RSS wing to hold science exhibition in IIT Delhi

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Vigyan Bharti, a wing of RSS which promotes scientific temper among the youth, is going to hold a science exhibition in the IIT Delhi Campus. In tandem with the flagship programme, Swachhata Abhiyan, being run by the BJP-led NDA government, the focus of the exhibition by the right wing organisation will be on cleanliness.

In the recent past, there have been allegations of the government shunting out the former IIT director, R Sheygaonkar. However, HRD minister Smriti Irani has denied that there has been any interference in the internal matters of IIT Delhi and said it is an autonomous institution.

The students of IIT are also expected to participate in the Vigyan Bharti event where the latest technology in environmental engineering is likely to be presented. Solid waste management and air pollution will be some themes on which the exhibition will be held. “The exhibition will be a joint effort of IIT Delhi, Ministry of Science and Technology and Vigyan Bharti,” said Mr Prajatantra, a Vigyan Bharti cooordinating.

The organisation has made several visits and met the IIT administration. Vigyan Bharti is also likely to rope in faculty for the exhibition which will be held from 4-8 December. Dr Shobha Jain, a member of Vigyan Bharti, said the organisation spreads awareness about science.

An IIT faculty member, who did not want to be named, said, “There is an attempt at saffronising education. But this should not happen in the IIT Delhi campus. Also, we have stopped giving grants to non-governmental organisations as there have been cases of misappropriation and we are accountable for all grants that we make.”
Dept of Biotechnology launches DBT-Pan IIT Centre for Bioenergy

The Department of Biotechnology (DBT) under the Ministry of Science and Technology has launched the ‘DBT-Pan IIT Centre for Bioenergy’, a virtual Centre spread across five Indian Institutes of Technology; Bombay, Kharagpur, Guwahati, Jodhpur, and Roorkee.

The project has been coordinated by IIT Bombay. A Memorandum of Agreement has been inked with the DBT and the five IITs. The first virtual centre for collaborative research will focus on the thematic areas of research in advance bio-fuel technologies, said a statement from the Ministry here. The collaboration was initiated in early January and engaged a research team from the five participating institutes consisting of 32 investigators who have been working on bio-energy and will jointly undertake research activities in the following thematic areas: Cyanobacterial Biofuels, Biofuels from micro-algae, Ligno-cellulosic biomass to Biofuels and Techno-economic and Life Cycle Analysis. The main objective of this centre is to develop advanced technologies in the area of biofuels, paving the way for a sustainable solution to the energy crisis.

‘Mukherjee Sir’ gives ‘social’ lessons

New Delhi: He regaled them with childhood stories, recounted the history of modern India and contemporary politics all within a little over an hour. President Pranab Mukherjee widely regarded for his vast knowledge and sharp memory used instances from his personal life to give students from the Dr Rajendra Prasad Sarvodaya Vidyalaya a crash course in political science on Teachers’ Day eve on Friday.

Asking the students to address him as “Mukherjee Sir” the President took to the ‘lectern’ 46 years after he quit his job at Calcutta University. The move described as a “wild idea” of Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal generated enthusiasm among the 60 students. “If anyone of you feel little bored, you are free to tell me Mukherjee you can stop it. I am no longer a President or a minister. I am just your Mukherjee Sir...I will be happy if you call me Mukherjee Sir,” he said.

Among these light hearted notes, were serious observations on the political history of India when he talked about the increasing role of social media and fourth pillar of the democracy — media and NGOs in forming social opinion which he said were “off shoot” of a healthy democracy.

Recalling a foreign journalist’s query about the Anna Hazare movement, he said: “If the people feel that MPs are not doing their jobs, governments are not doing their jobs, the law which is required, they (people) cannot simply sit idle... Through media, and powerful medium — the social media, Twitter, Facebook. These are powerful mechanisms of conveying opinion, carrying opinion, creating public opinion.”

Speaking impromptu, he described various milestones in India’s history, including crafting of the Constitution, economic liberalization, social sector schemes like NREGS among other issues.

For the full report, log on to www.timesofindia.com
1st session begins at IIM Paonta Sahib

Tribune News Service

Solan, September 4
The first session of the state's first IIM began today from the premises of a private college at Rampurghat in Paonta Sahib. Twenty-two students have been enrolled in the first batch.

The temporary campus has been provided the requisite facilities to make the institute functional. The hostel facility has also been arranged for the first batch of students. Chief Administrative Officer Dinesh Saxena said a batch of 22 students had been admitted for a two-year postgraduate course.

Initially, three faculty members from the IIM Lucknow have joined to facilitate beginning of the first session.
‘IIT Ropar will adopt engineering colleges’

Hindustan Times (Chandigarh)

RUPNAGAR: Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Ropar’s director, Prof Sarit K Das, said the country’s premier engineering institute was going to adopt a few engineering colleges of the region to assist in their overall development. He added that a proposal to set-up a consortium of IIT Ropar with its neighbouring institutes was already in the pipeline.

Das, who has recently taken over as IIT Ropar’s director, said he planned to develop it into a world class institute. He informed that IIT Ropar was going to choose its focus areas for academic research keeping in view the national and state priorities, strength of existing facilities and international trends. The institute was planning to focus on agriculture, health, defence, manufacturing and skill development related research, he added.

He emphasised on the need to modernise state industry to make it globally competitive and have effective programmes for skill development. Das said IIT Ropar was going to establish a career development and corporate relations centre to boost the training and placement activities by providing its students holistic professional training, which would include overall personality development in addition to strong technical skills. Das added that the institute would develop an eco-system, in collaboration with PGIMER.

Indian students in US universities increased by 32%

Hindustan Times (Indore)

WASHINGTON: The US universities and colleges have experienced a 32% increase in number of students from India since last year as compared to 9% internationally, latest official figures have stated.

According to “SEVIS by the Numbers,” a quarterly report on international students studying in the US released by the Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP), which is part of US Immigration and Customs Enforcement, there has been a “32% increase in students from India since 2014”.

Seventy-six per cent of all international students are from Asia. The top 10 countries of citizenship for international students included China, India, South Korea, Saudi Arabia, Canada, Japan, Taiwan, Vietnam, Mexico and Brazil.

India and Vietnam had the greatest percentage increase in students studying in the US at 31.9 and 25.9% respectively when compared to statistics extracted from SEVIS July 2014.
Seventh Pay Commission is no ogre

Its recommendations’ impact need not give us jitters because the rise in government wages will amount to only 0.8 per cent of GDP

The report of the Seventh Pay Commission (SPC) is set to be released soon. The new pay scales will be applicable to Central government employees with effect from January 2016. Many commentators wonder whether we need periodic Pay Commissions that hand out wage increases across the board. They argue over the havoc that will be wrought on government finances. They want the workforce to be downsized. They would like pay increases to be linked to productivity. These preconceptions deserve careful scrutiny. The reality is more nuanced.

T. T. Ram Mohan

Critics say we don’t need a Pay Commission every ten years because salaries in government are indexed to inflation. At the lower levels, pay in the government is higher than in the private sector. These criticisms overlook the fact that, at the top-level or what is called the ‘A Grade’, the government competes for the same pool of manpower as the private sector. So do public sector companies and public institutions – banks, public sector enterprises, Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs), Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs) and regulatory bodies – where pay levels are derived from pay in government.

The annual increment in the Central government is 5 per cent. Adding dearness allowance increases of around 5 per cent, we get an annual revision of 8 per cent. This is not good enough, because pay at the top in the private sector has increased exponentially in the post-liberalisation period.

Competition for talent

A correct comparison should, of course, be done on the basis of cost to the organisation. We need to add the market value of perquisites to salaries and compare them with packages in the private sector. We cannot and should not aim for parity with the private sector. We may settle for a certain fraction of pay but that fraction must be applied periodically if the public sector is not to lose out in the competition for talent.

True, pay scales at the lower levels of government are higher than those in the private sector. But that is unavoidable given the norm that the ratio of the minimum to maximum pay in government must be within an acceptable band. (The Sixth Pay Commission had set the ratio at 1:12.) Higher pay at lower levels of government also fuels short comings in the private sector, such as hiring of contract labour and the lack of unionisation. They are not necessarily part of the ‘problem with government’.

Perhaps the strongest criticism of Pay Commission awards is that they play havoc with government finances. At the aggregate level, these concerns are somewhat exaggerated. Pay Commission awards typically tend to disrupt government finances for a couple of years. Thereafter, their impact is digested by the economy. Thus, pay, allowances, and pension in Central government climbed from 1.9 per cent of GDP in 2001-02 to 2.3 per cent in 2009-10, following the award of the Sixth Pay Commission. By 2012-13, however, they had declined to 1.8 per cent of GDP.

The medium-term expenditure framework recently presented to Parliament looks at an increase in pay of 16 per cent for 2013-17 consequent to the Seventh Pay Commission award. That would amount to an increase of 0.8 per cent of GDP. This is a one-off impact. A more correct way to represent it would be to amortise it over, say, five years. Then, the annual impact on wages would be 0.16 per cent of GDP.

The medium-term fiscal policy statement presented along with the budget indicates that pensions in 2016-17 would remain at the same level as in 2015-16, namely, 0.7 per cent of GDP. Thus, the cumulative impact of any award is hardly something that should give us insomnia.

There are a couple of riders to this. First, the government is committed to One Rank, One Pension for the armed forces. This would impose an as yet undefined burden on Central government finances. Second, while the aggregate macroeconomic impact may be bearable, the impact on particular States tends to be destabilising.

The Fourth Finance Commission (FFC) estimated that the share of pay and allowances in revenue expenditure of the States varied from 29 per cent to 70 per cent in 2012-13. The corresponding share at the Centre was only 13 per cent. The problem arises because since the time of the Fifth Pay Commission, there has been a trend towards convergence in pay scales. The FPC, therefore, recommended that the Centre should consult the States in drawing up a policy on government wages.

Downsizing needed?

It is often argued that periodic pay revisions would be alright if only the government could bring itself to downsize its workforce – by at least 10 to 15 per cent. From 2013 to 2016, the Central government workforce (excluding defence forces) is estimated to grow from 33.1 lakh to 35.5 lakh. Of the increase of 2.4 lakh, the police alone would account for an increase of 1.2 lakh or 50 per cent. What is required is not so much downsizing as right-sizing – we need more doctors, engineers and teachers.

The Sixth Pay Commission estimated that the share of pay, allowances and pension of the Central government in revenue receipts came down from 38 per cent in 1998-99 to an average of 25 per cent in 2005-07. Based on the budget figures for 2015-16, this share appears to have declined further to 21 per cent. In financial terms, this amounts to a reduction of 17 percentage points over 17 years or an annual downsizing of 1 per cent. It’s a different matter that it is not downsizing through reduction in numbers of personnel.

It is often said that pay increases in government must be linked to productivity. We are told that this is where government and the private sector differ hugely. However, the notion that private sector pay is always linked to productivity is a myth. In his best-selling book, Capital in the 21st Century, economist Thomas Piketty argues that the explosion in CEO pay in the West has been increasingly divorced from performance. He also argues that the emergence of highly paid “supermanagers” is an important factor driving inequality in the West.

We are seeing a similar phenomenon in the private sector in India. The serious public policy challenge, therefore, is not so much to contain a rise in pay in the public sector as finding ways to rein in pay in the private sector. It is also ironic that people should yearn for linking pay to performance in the public sector when high-profile firms in the private sector such as Google and Accenture are turning away from such measurement.

A better idea would be to conduct periodic management audits of government departments on parameters such as cost effectiveness, timeliness and customer satisfaction.

Improving service delivery in government is the key issue. Periodic pay revision and higher pay at lower levels of government relative to the private sector could help this cause provided these are accompanied by other initiatives. The macroeconomic impact is nowhere as severe as it is made out to be.

(T.T. Ram Mohan is Professor at IIM, Ahmedabad)
CBSE chief: Smriti Irani-led HRD’s panel of nominees is scrapped

The HRD Ministry proposal had run into rough weather with Cabinet Secretary P K Sinha raising several objections over evaluation of experience criteria of candidates.

http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-others/cbse-chief-smriti-irani-led-hrds-panel-of-nominees-is-scraped/

The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC) has rejected the panel of names proposed by the Smriti Irani-led Human Resource Development Ministry for the post of CBSE chairman.

This comes after the Cabinet Secretary raised objections to the names, mainly over the “experience criteria” adopted for selecting them.

The ACC decided to “scrap the panel recommended by the search-cum-selection committee in its meeting held on April 13”. It directed the ministry to complete the selection process within two months and submit its proposal to the ACC for consideration before October 31. A letter by the Department of Personnel & Training (DoPT) in this regard was issued on August 31.

The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) has been without a regular full-time chairman since December 2014.

The ACC has entrusted Y S K Seshu Kumar — a Joint Secretary in the ministry — with the additional charge of CBSE chairman, taking away the responsibility from Satbir Bedi, who was Irani’s top choice for the job in the HRD proposal sent on June 24.

The HRD Ministry proposal had run into rough weather with Cabinet Secretary P K Sinha raising several objections and saying that it was not clear if the ministry had adhered to recruitment rules while evaluating experience criteria of candidates.

Sinha said the criteria advertised in the vacancy circular did not insist on the minimum three-year experience in educational administration, required as per recruitment rules. Instead, Sinha said, it gave the impression that officers of the rank of Joint Secretary — the post analogous to CBSE Chairman — were not required to meet the experience criteria.

The advertisement, he wrote, had “changed the applicability of experience criteria as it gives the understanding that experience criteria is not required for applicants holding analogous posts”. Bedi is a Joint Secretary in the HRD Ministry.

Sinha also pointed out that the information provided by the ministry in the proposal indicated that annual confidential reports (ACRs) “have not been taken into consideration while assessing the candidates”. The vacancy circular had sought ACR dossiers of the last five years from each applicant.

He also raised the issue of a complaint sent by an advocate to the HRD ministry last May regarding the appointment process. The advocate had claimed that recruitment rules were not followed in the vacancy circular. “The response of the Department (of School Education & Literacy), however, is still awaited,” Sinha stated.
Narendra Modi tells students: Don’t become robots, be sensitive

http://www.livemint.com/Politics/B7ULteXEufsXP4x2sxsEeN/Narendra-Modi-to-students-Dont-become-robots-be-sensitive.html

Modi said his govt is working on replacing the “character certificate” that students get after their school-leaving examination with an “aptitude certificate

New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday stayed away from rhetoric or big declarations, but called on teachers and students to become conscious citizens of India and make small contributions by doing things like saving electricity and promoting cleanliness.

“We need not become robots. We should nurture sensitivity,” Modi said on the eve of Teachers’ Day while interacting with school students from across the country.

Addressing the criticism that he got last year for speaking to students on Teachers’ Day, he said, “People wonder why I choose to spend time with students on Teachers’ Day. I feel that students are an image of their teachers. We all have a memory of something our teacher has given us when we were young. After a certain age, children spend more time with their teachers than their family. There is a huge responsibility with teachers at this time. Teachers make generations. It is time to commemorate teachers who have made scientists, doctors who are working for nation-building.”

Modi said his government was working on replacing the “character certificate” that students get after their school-leaving examination with an “aptitude certificate”. He said every quarter, the feedback of teachers, peers and friends of students will be captured digitally to produce the aptitude certificate, which will mention the areas of excellence of students when they finish school.

The Prime Minister said a true teacher can never retire and gave the example of former president A.P.J. Abdul Kalam and his passion for teaching. He also urged professionals from across the country to spend at least 100 hours every year voluntarily for teaching.

Giving small life lessons, Modi said that to be a good orator, “you need to be a good listener. And this will increase your confidence level”.

During the course of a nearly two-hour interaction, Modi reiterated his commitment for rural electrification and touched upon the key issues taken up by his government, including promotion of khadi, creating awareness about yoga, Digital India and Swachh Bharat Abhiyaan.

Replying to a question on how he will make the Digital India campaign a success even when several villages don’t have electricity, Modi promised to take electricity to 18,000 villages without power in the next 1,000 days.

Responding to a question on how to enter politics, Modi said: “Good people and people from all walks of life are required in politics...leadership quality is essential. You must also be clear why you want to be a leader: to fight elections only or to make a difference,” he said.
The Congress party, however, asked Modi to attend the class held by President Pranab Mukherjee in New Delhi. “Today the President also taught children. If Prime Minister would have attended the President of India’s *pathshala*, he would have known what Congress did in 60 years,” said Shaktisinh Gohil, a national spokesperson of Congress.

This is the second year in a row that Modi has addressed students and teachers on the occasion of Teachers’ Day. He took questions from several students through video conferencing from Jammu and Kashmir, Bihar and the north-eastern states, among others.

Modi was joined by human resource development (HRD) minister Smriti Irani, junior HRD minister Upendra Kushwaha and junior finance minister Jayant Sinha.

During his informal interaction with teachers, Modi exhorted them to continually strive towards improving the quality of education in the country. He said teachers should keep abreast of technology and imbibe it judiciously as part of the teaching routine.

The sorry state of India’s students is well-known. According to the Programme for International Student Assessment coordinated by the Paris-based Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, India was ranked at number 73 among 74 countries in 2010-11.

Similarly, the 2014 Annual Status of Education Report by education non-profit Pratham said every second Class V student in rural India can’t read the text of a Class III level. In 2005, when the first ASER report was published, three out of five children in Class V were able to read a Class II text.

**NIT-Tiruchi has doubled Ph.D seats**


The National Institute of Technology-T (NIT-T) has doubled the intake of Ph.D seats from 45 to 90.

The Ministry of Human Resource and Development (MHRD) has given its assent to the move recently.

Speaking to *The Hindu*, its Director S. Sundarrajan told *The Hindu* on Tuesday that it had enabled the institute to focus more on research and development.

**External registration scheme**

The introduction of external registration scheme had attracted more professionals from prestigious institutions, including the Defence Research and Development Organisation, the Indian Space Research Organisation, and others. The number of external entry for Ph. D programme had gone up to 60 during the current academic year. Stating that R. Umamaheswaran, Mission Director of recently launched Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle (GSLV) had been pursuing Ph.D at NIT-T, Mr. Sundarrajan said the external registration scheme had enabled the institute to work with the country’s leading technocrats and scientists.

It had benefitted faculty members and students to associate with them.