their studies abroad as compared to funding from family in the case of Chinese or government in the case of Saudis,” said Rahul Choudaha, director, research and strategic development at WES, by email.

However, when it comes to academics, Indian students are stronger, with 74% found to be “high in academic preparedness” compared to China (51%) and Saudi (48%). “Their comparatively robust English language capabilities make them attractive to institutions that do not have the resources or infrastructure to fully support English language learners,” the report said.