Push for Mandarin in CBSE

The best way to introduce China in India is to introduce its language at the primary level.

KAPIL SIBAL

"I'm willing to include Chinese in the CBSE system as a course curriculum but I can't do that unless I have standards and there's a test. And that can't happen unless I collaborate with you," Sibal told the Chinese.

The plan will be launched once teachers are available. However, existing Chinese language training programmes in deemed universities in India complain of constraints in acquiring visas for Chinese teachers.

A joint working group of both nations will discuss mutual recognition of degrees but Sibal said that extending recognition to Chinese medical degrees in India was out of its purview.

Sibal also proposed that India and China expand student sponsorship programmes on the lines of the Fulbright scholarship.

KRISHNA VISIT

External Affairs Minister S.M. Krishna will travel to China in November, his second visit to that country this year.

He will attend the RIC (Russia, India, China) meeting of foreign ministers and interact with the top Chinese leadership, government sources said.

The sources added that Krishna will hold discussions with Chinese foreign minister Yang Jiechi on the sidelines of the meet. He is expected to discuss concerns over Beijing's activities in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir, issuing stapled visas Kashmiri residents and the issue of trade imbalance.
PG STUDENT SUBJECTED TO RAGGING AT MAMC

HT Correspondent

NEW DELHI: A first year post-graduate student at Maulana Azad Medical College, the teaching wing of Lok Nayak Hospital, was allegedly ragged in the hostel premises by a group of seniors on Sunday night.

The 23-year-old student specialising in medicine had lodged a complaint with the dean as well as the Delhi Police on Monday, alleging "misbehaviour/ragging" by a group of five seniors from the department.

The Dean Dr AK Agarwal has constituted anti-ragging committee of three members comprising Dr Veena Choudhary, Dr Swaraj Batra and Dr Richa Diwan to look into the incident.

"It was brought to our notice on Monday. We formed a fact finding committee the same day and on Tuesday after they submitted a report, we forwarded it to the apex committee. The next course of action will depend on the report that is expected to be submitted by this week," said Dr Agarwal.
IITs want to repeat a failed experiment

FLOP SHOW Medical school, started 10 yrs back by IIT-Kgp, is dying

Churu Sudan Kasturi
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NEW DELHI: The first medical school started by an IIT 10 years back has struggled to retain students and attract doctors — showing up challenges the IITs may face as they expand further into medical education.

A decade before the IIT Council last week reiterated its long-standing proposal to allow the IITs to enter medical education to promote interdisciplinary research involving medicine and engineering, IIT Kharagpur had already taken the first step.

The School of Medical Sciences and Technology (SMST) at the country's oldest IIT was started in 2000 and offers a carefully crafted postgraduate course — a three-year programme for MBBS graduates.

The school was launched to coincide with the Golden Jubilee of the IIT, started in 1951.

Promoting interdisciplinary research has also been a key focus area of the school which does not offer MBBS courses. Other IITs are already pursuing interdisciplinary research involving the medical sciences.

But almost 50 per cent of the MBBS graduates who joined IIT Kharagpur medical school left the MMST course mid-way, and the school failed to attract doctors as faculty, top sources confirmed to HT.

"It is a fact that we have struggled to either attract doctors or retain students," ASST PROFESSOR at the II-Kgp run med school.

Professor at the school said on the condition of anonymity.

The school has only one professor rank teacher and all the other faculty are assistant professors — the junior-most posts in the teaching structure. Almost all the faculty have an engineering background.

Another faculty member at the school cautioned against concluding that the IITs should stay out of medical sciences. "On the contrary, what the problems faced at the SMST show up are the challenges that the IITs must be prepared for, if they want to expand into medical education," faculty member said.
Financial Chronicle ND
16/09/2010

IISc and IIM-B join hands for innovative research

SreeRupA Mitra
Bangalore

THE Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore (IISc) on Wednesday signed a MoU with the Indian Institute of Management, Bangalore (IIM-B) in a move aimed at deepening the academic exchange and collaboration between the two institutes.

The MoU will ensure closer academic collaborations between the two institutes as well as initiate technology and innovation management activities related to science-based Intellectual Property at IISc and co-created between the two institutes.

“In this technology-driven age, such collaborations are crucial for development, as academic research benefits society when converted into entrepreneurial opportunities. The intersection of science and management offers exciting opportunities and this collaboration will certainly enhance the output from Bangalore as a knowledge centre,” said Pankaj Chandra, director, IIM-B.

Agreed IISc director P Balaram, who sees the need for closer ties between these institutes in order to bring scientific innovations closer to society, and thereby build scientific institutions in India that will serve industry and society in general.

The academic activities include joint academic programmes in all areas of science and management. The technology and innovation management activities will involve joint identification of IP at IISc, strategies for its marketing, joint incubation and startup companies between IISc and IIM-B. Faculty, students and alumni of both the institutes will be involved and a joint board will be set up between IISc and IIM-B for overseeing this initiative.

sreerupamitra@mydigitofc.com
‘US should invest in jobs, not take regressive steps’
Nasscom hits out at Ohio’s outsourcing ban, visa fee hikes

Thanjia B M
Bangalore

TRADE body Nasscom has described US protectionist moves as a disturbing trend and said it hopes that America will make more investments to create jobs, instead of taking such regressive actions.

“I hope the US makes more positive investments to create jobs and to become competitive, rather than taking any regressive action which seems negative and will lead to protectionist measures around the world,” Nasscom president Som Mittal said on the sidelines of Nasscom’s Infrastructure Management Services Summit 2010 on Wednesday.

The last couple of months have seen some measures in the US that have caused concern in the Indian IT industry. These include a controversial bill that proposed to strengthen security along its border with Mexico by increasing H-1B and L1 visa fees and state of Ohio, US recently banning outsourcing by government departments to offshore locations.

Mittal said the industry expects to hear more noise on the issue in view of the forthcoming elections to the US Senate and House of Representatives. “But we do not know in what form or shape it would be. It was also not necessary that it would all be targeted at India,” he added.

Forrester’s VP and principal analyst, John McCarthy said the moves were mere rhetoric and there won’t be much impact on Indian IT services companies. “A lot of it is rhetoric since the mood in the electorate is pretty volatile. But I don’t see companies becoming less reliant on IT because of this,” he said.

He suggested that Indian IT firms increase their hiring in the US because of the presence of highly skilled talent in domain and consulting areas.

Meanwhile, remote infrastructure management (RIM) services as a segment is estimated to have aggregated export revenues of $4.3 billion in FY2010 and employs 90,000 people. It is projected that by 2020, RIM can contribute more than a third of total IT services revenues for India.

Mittal said, “The RIM services sector has been a major growth driver for the Indian IT services industry in the past few years, and has the potential to become the third largest revenue contributor to the IT services industry by 2020. But to sustain and achieve the potential growth, the industry needs to find effective measures to ensure 24X7 uptime of technical infrastructure, build a large pool of talent through investments in training, ensure compliance requirements of clients are met and security best practices are implemented on an ongoing basis.”

The drivers for RIM are expanding rapidly from cost, value to innovation and transformation. Over the past four years, the domestic IT services market has also witnessed increased adoption of RIM services across different verticals like BFSI, telecom, real estate, utilities, auto, consumer, pharma and government.

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"THE industry expects to hear more noise on the issue in view of the forthcoming US elections"

Som Mittal
President, Nasscom
Antibiotic to fight drug-resistant bugs?

A test that diagnoses TB in just an hour

Washington: Scientists have developed next-generation of antibiotics, which may fight be able to fight “superbugs” that are resistant to normal antibiotics.

Micha Fridman of Tel Aviv University said that the key to developing this miracle drug is the bacteria itself.

“We took the mechanism of bacterial resistance and used this mechanism itself to generate antibiotics. It’s thanks to these bacteria that we can develop a better medication,” explained Fridman.

The research has been conducted in collaboration with Sylvie Garnier Tsviokova from the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor.

According to Fridman, certain bacterial strains include enzymes, which help the bacteria to inactivate antibiotics.

When the enzymes meet with London: Scientists have developed a new test which can diagnose tuberculosis in one hour, potentially helping to curb the spread of the disease, a health agency said in a study on Wednesday.

The “ultra-rapid” test is far quicker than traditional methods, which can take up to eight weeks and mean that patients, who are often from transient populations, move on untreated, said the Health Protection Agency (HPA).

“We’re excited to have developed this new test because it means we can potentially diagnose someone with TB cleaner within an hour and start them immediately on the treatment they need,” said Cath Arnold of the HPA, who led the study.

The new, highly sensitive test works by identifying a single molecule of DNA in the TB bacterium. The announcement comes less than two weeks after US researchers said they had developed a new test also using genetic markers that could diagnose drug-resistant TB in two hours.

These new antibiotics will be a vast improvement on today’s drugs, said Fridman.

When fully developed, they could be used to treat infections that are now considered difficult if not impossible to treat with current antibiotics. The findings were published in the journal ChemBioChem.

IT future looks hazy as US cos turn wary of offshoring

New Contracts Get Postponed Raising Concern Levels

Pankaj Mishra

MERICA’s worsening economic climate and incendiary political rhetoric could end up hurting the fortunes of India’s $50-billion outsourcing industry as US firms start avoiding overseas contracts fearing a backlash from skittish politicians. At least six customers of India’s top three IT companies—Wipro, Infosys and TCS—have postponed decisions on new contracts in the past quarter, triggering concern in Bangalore and Mumbai, the headquarters of the big Indian IT firms.

“What we see from customers is that they are committing short-term; they also reserve the right to cancel, so clearly, everybody is playing the short-term game at this point in time,” said S. Kris Gopalakrishnan, chief executive of India’s second-biggest software exporter, Infosys.

The trend, if it continues, will be a body blow to the outsourcing industry, just recovering from the worst slowdown in its history. Hiring in IT companies has picked up in the past few quarters and so has earnings growth. But another round of weaknesses, bound to be triggered if American firms pull the plug on new orders, will definitely damage confidence and financial performance, experts say.

“Customers are not pulling any triggers on big contracts, and unfortunately, the November election is making them even more cautious,” said John C. McCarthy, vice president and principal analyst at US-based Forrester Research. Says Indian firms, he adds that hopes that customers in the US would start doling out large contracts after the European debt crisis, which didn’t happen. Large banks and manufacturing companies in the US are wary about demand for their products, and have been trimming their payroll in order to boost profits. This has resulted in high unemployment rates of 9.6%, the biggest slump in hiring since the post World War II era. US economic growth too has slipped to about 1.6% in the second quarter, less than the 3.7% growth in the first quarter.

> Job scene worsens in US: P 3
Times of India ND 16/09/2010
p13

To give China a run for its money, IIT-M to study it up close

Hemali Chhapla | TNN

Mumbai: It was the ancient Chinese strategist Sun Tzu who spoke of the importance of knowing one's enemy when he said, “If you know the enemy and know yourself, you need not fear the results of a hundred battles”. India has evidently decided to take a cue from that principle: It will now keep a keen eye on its competitors on the global stage. And it will do this through its best centres of excellence — the Indian Institutes of Technology.

Each IIT, which is free to pick the country it wants to study, will establish an observatory and study the developments of nations strategic to India. IIT-Madras, which mooted the proposal, is setting up a centre that will follow China — right from Mao Tse Tung’s revolution and Deng Xioping’s reforms to every step that the dragon takes today. The idea was approved by Union human resource development minister Kapil Sibal.

“A centre of studies on a foreign country may be established with a view to developing expertise on countries of strategic importance,” says the note shared in the meeting with Sibal. “Each IIT may concentrate on a particular country. As in the US, such centres will be able to advise the government, especially in terms of strategic negotiations... Such centres will necessarily have advisory boards of former foreign secretaries and ambassadors.”

The idea of such centres is borrowed from the West. Asia’s upward surge recently saw several American and British universities starting observatories that most commonly watched India and China. No longer are neighbours and nations just that; enmeshed among countries are multiple complexities, making foreign policy a frontal issue. And experts say that observatories are as much international watchdogs as they are vehicles for turbocharging bilateral relations.

In its pitch, IIT-Madras stated: “China is important in geopolitical terms. China and India also compete on the world stage. An engaged study of policy would provide a sound basis for creating an interpretative framework within which China may be understood.”
Indian campuses get a foreign flavour

BY PALLAVI SINGH

The opportunity to work in foreign countries has been a major draw for students and faculty alike. However, the pandemic has led to a shift in the way foreign opportunities are presented, with virtual conferences and workshops becoming a common way to engage with foreign institutions.

"It was exciting to work with people from different parts of the world," says a student who recently completed an internship in the UK. "It was a great learning experience and I am glad I took the opportunity."

The pandemic has also led to an increase in the number of online courses and programs offered by foreign universities, which has made it easier for students to pursue foreign opportunities. Many universities have also started offering dual-degree programs, which allow students to earn a degree from a foreign university while completing their studies in their home country.

For faculty, the pandemic has also opened up new avenues for collaboration with foreign institutions. "We have been able to work on several research projects with our foreign counterparts, which has been an enriching experience," says a faculty member from a top Indian university.

However, the pandemic has also highlighted the need for universities to focus on developing local opportunities for their students and faculty. "We need to work towards making our institutions more attractive to students and faculty, so that they do not have to look outside our borders for opportunities," says a university administrator.

In the future, it is likely that there will be a greater emphasis on developing local opportunities, while still maintaining the focus on global collaboration. "We need to strike a balance between local and global opportunities, so that our students and faculty can benefit from both," says a university administrator.

Despite the challenges posed by the pandemic, Indian campuses have shown a strong ability to adapt and find new ways to engage with the global academic community. "The pandemic has been a catalyst for change, and we need to continue to work towards developing opportunities that are beneficial for both our students and faculty," says a university administrator.
Half of the gainfully employed women in India are unskilled

Study says housewives have fewer socio-economic profiles compared with married working women

By Abhishek Ojha
abhishek.ads@gmail.com

JUXTCONSULTING SURVEY

October 2019, a survey conducted by the New Indian Express, a leading news organisation, showed that only 12% of housewives and stay-at-home mothers had better socio-economic classifications (SECs) profiles compared with married women who were working as well as working mothers.

The study was conducted over two months in 35 states, covering 58,000 households in cities, towns and villages, says Samajwadi News, a leading news organisation.

The study divided women into six sections, including housewives, stay-at-home mothers, students, single women who were working, women who were married and working, and working mothers. Out of 448 million women, only 10 million are working women (roughly 9%). Of the rest, 25 million are housewives.

Women who are single and working constitute only 2% of all women. While half of the gainfully employed women in India are "skilled" workers, only one in ten is employed in the corporate world.

The survey also revealed that there are more working women in southern India, and Marathis and Telugu-speaking women form a noticeable proportion of the workforce.

Stay-at-home mothers or "housewife moms" is the largest occupational-martial segment among women (56%).

According to the survey, a majority of housewives and stay-at-home mothers belonged to SEC A, B, and C. SEC D is based on education and occupation of the chief wage earner who contributes maximum to household expenses. SEC A and B refer to high status, while SEC D and SEC E fall in the low socio-economic class.

The study stated that the average monthly household income of housewives ranged from Rs 4,440 to Rs 28,424, an average of Rs 5,284 for women who were married and working.

Single and working women, said the survey, had the highest average monthly income of Rs 14,551 and lived mainly in the metros.

While a relatively higher proportion of housewives live in bigger cities, including the metros, two out of three working women are found in the 4 cities such as Mumbai, Delhi, Kolkata, and Hyderabad.

"The monthly average household income of the families to which the housewives belong is higher compared to lifestyle diseases." A majority of working housewives and working mothers surveyed found themselves less physically fit. The study added that these two segments were in fact, more prone to lifestyle diseases.

Healthcare, hospitality lead in job creation

Maya Kakar

The organised sector in India could create about 320,000 jobs between July and September, according to the Maf Rangdaj Employment Trends Survey. There is optimism in the economic scenario across all sectors and most of the new jobs created are in services, it says.

According to the survey, 500 companies across 13 industry segments that included eight Indian cities, the survey revealed 418,000 jobs were created between January and June with the healthcare sector creating 121,000 jobs, with another 63,000 in the hospitality sector. The top five sectors leading the boom are healthcare, hospitality, real estate and construction, information technology and IT-enabled services, and education, training and consulting.

New Delhi, Mumbai, and Chennai are the main cities leading on jobs, by creating 1.5 lakh, 41,000, and 40,000 respectively during the same period.

Real estate and construction leads with the highest growth in number of people employed. It also expects growth in average salary by about 4.8% per cent, followed by pharma (4.3 per cent) and healthcare (3.4 per cent) during the third quarter.

Bangalore expects a rise in average salary by about 4.9 per cent (the highest), followed by Delhi and Pune (both 4.5 per cent) during the third quarter.

The estimated proportion of experienced workforce is highest in the pharma sector at 87 per cent.

Indian legal eagles begin to ‘correct’ their US counterparts

PRAVEEN ROSE

Indian lawyers’ standards are low in the eyes of the top American law firms that handle legal process outsourcing (LPO) here. The lawyers hired by LPOs over time have become skilled enough to review the work of US lawyers, they say.

For instance, the Myrons team of SSD Global, the Indian subsidiary of SmithDehn LLP, a New York-based law firm, is now checking for English and editing drafts of US lawyers. The usual high-end model till now has been that Indian LPO employees preparing only drafts and for the US lawyers to review these. "The most surprising news work is good editing for English, as is the Myron team’s legal review of US lawyers’ drafts for errors in substance," said Russell A Smith, president and chairman, SSD Global Solutions, an LPO with offices in Mumbai. Smith is a partner at SmithDehn LLP.

"I never would have predicted this," he added.

A recent American Bar Association article compared the scenario to a ‘man bites dog’ story. "Indian LPO companies have taken a lot of heat from US lawyers for plagiarism of work, but they (the latter) now may need to steel themselves against editors," the article says.

The Myrons team has given a boost to real estate & construction, which has demonstrated the highest growth in employment figures. They see that the trend will continue in the next quarter, too.

The survey found housewives having better household asset ownership levels compared with working and married women and working mothers. For instance, 90% of housewives had colour television sets at a household asset compared with working and married mothers.

Likewise, 94% housewives and 10% single-working women had access to iPods and MP3 players compared with those who were working and married (2%).

A majority of working housewives and working mothers surveyed found themselves less physically fit. The study added that these two segments were, in fact, more prone to lifestyle diseases.

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Business
Standard ND
16/09/2010 P6
IISc, IIM-B to collaborate on technology, innovation

BS REPORTER
Bangalore, 15 September

The Indian Institute of Science (IISc), Bangalore, on Wednesday signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Indian Institute of Management Bangalore (IIM-B) in a move that will deepen the academic exchange and collaboration between the two institutions.

The MoU focuses on two goals — to have closer academic collaborations between the two Institutes and to initiate technology and innovation management activities related to science-based intellectual property generated at IISc and co-created between the two.

The academic activities will cover joint academic programmes in all areas of science (pure science and engineering) and management, and will share the wealth of complementary wisdom and pedagogical experience the Institutes possess. The technology and innovation management activities will involve joint identification of intellectual property at IISc, strategies for its marketing, joint incubation and start-up companies between IISc and IIMB.
IT hubs will be set up in more places: Buddhadeb

Press Trust of India
Kolkata, Sept 18
West Bengal will set up more IT hubs to facilitate expansion and create employment in the IT and ITES sectors, the Chief Minister, Mr Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee, said today.

"We will set up IT hubs in Siliguri, Durgapur, Haldia and Kharagpur," Mr Bhattacharjee said at the foundation laying ceremony of the East Kolkata IT Park here.

He said West Bengal had been a late bloomer in the domain of IT as compared to Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra. "Since 2002, when the IT sector started to take off, the growth has been good," he said.

The IT park will come up at Nonadanga near the metropolis. It will be operational in 18-24 months and will involve an investment of Rs 500 crore. Rotla, HSBC and HCL will set up development centres on 5.5 and 1.5 acres respectively. The Managing Director of Rotla India, Mr K.K. Singh, told reporters that the company will invest Rs 250 crore and create employment for 5,000 people.

One more for Kolkata: The West Bengal Chief Minister, Mr Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee, unveils a plaque during the foundation stone laying ceremony of 'East Kolkata IT Park' in Kolkata on Wednesday. - PTI

US ‘protectionist’ policies won’t hurt industry: Nasscom chief

Business Line ND 16-Sep-10

Our Bureau
Bangalore, Sept 15
Short-term blips will not impact the IT industry, said Mr Som Mittal, President, Nasscom (National Association of Software and Services Companies), referring to the "protectionist" policies of the US and the global economic scenario.

“We may see a protectionist policy, which is political in nature. But it will not change the fundamentals of the industry," said Mr Mittal at the inauguration of the ‘Infrastructure Management Services Summit 2010’ organised by the industry body. The trend is “disturbing”, said Mr Mittal, hoping that the US would make positive investments to create jobs, instead of resorting to “regressive” measures.

The global changes of 2008 have led to a ‘new normal’. Emerging economies have become the drivers of the world and the developed economies are looking at improving productivity. And the Indian IT industry has a role to play. Despite the downturn, free movement of data and people between economies will continue, said Mr Mittal.

ON GST, DTC

Referring to the changes in the tax structure in the country, Mr Mittal said he proposed GST (goods and services tax) which plans to simplify laws will "make life easy". The Direct Tax Code (DTC) too will have its merits, especially for units that commence operations in SEZs by March 2014, he said.

"We have to make a presentation to the standing committee (on DTC) with our suggestions. It is our endeavour to ensure that the industry remains competitive and gets benefits."

The IT industry is seeing great promise in the domestic market, especially government projects. "The Government (through the public-private partnership model) will drive more large virgin outsourcing deals in the future," said Mr Mittal.

A new talent base is emerging in the industry which is looking at science graduates and diploma holders with great interest, said the Nasscom President. "We don't need only highly qualified engineers. We need some engineers. But the industry is training people doing their undergraduate programme so that when they pass out, they are industry-ready."

RIM SERVICES GROWING

Apart from the traditional services, the IT industry is seeing good growth from remote infrastructure management (RIM) services, said Mr Mittal. "The RIM sector has been a major growth driver for the Indian IT services industry in the past few years, and has the potential to become the third largest revenue contributor to the IT services industry by 2020.”

This sector, which employs 90,000 people, is estimated to have aggregated export revenues of $4.3 billion in FY2010.
Use eco-friendly idols, says ministry

Urmia Goswami
NEW DELHI

Religious rituals may have to make some compromises for the sake of environment. Ahead of Ganapati Visarjan and Durga Puja, the environment ministry has put in place guidelines for idol immersion.

Concerned about the increase in pollution of water bodies at the end of the festival, the ministry has suggested use of environment-friendly materials for idols and laid out a system for immersions that would minimize pollution of water bodies.

Environment minister Jayaram Ramesh has written to all chief ministers asking them to ensure strict implementation of the guidelines. "Faith must be respected but there is a growing need to regulate this practice since the number of idols being immersed is increasing every year. This has led to instances of severe pollution of these water bodies," Mr Ramesh wrote.

The guidelines, formulated by the Central Pollution Control Board, has suggested preferred materials for idols, immersion process and segregation of materials ahead of immersion to prevent pollution. These guidelines lay down specific instructions for immersion in lakes, rivers and in the sea, which must be paid attention to. These guidelines further delineate and specify the role of the state pollution control boards in conducting water quality assessments of water bodies and classifying them on the basis of certain physio-chemical parameters," the minister wrote.

It has been suggested that idols be made from natural materials "as described in the holy scripts". The CPCB guidelines suggest discouraging the use of plaster of paris and baked clay. Painting of idols is also being discouraged. In case idols have to be painted, the CPCB has suggested that water soluble and non-toxic natural dyes are used. The guidelines suggest to segregate all worship materials into bio-degradable and non bio-degradable materials, the former would be used for composting and recycling and the later to be disposed in sanitary landfills. It is suggested that clothes be sent to orphanages.

To ensure that immersions are conducted with minimal damage to water bodies, the local authorities have been asked to identify and notify immersion spots. This identifications will be done in consultation with the river authority, port authority, water supply board, irrigation department. The pooja organisers are to be roped in for spreading awareness about the need to use non-toxic materials for idols and decorations.

It has also been suggested that the immersion spots be cordoned off and barricaded, and a synthetic liner be placed at the bottom of the spot. This will help in collecting and removing materials that do not dissolve in water. The CPCB has set out specific instructions for all kinds of water bodies. The state pollution control boards and pollution control committees have been asked to make a water quality assessment before and after the immersions.
Let IIT directors retire at 65

Over past year or so, three leading business schools in the US — Harvard, Chicago and Stern — have hired new deans. The oldest of them is 48. Here in India, we seem to be moving in the opposite direction. The ministry of human resources development (HRD) has permitted the boards of IITs to raise the retirement age of directors from 65 to 70. This is a bad idea. The IIT boards would do well not to implement it.

Raising the retirement age to 70, it is said, will give greater scope for a second term and even a third term for directors. Some in the IIT system have argued that this is necessary as there is a scarcity of directorial talent. Nonsense. There is enough talent in the university and among overseas Indian faculty willing to return to India — enough to fill the post of director in the 15 IITs we have.

We need younger leaders in this country, new leaders. One of the welcome changes in the Indian corporate world in recent years is that there are more young people at the top. Ails, other walks of life — politics, the bureaucracy, academia — have remained relatively immune to this trend. Academia must embrace this trend, not buck it.

That apart, there is a weighty reason for not having a higher retirement age and a second or third term for directors. In the IIT system (and also in the IIM system), there is very little accountability of directors. Lack of accountability of the director is the principal governance issue in our elite institutions today, not any supposed lack of autonomy. Over the years, the boards of these institutions have failed to put in place adequate norms for accountability of the director. In the past couple of years, the ministry of HRD has tried very hard to bring this issue to the fore, but we are yet to see any results.

The contrast with top institutions in the US, the Mecca of higher education, could not be starker. Competition among educational institutions in the US is fierce, unlike in India where the leading IITs and IIMs face no worthwhile competition. The deans of these institutions are, therefore, subject to a high degree of accountability. A failure to improve the faculty profile, the departure of faculty of stature, a fall in programme rankings, a decline in the quality of research — these and other failures could easily cost the dean his job. In India, it is possible for the director of an elite institution to sleep through his tenure without evoking any response from the system.

Until the Indian system is subject to greater market discipline and accountability, giving IIT directors a second or third term is unwise.

IIMA has set the right example by limiting the tenure of the director to one term.

The IIMs, in general, have followed the healthy principle of a single term for the director, although there have been occasional departures at some IIMs (other than IIMA). The man responsible for this convention in the IIM system was IIMA’s first full-time director, the legendary Ravi Manthri. Matthai was all of 38 when Vikram Sarabhai and his colleagues chose him as the first full-time director. (Sarabhai had been honorary director until then).

Even at the time that he was appointed, Matthai had indicated to Sarabhai that he would not like to stay on in the job for more than five to seven years. His contract, however, did not stipulate any term. Power is addictive. Matthai could have changed his mind and stayed on as director until retirement. He did not do so. At 45 and at the peak of his fame, he chose to step down, having put IIMA firmly on the map of the country as a centre of excellence.

Matthai argued that as institutions evolve, a change in leadership is required, otherwise a system can get too set in its ways. My own sense is that he was also alive to the dangers inherent in a director’s staying on for too long a system where the director had sweeping powers but was subject to very little accountability. At IIMA, having a single term for the director has been crucial to preserving the culture and processes that Sarabhai and Matthai created. It has been an important factor in IIMA retaining its position of pre-eminence in the country.

IIMA has adhered to this convention for the past four decades. (Those seeking to have it overturned have run into the argument to end all arguments: if the great Matthai could step down after one term, why should anybody else continue?). But not all the IIMs have remained true to it. The government would do well to codify this convention for the IIMs and extend it to the IITs as well. Not only must the IIT director retire at 65, he must stay only for one term. Where accountability is ill-defined, limiting the director to one term is eminently desirable.

(The author is professor, IIM Ahmedabad)
Chinese soon in CBSE curriculum, says Sibal

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
BEIJING, SEPTEMBER 15

MANDARIN, the language spoken by the majority of the Chinese, will soon be part of the CBSE curriculum as India and China discussed modalities on Wednesday to train a large number of Indian teachers to acquire the language skills necessary to make it part of the course.

"China is a powerful neighbour and is emerging as a biggest consumer of global resources. The best way to introduce China in India is to introduce its language at the primary level so that our kids develop interest and knowledge about China," Human Resource Development Minister Kapil Sibal said.

The issue figured high on his talks with China's Education Minister Yuan Guiren, who promised to work out modalities to train Indian teachers in Chinese language in India.

"Let us get enough Indians to learn Chinese. Let us have a lot of Chinese trainers in India who will teach the school students. That is how we evoke interest in our kids about China," Sibal told Indian journalists here.

"I told Yuan I am willing to introduce Chinese in the CBSE system as a course. I cannot do that unless I have standards and a there is a test. That cannot happen unless I collaborate with you," said Sibal, who also took part in the World Economic Forum in the Chinese city of Tianjin.

The Chinese side said that a two-way programme can be worked out to train about 200 teachers. Some can come here to learn and others can learn in India through different methods, Sibal said.

Sibal said he has already spoken to CBSE chairman Vincent Joshi and obtained his consent to make Chinese part of its curriculum.

Sibal has also proposed to China to extend its sponsorship programme to exchange scholars from universities in different subjects on the lines of Full Bright Scholarship. India as a reciprocal gesture will support equal number of students, he said.

Sibal visited Peking University and held discussions with its officials on various subjects. To deepen the cooperation among universities, 10 Vice-Chancellors of India and China would meet here next month to discuss specific issues of collaboration.
THE Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) has asked schools to ensure that projects and assignments given to students under the Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE) scheme must be done as group activities in school and not carried home.

The CBSE decision is seen as an attempt to stop students from taking their assignments home. The board had recently expressed concern over students outsourcing their projects to siblings and parents or to “entrepreneurs who have set up shop.”

In a new circular on the implementation of CCE in upper primary classes — VI to VIII, the CBSE has asked schools to communicate to their teachers that various projects and assignments given to children must be done within school time and in class. The board has released a teacher’s manual listing its directives.

The Indian Express had earlier reported that schools were extending the tools and techniques of CCE to upper primary classes.

The CCE takes into account both scholastic and non-scholastic areas for grading a student. “The teachers’ manual has recommended a nine-point scale for scholastic components and a five-point scale for co-scholastic components,” said a CBSE official.

Co-scholastic areas consist of life skills, values, health and physical education, etc. The CCE was implemented in class IX last October.

The CBSE has also raised concerns about the CCE such as too many tests, assignments, projects, homework and review tests and increasing stress on students.
Don’t doubt the HR in HRD

The ministry’s response to criticism of its legislative

Indian Express ND 16/09/2010

p11

SHAKE OFF YOUR INGLISH SHACKLES, SAVE HINDI

Hindi, our mother tongue and our national language, is facing an identity crisis in the fast-changing modern world. It is getting limited to speaking and verbal communication, and even printed Hindi newspapers are facing a decline in readership. Hindi can be more popular and given its due importance, but the language has not been taken seriously. We, the students, should not allow Hindi to die. The language should be preserved and promoted.

Ankit Bhatia, XI, The Indian School, Vadodara

#“AS LONG AS WE HOLD ON TO OUR OWN LANGUAGE, WE WILL HAVE A KEY TO OUR CULTURE.” HINDI, a language spoken by 40% of our population, is a true reflection of our culture, values, and ethos. Westernisation has stripped the minds of the people of their unique identity as they are being forced to adopt English, seen as the language of the rich.

Nishant Kaur, XII, St. Mark’s Sec Public School, Moreh Bagn

Hindi was adopted as our national language by the Constituent Assembly on September 14, 1949. Since then, it has been celebrated on the date as Hindi Diwas. However, in spite of being the national language, it is witnessing a gradual decline among the masses. There is a need to take steps to popularise Hindi in the country.
Who’s afraid of visa fees?

While we must certainly continue to contest the hefty increase in visa fees payable by software engineers, there is no need to get worried because this anti-India measure will rebound and hit the US in the long run, says Bharat Jhunjhunwala

The United States Government has made a hefty increase in H1B visa fees payable by software engineers and other professional seeking to enter the US. Professionals are allowed to take wage employment for six month under this visa. Previously applications had to pay $ 1,060, towards fees. Now they will have to pay $ 3,900. Consequently, it will become difficult for Indian software engineers to migrate to the US.

The US Government hopes that this move will reduce competition faced by US engineers and open up job opportunities for them that were till now being grabbed by Indians. American engineers will not have to face competition from Indians who were willing to work for lower wages. Indian software corporates like Infosys and Wipro offer services to US companies from the US.

The increase in fees has been much under pressure from the American firms who perceive that Indian engineers are taking jobs that only belong to theirs. Government at $ 3,900 is forcing the US lawmakers to discontinue their traditional stance of free markets and to take the direction of protectionism.

The increase in fees appears to be harmful to India and beneficial for the US in the long run. The US President may gain immediately by saving the funds. Americans will benefit in the long run. Home countries will buy fewer from the Indian shop instead of buying wheat and having it grown. Go to the US shop and buy the same. In the end, the high price will lead to less import for the deep observed. Similarly, the American recovery will stand to lose by encouraging the immigration of Indian engineers.

Gary Ruskin, president and CEO of the Consumer Electronics Association of USA says on the basis of a study by Yale University that “migrants from the US headed more than half of all silicon Valley start-ups created in the past decade. Half of all Silicon Valley engineers are foreign born, up from 40 per cent in 1975, and about 60 percent of all US patents go to immigrants. These immigrant-founded companies employed 150,000 workers and generated $22 billion revenue in 2007.” In the same vein, according to GreenCardlaw.com website, ”Microsoft Corp. Chairman Bill Gates has urged the US administration and lawmakers to increase the immigration levels for foreign workers who can be hired by US companies on the H1B visa programme. The US education system is producing fewer math and science graduates than countries like India and China, and only 60% in those countries and others are more often bringing in new inventors along with new ideas.”

The knee-jerk impact on the Indian economy, on the other hand, is likely to be severe. Reversing direction has made it possible to talk to preserve millions of jobs away from us if they were sitting on the same table. The need to send Indian engineers to perform tasks sitting in the heart of India has already been noted. America has consistently become less American principal can compensate their requirements and problems to Indian engineers sitting in India. This has led to a decline in the number of engineers being sent to America by Indian companies. India had requested 2,000 H1b visas in 2009. This had declined to a mere 445 in 2010. A similar decline is seen by Wipro, Infosys and TCS. In fact the H1b quota was capped at very low 20,000 for opening this year, however, only 28,000 applications were received months after opening of the 80,000 visas that were available.
Small IT cos to feel heat of ban on outsourcing

By Anuradha Shukla
In New Delhi

EVEN as the Indian IT industry finds the recent speech by US President Barack Obama disturbing, industry experts say that the anti-outsourcing move will not have any immediate impact on its revenues.

However, they maintain that it may affect the business of small companies.

"The recent anti-outsourcing sentiment is not going to impact the Indian companies as most of their businesses are with private companies. The private companies are still looking at India as their outsourcing partner and not affected by rhetoric. However, the trend is certainly disturbing," said Aneet Nayar, vice president, global trade, Nasscom.

Similar sentiments were expressed by global networking giant Cisco.

"This is business is not driven by rhetoric but hard-core commonsense. US companies outsource because it is profitable and not just out of some political compulsions. So, large contracts will not be impacted," TCS, M-Sat & Mindtree looking at Europe

However, there may be certain disruption for small contracts and companies," a senior official of Cisco said.

And with the mid-term elections to the Senate and House of Representatives coming up, there would be more noise on the anti-outsourcing front, said IT & ITES industry body Nasscom.

Recently, the state of Ohio banned offshoring of jobs by government departments. This was followed by protests by Indian companies. The ban was followed by the Obama's statement against outsourcing by American companies.

Last month, the US increased the fees for H-1B and L1 visas, sought by Indian professionals and IT companies. The hike in fees is expected to be an additional burden of $250 million annually on the Indian IT firms.

However, there have been some concerns among the Indian IT companies on the US companies shying away from making long-term commitments.

"What is challenging is that companies are willing to commit for the short term but not the long term or the medium term. Because of this, it becomes challenging to do medium- to long-term planning," S. Gopalakrishnan, chief executive officer (CEO) of Infosys Technologies had said in an interview at the World Economic Forum in China.

However, the Cisco official pointed out that companies are being held back from committing to long-term contract not by political sentiments but by economic concerns.

"The global economy has not recovered completely and so the companies are trading with caution before making long-term commitments. The concerns are similar in the European as well as other markets," he added.

At present the $50-billion Indian IT industry gets over 60 per cent of its revenue from the US. Europe accounts for about 20 per cent of its revenue while the rest 20 per cent comes from Latin America, Middle East and other destinations. And with the anti-outsourcing rhetoric getting louder, Indian IT companies have started looking for alternatives in other markets like Europe, Middle East and Latin America.

"It is not that the companies are not looking at the options. We have already started looking at the options in Europe. The response is slow but good. Once the economy improves we will get many more deals and also from Latin America," said an official from Infosys, who did not wish to be named.

Others like TCS, Mahindra Satyam and Mindtree are also considering European options seriously.

Even Nasscom is pitching for flexible work permits and single visas for European Union countries, which will reduce costs for the Indian IT industry.
IT stocks shine despite talk of outsourcing ban

By B.S. Srinivasalu Reddy in Mumbai

The market continued its winning streak as the benchmark Sensex gained a bit closer to the 20,000-point mark, mainly led by information technology (IT) stocks which found favour with the investors after nearly two months.

The BSE IT index moved up by 2.49 per cent in a single session, closing at a record high of 16,089.47 points, while the raging issue fighting price epic pickup pace ahead of state elections in the US and the feeling that IT stocks are expected to be fairly valued. The Sensex gained 0.8 per cent to 19,502 points.

"The reason for optimism in the sector is growing volumes of business and low impact of the anti-outsourcing propaganda in the US," Sajni Amanad, IT analyst of Angel Broking.

Elections in the US are scheduled for November, boosting the stock for ban on outsourcing government jobs. The US administration has officially banned outsourcing of its jobs abroad, making a case for other stock.

If Obama's Democrats gain in the elections, it is feared that this rhetoric may gain further strength.

"Most of the non-governmental outsourcing business from the US comes from three sectors: banking, financial services and retail segments, and there are signs of revival in these segments, of late," Shridh added. Unlike in the UK, where government outsourcing is in high gear, outsourcing by the US government agencies is minimal.

However, as the US economic prospects brighten, Indian IT firms are expected to benefit further. "There is a lot of headroom for IT companies to gain in valuations. Volume growth will pick up further. However, I bet more on big companies in the sector," said Rajiv Mehta, IT analyst of IIFL.

Rajiv beta only on Infosys, TCS and HCL Tech in the sector. "It is difficult for the smaller players to maintain their margins in adverse conditions," he argued.

Harit Shah of Karvy Stock Broking however, said that IT firms' valuations are stretched and advised a little caution. "It is better to wait for a correction before buying into IT stocks, in the wake of rising protectionism in US and global economic uncertainties," he said.

Shridh, however, bets for smaller ones too, saying their valuations are not as stretched as the bigger ones. "Of course, there are execution problems at Infosys. The firm is a low risk play, and Patni is valued 10-11 times earnings. Infosys is 40-50 times," he added.

Asian Age ND 16/09/2010

It's social network-centric warfare

Google plans layered phalanx

ALEX RISHKOVIC

Arizona Sept 15: Google plans to gradually introduce social networking features starting this fall, rivaling attempts to compete with Facebook after putting the plug in on a stillborn Wave project.

Chief Executive Eric Schmidt said Tuesday the Internet giant intends to work "in layers" of social networking with its sites, rather than unroll a flashy product. To propel that effort, he intends to sustain its pace of acquisitions.

"We're trying to take Google's core products and add a social component," Schmidt said at Zeitgeist, a gathering of business owners, partners and high-profile industry figures.

"If you think about it, it's obvious. With your permission, knowing more about who your friend are, we can provide more tailored recommendations. Search queries are social,"

Google has struggled to find the right touch in creating the types of social networking services that have become increasingly hot online. It declared the demise of its Wave project last year, and Orkut, its early attempt to rival Facebook, has failed to catch on outside Brazil and India.

Many analysts now peg Google as developing a new social networking product dubbed Google ME - a rival to Twitter, Facebook which has more than half a billion users worldwide. Others speculate it might be looking for an acquisition to get into social gaming.

Google founders Sergey Brin and Larry Page with CEO Eric Schmidt

Google has convinced itself that there's some huge project about to get an enormous test. And I don't think you should have that sort of faith," Schmidt said.

Analysts point to recent acquisitions as signs that Google is steadily beefing up in social-networking capabilities.

The company this year undertook a series of small to mid-sized purchases, including a $32 million deal to take over social networking firm SocialBase, and a $370 million offer for airline ticketing firm ITA Software Inc.

Schmidt expects the fast deals to win regulatory approval. He said the level of resistance it has drawn is similar to that Google's acquisition of AdMob, which was a green light.

Analysts have attributed a recent flurry of tech-sector acquisitions to a perception that volumes remain low, a product of a robust economy as well as persistent doubts about the strength of the tech sector recovery.

Schmidt said he did not expect another recession soon, but warned of slowed, or even zero growth, over the next few years. "It's unlikely we'll have a double dip for all the reasons people talked about. A much more likely scenario is slow or no growth for a few years."

Schmidt said in the interview, "High tech is different. High tech seems to be benefiting from new product cycles. A lot of growth is coming from new investments," he added. "So high tech will probably have a different outcome from the average American (component)."

San Francisco, Sept 15: Microblogging sensation Twitter, which is now signing up 170,000 new users daily on average, is redesigning its platform to make it easier for users to navigate the site and discover new information.

The four-year-old company, which this month reported more than 145 million users, announced on Tuesday new improvements, such as embedded YouTube videos and other content, which is featured in a new "trending" feature.

Twitter Chief Executive Evan Williams said the overhauled twitter.com features a completely new architecture, which is more responsive and user-friendly.

"It makes it a richer and faster experience," Williams said at a press conference to announce the new site. "We allow users to send 140-character text messages -- tweets -- to groups of followers. The company has quickly become one of the Web's most popular social networking venues, along with Facebook and LinkedIn.

Williams said more than 90 million tweets are sent per day on average. He hopes the new site will improve discovery, making twitter.com more of an information resource.

"You don't need to tweet. You can just be a way to get information."

Twitter revamps to manoeuvre

Twitter "is increasingly challenging established Web giants such as Yahoo Inc and Google Inc". -Reuters

Twitter founder Jack Dorsey's Twitter handle

Twitter revenues on Twitter time.

Forecaster analyst Angie Ray said the Twitter revamps should help improve engagement with users.

"Twitter's new Web functionality is a significant evolution that promises to attract more users to Twitter, improve Twitter users' interactions with content and each other, and ease adoption for Twitter newbies," Ray said."

The new twitter.com will start rolling out to a small percentage of users on Tuesday, and will be rolled out incrementally on a global basis over the next several weeks. The company is aiming to boost Twitter's appeal. It is also rolling out a new Twittering system, as it aims to transform it into a huge new business with a sustainable, revenue-generating business model.

Williams said he hopes the revamp will help Twitter better monetize the service.

Twitter's backers include Spark Capital, Benchmark Capital, mutual fund giant T. Rowe Price and private equity firm Insight Venture Partners.
IBM boss blasts HP, defends ‘boring’ image

New York, Sept 15: IBM Corp has been known to revel in its image as the most boring technology company. But Chief Executive Samuel Palmisano took that a step further when he used a rare public appearance to tell his Silicon Valley rivals they should consider being more boring themselves.

Palmisano, in particular, took several swipes at computer maker Hewlett-Packard Co, questioning everything from its acquisition strategy to its technology investment levels and its recent handling of the exit of former CEO Mark Hurd.

He said on Tuesday that Hurd’s exit package — estimated at about $54.6 million — was a mistake, especially since Hurd very quickly joined rival Oracle Corp after departing amid a scandal related to allegations of sexual harassment.

“They spent a lot of money to keep him for an hour,” the executive said in response to a question at the Wall Street Journal Viewpoints Executive Breakfast. “That to me was not handled in the best interests of shareholders.”

The executive also questioned HP’s recent flurry of acquisitions, including deals to buy data storage company 3Par Inc for $2.4 billion and security technology company ArcSight Inc for $1.5 billion. He said HP makes its acquisitions at “reasonable valuations.”

“We’d never do a 3Par or the one (ArcSight) yesterday. We don’t have to,” Palmisano said, noting that 3Par had traded at $18 a share before HP agreed to pay $33 a share for the company to win a bidding war with Dell Inc. Instead of making flashy acquisitions, Palmisano said IBM makes sure it sticks with its policy of returning value to shareholders through dividends and share buybacks.

“I understand this is boring and old-fashioned,” he said the executive, who joked that he would never get the HP CEO job.

He also defended IBM’s policy of not providing mid-quarter earnings updates, saying he focused on the long term. Palmisano said he respects Oracle’s high level of investment in new technologies. He was much less worried about competing against HP because that company does not invest enough in research and instead depends on reselling products of partners such as Microsoft Corp.

“If you’re pushing technology you will get returns,” Palmisano said.

According to their latest quarterly reports, Hewlett-Packard, long known as the original ‘garage company’, invested 2.4 percent of its revenue in research and development (R&D) while IBM invested about 6 percent.

HP declined to respond to the comments. Palmisano also said he was glad IBM had sold its personal computer business to Lenovo several years ago because of the declining profit margins in PCs. Retail prices have fallen to the extent PCs can sell for as low as $400.

“You can’t even cover advertising and support at $400,” he said. Asked if the PC business was over Palmisano said: “It ended three or four years ago.”

Instead, he said IBM focuses instead on investing overseas and building its technology services business by placing employees in growing markets.

Palmisano said IBM is looking to benefit from growth in economics such as China and India, and also cited Vietnam and Egypt as countries where IBM sees a lot of promise.

However, the executive said he had made little progress with the Obama administration in his discussions with officials about what would be good for business. In particular, the executive criticized the government’s policies on exports, saying that exports were key to future growth of the United States.

Palmisano, who turned 59 in July, said he was not “going anywhere” when asked if he would retire when he reaches 60. But in a slight effort to balance his criticisms, he also made fun of the flamboyance of his performance at the event.

“You see why they don’t let me out very often,” he said.

— Reuters

Intel inside TV, cars

San Francisco, Sept 15: Intel Corp unveiled microprocessors for smart TVs and Web-connected cars on Tuesday and expanded an online store selling applications for netbooks built with its Atom chips.

Intel’s low-cost Atom processors designed for mobile gadgets dominate the netbook niche but the leading chipmaker has struggled to get into smartphones — and the fast-growing market for devices like tablets, car computers and Internet TV is wide open. As well as high-profile consumer gadgets, Intel aims to include its Atom silicon in more mundane machines like traffic signs, security cameras and home appliances that are increasingly computerized and interconnected.

Intel launched two new versions of its Atom chip. The E600 series is aimed at embedded applications like in-car computers that control entertainment and navigation. The CE4200 series is for machines that blend TV with web-browsing.

“We’ve got a lot of territory and as Atom is coming into these market segments where Intel architecture, hasn’t been before we’re really trying to help support customers very quickly,” said Doug Davis, head of Intel’s Embedded and Communications Group. He showed off a prototype racing motorcycle that uses a microchip to send data about its engine to a pit crew, and a roof-mounted taxi sign that shows different ads depending on where the cab is driving. — Reuters
Genetic therapy cures thalassaemia

Though the patient has not required any blood transfusion for the last 2 years, risk of cancer has to be continuously monitored

R. Prasad

Nearly 10,000 children born every year in India suffer from thalassaemia major, an inherited disease that is caused by an abnormality in haemoglobin (an oxygen-carrying protein) production, which results in ineffective production of red blood cells, thus causing anaemia. This necessitates regular blood transfusion, not only affecting the quality of life of children but also causing a strain on their life span.

A paper published in Nature (Nov 16) reports the first case where gene therapy on an 8-year-old teenager has successfully cured the disease.

Transfusion free

The therapy was performed three years ago in Italy and the patient has not required any blood transfusion since June 2008, a year after the transplantation was conducted. However, the patient remains on oral drugs. The frequency of transfusion required was one pack every 2-3 months given once a month before the therapy.

"At present, approximately three years post-transplantation, the biological and clinical evolution is remarkable, and the patient's quality of life is good," cite the authors.

Since no red blood cell transfusion was required since June 2008, the authors consider this case as a "clinical success."

The procedure

First, the patient's diseased haematopoietic stem cells were removed. They then transferred a functional beta-globin gene capable of producing red blood cells into the haematopoietic stem cells. The beta-globin gene was introduced into the patient's haematopoietic stem cells using a viral vector (HI-Madac).

With the gene successfully transferred, the patient was treated with a high dose of chemotherapy before transplanting the genetically modified haematopoietic stem cells. High dose chemotherapy treatment ensured that all diseased stem cells were destroyed. This ensured that the effects of the genetically modified stem cells introduced were not diluted and hence the outcome not compromised.

Following the treatment, the haematopoietic stem cells containing the modified gene started to produce healthy red blood cells. According to a News and Views piece in the same issue of Nature, the levels of genetically modified red cells range from less than 3 per cent in the first few months to 25 per cent at 6 months after transplantation.

Need for caution

However, there is great need for caution. The genetically modified stem cells appear to have altered the expression of a gene that controls the behaviour of blood cells, creating a mild, benign expansion of these cells. While the effectiveness of the therapy is remarkable, the possibility that the behaviour is a probe to cancer cannot be entirely ruled out.

The paper notes that the new procedure, known as partially defective (FIMAGA) that has implications as a potential cancer stimulus was present in only half of all the haematopoietic cells circulating in the patient's blood.

Based on this fact, the authors note that "there is no evidence of a malignant or pre-malignant state in the patient."

Earlier experiments

It must be remembered that early experiments of introducing genetically modified haematopoietic stem cells led to cancer. The first time it was tested about five years ago, a murine leukaemia virus vector was used. Several patients developed cancer.

In a similar trial, a retroviral vector was used to introduce the genetically modified beta-globin gene. But the result was the same — patients developed cancer.

Though HIV-derived viral vector was used in this case, there has been some concern that the production of cells that have a protein which is often involved in cancer.

Hence more trials and more investigations are required before genetic therapy for curing thalassaemia can be considered a viable alternative.

The advantage

The advantage with genetic therapy is that the therapeutic gene (beta-globin gene) is passed in the laboratory and inserted into the vector and transplanted into the body.

This makes redundant the need to look out for a donor, leave alone donors with a perfect tissue match as the recipient's, as is the case with bone marrow transplantation.

Though stem cells harvested from cord blood do require perfect tissue match, a perfect tissue match, nevertheless, greatly improves the chances of the transplant's success.

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TERRY MACALISTER

The world's largest offshore wind farm, which cost more than GBP750m to build, is poised to begin generating power off the coast of Kent, south-east England, with 100 turbines producing enough electricity to supply heat and light for some 200,000 homes.

The Thanet facility, which is going through final testing by Vattenfall, its Swedish power company operator, is going on stream as the National Grid revealed that at one stage last week 10 per cent of the U.K.'s electricity came from wind farms.

But industry experts claim that the wider green revolution needed to meet renewable and climate change targets imposed by the European Union is still in danger from proposed spending cuts.

Chris Huhne, the energy and climate change secretary, will open the facility, which is 7.5 miles (12km) off Foreness Point, on 23 September.

The Thanet farm, which will be capable of producing 300MW of electricity, will be the biggest offshore facility of its kind until the even larger London Array, which has an eventual goal of 340 turbines, is completed.

It will dwarf the nearby Kentish Flats facility off Whitstable, also run by Vattenfall and using similar Vestas turbines.

Excitement about the potential for wind was heightened last week when the grid put out a statement that a 24-hour period up to 10 per cent of electricity came from wind and 4 per cent from hydro.

Maria McCaffrey, chief executive of RenewableUK, said the figures underscored the contention that wind and renewables were no longer "alternative" but core parts of the energy mix.

"We are expecting to see the contribution of electricity from wind gradually increase over the next decade, to around 30 per cent of the U.K.'s total consumption."

This news confirms that not only are the wind farms we have built so far starting to deliver, but that U.K. wind farm yields are the best in Europe, and comparable with established technologies such as hydro," she said.

The U.K. currently generates only 3 per cent on an annual basis, although last week's figure from the National Grid shows that a temporary basis of at least 10 per cent that figure can be much higher.

--- © Guardian Newspapers Limited, 2010

Hindu ND 16/09/2010

p-13
World's biggest solar-powered boat

Turanor, a giant catamaran launched by the Swiss company PlanetSolar, is planning to circumnavigate the globe simply by harnessing the power of the sun. The 50,000km journey, expected to take over 160 days, is intended to prove the under-exploited potential of solar energy.

Length: 31m  Width: 15m  TURANOR  Max. speed: 26 km/h
Weight: 85 tonnes  Crew: 4  Capacity: 40 people

ROUTE: Turanor plans to follow equatorial route to take greatest advantage of sunshine

START / FINISH: Monaco

London bus to scale

San Francisco
Miami
Cancun
Abu Dhabi
Singapore
Sydney

Solar panels: 825 modules, equipped with 38,000 photovoltaic cells, cover total area of 537 square metres

Propulsion: Twin carbon-fibre propellers enable boat to be steered without rudder

Batteries: Energy stored in world's largest lithium ion battery allows boat to run for three days at 14km – speed of average oil tanker – in absence of sunlight

Power: Four electric motors have maximum output of 120 kW and energy efficiency of 90%

Source: PlanetSolar

© GRAPHIC NEWS
UGC nod for four new centres at JNU

Urvashi Sarkar

NEW DELHI: The University Grants Commission has approved the establishing of four new centres at Jawaharlal Nehru University. Three of the proposed new centres are part of the School of Social Sciences while one is a special autonomous centre.

Prof. Deepak Kumar, head of the proposed Centre for Media Research, said the centre will focus on research and not on media studies which is the common focus of many institutions.

The centre will aim to develop a critical understanding about the media and its engagement with society, politics and economy in India. It will also engage itself with determining and studying factors influencing the media and search for alternative niches through new media for instance.

According to Prof. Kumar, the centre should be functional in a year or two. The initial programmes on offer will be M. Phil and Ph. D. programmes.

Centre for the Studies of the Informal Economy head Prof. Amitabh Kundu said: "The informal economy is a significant emerging field of study in India and not much research has been done in this area. The centre will aim to focus on the informal economy in all its dimensions and explore its importance."

Efforts would be made to have the centre functional in a year, he added.

The third centre at the School of Social Sciences is the North-East Studies Research Centre.

According to Special Centre for Nano Science chairperson Prof. Sanjay Puri, the aim of the centre is to be "at the cutting edge of research in nano technology." The centre will be a special autonomous centre in JNU and will not be part of any school.

FMS goes online
Integrates two MBA courses

TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 15

In a bid to make admission more student-friendly, Delhi University's Faculty of Management Studies (FMS) has made several changes to its admission process and courses.

From now on, aspiring candidates will have to register themselves on the official website of FMS. In another major change, FMS has decided to integrate its two-year full-time MBA in management services programme (MBA-MS) with its flagship MBA (full-time) course. The new programme will now be known as MBA (FT). The student intake for MBA (FT) programme will be 226, which is 15 seats less than the cumulative intake of both the courses in 2010.

FMS dean K. Mamkoottam said that the decision to integrate the two courses was taken by the academic council. Mamkoottam also clarified that there will not be a decrease in the number of seats for the course. "Besides the 226 seats, there will be 5 per cent seats for foreign students," he said.

Further, FMS has also advanced the dates of entrance tests by almost a month. The institute has included three new test centers— Varanasi, Roorkee and Baroda.

Also, this year, FMS will be selecting Ph.D. scholars on the basis of an entrance test. The entrance test for MBA (FT) and PhD programmes will be conducted on December 5, 2010.
PSIEC land for IT companies

Chitleen K Sethi
Tribune News Service

CHANDIGARH, SEPTEMBER 15
In a bid to ease out the acute dearth of land for the setting up of bases of IT companies in Mohali, the state government today decided to use over 70 acres of land available with the Punjab Small Industries and Exports Corporation (PSIEC).

Almost 73 acres of land of the corporation had been offered to IT giants Wipro and TCS to set up base here. However, in the absence of any response from the two companies it was decided today that a part of this land be offered to other companies and the rest divided into allotment to IT and IT-related industries.

The state government has decided to use over 70 acres of land available with the PSIEC for providing land to IT companies to set up their base at Mohali.

The state government wrote to the two companies informing them that the land was available and in case they were still interested they could pursue their offer with the government. However, the CM was today informed that these two companies had not shown any interest in this land and it could be used for other purposes.

The Principal Secretary, Industries, SS Channi, said 25 acres out of these 73 acres would now be kept aside to be offered to a big IT company, which can set up an anchor unit here. Another 10 acres would be kept aside for the setting up of an IT Park.

It was decided that almost 10 per cent of the land would be retained by the PSIEC for commercial use to set off the subsidy that the government might have to give while allotting land to the IT companies to set up base on these chunks of land.

“There would be 10 1-acre plots on 10 acres of this land, another 20 of 2,500 square yards on another 10 acres and 50 of 1,000 square yards each on another 10 acres which would be allotted according to the Industrial Policy,” Channi said.

IIT takes steps to counter stress among its students

Zafar Irshad
Kanpur, Sept 15

A day after an ITI-IITian here landed himself in a hospital in a bizarre act, the institute today said performance pressure, at times, leads students to mental illness and depression resulting in such unnatural steps.

Many students here face stress due to high academic pressure, besides parental and peer pressure. Some are worried over job prospects in current scenario. This builds up so much pressure among them that sometimes they take drastic steps like suicides, IIT-K Registrar Sanjeev Kashalkar told PTI.

To counter this, counselling and yoga centres have been set up on the campus with an aim to reducing stress level among students. A separate centre with a woman counsellor is there for girl students. Various sports activities are also organized round the year, to give them a break from the hectic routine, he said.

However, an IIT student, suspected to be under depression, had yesterday inserted a pencil in his penis following which he was taken to a hospital in a critical condition.

According to SC Tewari, professor psychiatry department of Chhatrapati Shahaji Maharaj Medical University, Lucknow, the disease is called "sexual perversion" in medical terminology.

"Students in institutes like IIT are constantly under the burden of studies or job prospects. To fulfill their sexual desires, they, at times, indulge in such unnatural activities," Tewari said.

Senior psychiatrist Manish Nigam here described sexual perversion as a mental illness.

Seven students of the institute had committed suicide in last five years, Kashalkar said, adding that mental stress was a major reason behind the suicides. — PTI