



Right Way to Hone Our **Skiller** Instinct

Skills and knowledge drive economic growth and social development for any country. But they are supercritical ingredients for India. This is because 53% of the country's 1.4 billion population is under 30, and steady employment is a challenge for many. Arguably, India's real problem is not so much unemployment as underemployment, where jobs don't have enough qualified workers. Realising this gap, and the potential if this demographic is harnessed properly, the ministry of skill development and entrepreneurship (MSDE) has onboarded the PM Gati Shakti National Master Plan portal to help it map skill-training centres around areas that have employment potential like industry parks and infrastructure projects. Once the mapping exercise is

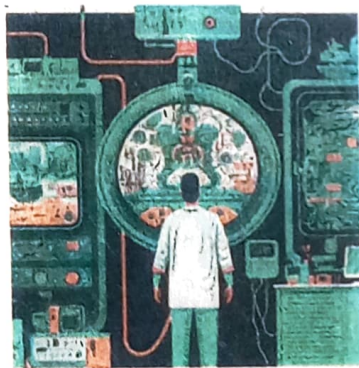
done, MSDE will use a gap analyser tool to determine the status of those skill centres and what more needs to be done.

This is a welcome move. India is woefully short of skilled workers. In 2020-21, over 84% of Indians in the 12-59 age group did not receive vocational and technical training (VTT), according to a Periodic Labour

Force Survey analysis. The situation is worse for women, with about 90% without any VTT. There are complaints against GoI's Skill India Mission: lack of adequate training centres, poor training, forced or no placement, lack of trainers and no assurance of a decent wage for those trained. The focus is overwhelmingly on meeting targets, and it has become a source of income for many companies without delivering much.

India wants to be the skill capital of the world and replace China as a manufacturing hub. But this would only be realised if workers' productivity, capacity and skill sets are upgraded quickly and qualitatively. Not as 'manhole cover manufacturers' but as tech artisans.

ET/18



Is higher education out of touch with the skill requirements in the job market?



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PARLEY

Reports by private agencies state that fewer than half of India's graduates were employable in 2021. According to the Periodic Labour Force Survey, the unemployment rate among graduates is higher than in many other developing countries. Students who enrolled in college during the pandemic have now graduated and there are concerns over their employability and the quality of online education. Is higher education in India out of touch with the skill requirements in the job markets? Furqan Qamar and Santosh Mehrotra discuss the question in a conversation moderated by A.M. Jigeesh. Edited excerpts:

Has online learning impacted employability?

Santosh Mehrotra: There was a problem with employability well before this craze for online learning took off. It is important to understand that those who have acquired or are acquiring higher education are those who belong to at least the top 20-30% of the income distribution, so they are relatively well off; a vast majority of the country's youth don't even manage to enter higher education. Higher education enrolment rates are still about 27% (18-23-year-olds). In 2012, the unemployment rate among graduates was 20%; it shot up to 34% in 2021. Among postgraduates, it used to be 18% in 2012; it doubled to nearly 37%. Why am I saying this? Because even before the online boom, the problem with our education system was structural. A major reason for this was the massification of higher education between 2006 and 2018. Because of this, the number of private colleges grew and quality deteriorated. State governments, the Central government and the University Grants Commission did not have the capacity to regulate [them]. These universities just became exam-giving institutions. Online education is an additional problem, which perhaps Professor Qamar can speak about.

Furqan Qamar: Yes, educated people are not getting jobs and therefore unemployment is an issue. But if graduates are not getting jobs in India, that could also be because the economy is not creating any jobs. That is why we have so many graduates leaving the country in search of better opportunities abroad.

Online learning did cause learning losses. We meet students who say that they missed a lot [while studying from home] and that it was a challenge to concentrate for long hours on screen. There were learning deficiencies and that has affected the abilities of these students to acquire knowledge and become more employable. Ed-tech companies are downsizing as students themselves realised that such



GETTY IMAGES

companies wouldn't serve their purpose.

You said that the economy is not creating jobs. Agriculture is still the largest employment-providing sector and the share of the manufacturing sector in providing jobs is coming down. So, how can skill enhancement in institutions of higher education bring changes in primary sectors?

FQ: Agriculture in India remains largely conventional. It has not become high tech, so I don't see mainstream graduates joining agricultural professions. Even in the services sector, the jobs that are being created require a high level of knowledge. But most jobs, such as of delivery boys, are not preferred jobs for educated people although in the absence of jobs, they might be found in these jobs.

Higher education institutions are essentially knowledge institutions. When they create new knowledge, it leads to the development of new technologies, the possibilities of new businesses, innovation, entrepreneurship, and start-ups.

SM: There are structural problems with the higher education sector. One, our research and development (R&D) expenditure as a proportion of GDP is only 0.7%. In Korea, it is 4%. So, how will new knowledge get created? Second, globally, the private corporate sector accounts for about 70% of total R&D expenditure; only 30% comes from the government. In India, the public sector accounts for some 70% of the total R&D expenditure and the private sector's contribution is relatively small. Private sector jobs in research are not growing. Third, unlike in the rest of the world, where most research takes place in universities, a very small proportion of public funding goes towards research within universities. Most of it from government sources goes towards the Council of Scientific and



Industrial Training Institutes have grown in number as affiliated colleges have grown in number at a phenomenal rate. When you get this level of massification, the issue of quality arises.

SANTOSH MEHROTRA

Industrial Research, Indian Council of Medical Research, etc. This is problematic because these public research institutions don't have the mechanism of translating their research output into actual usable products and processes which can help ordinary people. The only way we are going to solve this problem is by creating institutions that convert patents or research scientific research papers into products and processes. Or universities have to be funded more and industry will have to be associated with this. Finally, unfortunately, our country still doesn't have an industrial policy or a manufacturing strategy. Young, educated researchers are absorbed in high-value services. There are 800 multinationals which have set up their global hubs for research here. But the value of that research flows abroad.

Professor Mehrotra, some reports suggest that India has a higher percentage of employable women graduates than men. But participation of women in the workforce is very low. Does it have anything to do with skill enhancement and opportunities for education for women in India?

SM: Indeed, it does. India's female labour force participation is among the lowest in the world. It's as low as in Yemen and Saudi Arabia. But let's remember that girls are getting better educated than before. India managed to rapidly ensure gender parity at the secondary level, which is unusual for its level of per capita income. So, more and more women became better educated and their aspirations are not to get married immediately. But what are they going to do if jobs are not growing?

This is the fourth year of the 2020 National Education Policy, which promised integration of skills with traditional syllabi and curricula. How do you assess the impact of NEP in fulfilling these requirements?

FQ: The selective implementation of the policy is a problem. Whatever is happening is happening in the name of the policy, while the policy may be providing different things. As a result, we have not seen any substantive change in the education system on the ground. Instead,

it has led to controversies and confusion about what higher education institutions should do.

Let me give an example. The policy clearly said that there should be a common basis for admitting students. It also mentioned that the National Testing Agency would hopefully have these systems and processes and that people may want to use those scores as a basis for selecting students. But then the policy underscored that the decision whether to use those scores or not would be left solely to individual higher education research institutions. That is a very good articulation as far as the autonomy of higher education is concerned. But then what we saw was that the Central University Entrance Test was introduced. Then we started talking about 'one nation, one examination'. So the higher education system is quite confused.

This takes me back to an earlier question on women. In engineering or in job-oriented courses, women are in lower numbers than boys, but on the whole, on average, there are more women. But let's talk of the larger issue of social growth equity. Are Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Muslims participating more in higher education? They are now almost close to as much as reservation provides, but they are still far lower as compared to their share in the population in the country. The policy doesn't talk about specific equity actions. The intervention strategies for promoting inclusiveness and equities for different sets of people need to be different.

India's industrial training institutes (ITI) and Polytechnic colleges were helping the poor and marginalised students to learn some skills. How are they placed to address this issue of inequality in skilled employability?

SM: ITIs have grown in number as affiliated colleges have grown in number at a phenomenal rate. When you get this level of massification, the issue of quality arises. This brings me back to the NEP which exhorts the country to go from the current level of 27% of gross enrolment ratio in higher education to 50% in a matter of another 12 years. This is a bizarre goal and the government has not increased allocations as to achieve this. I have an alternative: divert students at the end of Class 10 and Class 12 away from higher education towards ITIs and better vocational training institutions. And improve quality by engaging with industry and employers.



To listen to the full interview
Scan the code or go to the link
www.thehindu.com

Centre launches portal for students to register for tour to PM's school in Guj

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NEW DELHI: The government on Thursday released details of the programme under which selected school students from across the country will go on a seven-day study tour to the school where Prime Minister Narendra Modi studied in Gujarat's Vadnagar, and where they will "embark on a journey of inspiration, innovation, and self-discovery", according to a statement from the union ministry of education.

On Thursday, the ministry launched a portal for interested students, enrolled in Classes 9 to 12, to register and participate in the programme. Applicants will go through a three-stage selection process and two students from each district will attend the programme in batches of 20, 10 girls and 10 boys. The programme will last for at least a year. In June 2022, the government announced its plan to launch "Prerana", a programme to inspire the youth to become "catalysts of change".

According to the ministry, "Prerana: An Experiential Learning program" aims at offering a meaningful, unique, and inspiring experience to participants, and empowering them with leadership qualities. "Prerana is driven by a strong commitment to integrate principles of the Indian education system and the philosophy of value-based education which is a cornerstone of



The primary school was set up in 1888 in Vadnagar of Gujarat.

National Education Policy 2020. It is an experiential and inspirational learning program for students..." the ministry said in the statement.

The programme will be operated from a primary school, established in 1888, in one of the oldest cities in India, Vadnagar, in Gujarat. PM Narendra Modi enrolled in the school in Class 1 in 1956. "The school stands tribute to Vadnagar's indomitable spirit, a living city that has triumphed over challenges such as earthquakes and natural calamities..." the ministry said in its statement.

"Grounded in the timeless wisdom of India's rich civilization, this unique initiative embodies a vision aligned with the principles and ideals of our Hon'ble Prime Minister, who is an alumnus," it added.

The Vadnagar Kumar Shala No-1, which was functional until 2018, is being restored by the Archaeological Survey of India as part of a redevelopment of Vadna-

gar. The school will now be known as "Prerana School".

According to the ministry, the curriculum for the Prerana School has been prepared by IIT Gandhinagar and focuses on nine value-based themes: Swabhiman and Vinay (self respect and modesty), Shaurya and Sahas (bravery and courage), Parishram and Samarpan (hard work and dedication), Karuna and Sewa (compassion and service), Vividhta and Ekta (diversity and unity), Satyanishtha and Shuchita (integrity and chastity), Navachar and Jigyasa (innovation and curiosity), Shraddha aur Vishwas (admiration and faith), Swatantrata and Kartavya (freedom and duty). "The program will inspire the youth and foster respect for Bharat's unity in diversity, embodying the spirit of "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam" (world is one family) and will contribute by making youth, a flame holder for Viksit Bharat (developed India). Towards this endeavour, the participants will be guided by mentors..." the ministry said. The ministry said its schedule will include sessions on yoga, mindfulness, and meditation, followed by experiential learning and other thematic sessions.

According to a senior ministry official, the students will make portraits of freedom fighters including Sardar Patel, Bhagat Singh, BR Ambedkar, and Mahatma Gandhi, with Rubik's cubes, strings, bindi and stereographic projection using laser cutter machines and 3D print-

ers. "They will also learn to spin thread from cotton using a box charkha (spinner)," the official said. "The participants will carry the ethos of Prerana into their respective communities, become change makers and spark positive change to inspire others," the ministry added. According to the ministry, the selection will take place in three stages. In the first stages, students enrolled in Classes 9 to 12 in any recognised school of the country, will register on the portal. Based on the details provided by the students and their special achievements, 200 students will be shortlisted in each district, with 50% of them being girls. In the second stage, students will exhibit their talent in multi-modal activities like recording a short video, writing essays/poems/storyies and other creative expression (Painting/ caricature etc.) on topics like "Why should I be selected for Prerana" or "My Vision of India @ 2047".

These will be uploaded on the portals and teacher committees from Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan will evaluate them, shortlisting 30 students from each district. In third stage, two students (1 boy and 1 girl) along with two students as reserves will be selected via interviews and impromptu writing. Mount Abu Public School principal Jyoti Arora said: "It's an inspiration for schools nationwide to consider organising similar initiatives, tailoring them to local contexts".

Unemployment: Overseas jobs is a viable solution



A S MITTAL

Given the huge labour requirement in the developed countries, India could explore job opportunities for Indians there to solve its unemployment problem

Unemployment has become a major concern in recent times, especially with the widening gap between a country's economic growth and employment generation. The latest Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) for 2022-23 has revealed interesting trends, resulting in a six-year low unemployment rate of 3.2%. However, despite the declining unemployment rate, the general perception in the country is not positive. As such, there is a need to explore opportunities to deploy the workforce in developed countries, which could be the perfect solution to tackle the unemployment problem in the country.

India has a unique opportunity to export its young workforce and become a significant part of the workforce in developed countries. Developed nations are currently experiencing a shortage of workers, and India can leverage this opportunity by sending its surplus young workforce to these countries. To facilitate this, the Indian government has signed 17 Mobility and Migration Partnership Agreements (MMPA) with countries like Australia, France, Finland, Germany, Austria, Japan, and the UK. Additionally, agreements are underway with the Netherlands, Greece, Denmark, Switzerland, South Korea, and Taiwan to facilitate the free movement of the workforce.

India's economy currently ranks 5th in the world and is expected to become the 3rd largest in the future. However, there is a need to improve the relationship between the country's economic growth and employment generation, as the demographic dividend is not being fully utilized. It is concerning to note that while there are 13 million active job seekers on the Union Ministry of Labour and Employment's portal, the total number of vacancies in both private and government sectors is only 2.20 lakh.

India is the only country where the supply of young workforce is growing faster than demand. Every year, a massive 12 million young people become employable. This sets India apart from developed countries like the USA, Japan, and Germany which have middle-aged or elderly workforces and are facing a severe shortage of young workforce. With a young population (below 35 years) set to grow from 62% to 68% by 2030, India has an incredible opportunity to leverage its workforce and meet the demands of developed nations.

Developed countries are facing a serious shortage of workforce, leading to a rise in labour costs and inflation. While they try to keep their manufacturing and service sectors going with new technologies like Artificial Intelligence (AI) and the Internet of Things (IoT), it's important to note that this approach has its limitations. However, India has a young and abundant workforce that is motivated by a growing working-age population. Therefore, developed nations are considering India's workforce as they seek to hire skilled workers and keep the costs of their goods and services low.

USA: The latest data unequivocally shows that the USA still has three million open jobs, and it's a fact that there are not enough workers to fill them. The US Chamber of Commerce's reports paint a clear picture of countless job openings



INDIA'S ECONOMY CURRENTLY RANKS 5TH IN THE WORLD BUT THERE IS A NEED TO IMPROVE THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE COUNTRY'S ECONOMIC GROWTH AND EMPLOYMENT GENERATION

across industries such as transportation, healthcare and social assistance, hospitality and food sectors, manufacturing, wholesale, and retail trade. According to the survey findings of the US Chamber of Commerce, nearly one in five Americans have altered their livelihood in the last three years. Among them, 17% have retired, 19% have transitioned to become homemakers, and 14% are now working part-time. Additionally, it's alarming that almost a quarter (24%) of respondents say that government aid packages during the pandemic have disincited them from actively seeking work. It's worth noting that younger respondents, aged 25-34, are prioritizing personal growth over job hunting right now. Shockingly, 26% of those surveyed say that they're more focused on acquiring new skills, education, or training before re-entering the job market.

EUROPEAN UNION: The situation is quite alarming in Europe. The current labour shortage in Europe is a staggering 14.3 million workers. Shockingly, the European Commission predicts that the EU's workforce will shrink by 96 million workers by 2030. This potentially catastrophic workforce crunch could lead to a loss of \$1.323 trillion in unrealized annual revenue over the next six years. Despite previous strictness on

immigration policies, in the current scenario, the Greek Parliament has now approved an amendment that allows illegal migrants to receive three-year residency and work permits for specific job sectors. As a result, Greece has requested up to 10,000 farm workers from India to address their labour shortage. A significant number of workers from Punjab have already been employed in farming, factory, or construction work there.

TAIWAN: India and Taiwan are expected to sign an employment mobility agreement in February 2024. Taiwan plans to recruit up to 100,000 Indian workers for various roles in industries such as factories, farms, and hospitals. This move is due to Taiwan's ageing population, which is expected to make up over 20% of the population by 2025. To sustain its \$790 billion economy, Taiwan is seeking Indian workers and is offering pay parity and insurance benefits to attract them.

JAPAN: Japan, being the third largest manufacturing nation in the world, is facing an imminent and severe shortage of workforce. This situation is likely to have an enormous impact on Japan's ability to retain its position as a top manufacturing hub. It's been predicted that by 2030, Japan may lose out on a staggering \$194.61 billion in revenue due to the

scarcity of labour. **GERMANY:** Germany is expected to face a significant impact on its manufacturing output due to a labour shortage, following Japan. As a leading manufacturing hub, Germany is currently experiencing a shortage of 2.4 million workers, with the situation expected to worsen. By 2030, it is estimated that Germany's unrealized revenue will increase to \$77.93 billion if the labour shortage reaches 10 million.

The need of the hour: The Ministry of External Affairs' Overseas Employment Division and Skill India International Centres (SIICs) are expected to take an active role in offering immigration assistance and post-placement support.

To equip the workforce with standardization and certification of skill courses that align with International Occupational Standards, SIICs must work effectively. It is important to utilize the interconnected ecosystem fully to scale up the prospective hires of more workforce and not leave any opportunity unexplored.

(The Author is vice-chairman of Sonalika Group, vice-chairman of the Punjab Economic Policy and Planning Board, and Chairman of ASSOCHAM Northern Region Development Council; Views expressed are personal)

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85 IIT-B students get ₹ crore+ offers in Ph-I of placements

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Mumbai: As many as 85 IIT-Bombay students have bagged cool crore-plus annual pay packages in the first phase of placements.

Most of the higher salaries on the IIT-B campus during this year's placement seem to have come from the research & development space, the average annual salary for which stood at Rs 36.9 lakh, up from the previous year's Rs 32.25 lakh. In contrast, the finance sector that is hogged by algo trading firms saw a drop of 22% in average yearly compensation to Rs 32.4 lakh from Rs 41.7 lakh last year.

Other sectors, including IT, software and consulting, saw a marginal rise in the overall average pay in the first phase of campus placements. The institute released the report of the first phase on Thursday night.

"Our students have put in



In the first phase of the placements that ended on Dec 20, 63 students have accepted international offers

a lot of effort to match up to the requirements of companies. Many firms conducted interviews online which is not easy to crack. Offers have been staggering and are coming in small waves. International recruitment is slow as the geopolitical scenario is not favourable and this is an election year in India, so many companies are adopting a wait-and-watch policy," said a placement officer.

In the first phase that ended on December 20, a total of

63 students accepted international offers. Most of the international offers have come from Japan, Taiwan, South Korea, Netherlands, Singapore and Hong Kong. Despite global and economic uncertainties, IIT-Bombay saw a total of 1,340 offers being made till December 20, which resulted in 1,188 students getting placed. This included seven students placed in PSUs as well as 297 PPOs via internships of which 258 were accepted. The number of offers received overall, though, were lower than last year's phase one of placements.

Some of the top recruiters that have visited the campus this season include Airbus, Air India, Apple, Cohesity, Da Vinci, Google, Intel, Jaguar Land Rover, Morgan Stanley, Mercedes-Benz, Qualcomm, Reliance group, Samsung, Schlumberger, Strand Life Sciences, Tata group, Texas Instruments, TSMC, TVS Group and Wells Fargo.

PG med students to get weekly off, 20 CLs to ensure work-life balance

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: In a major overhaul aimed at ensuring work-life balance of post-graduate (PG) medical students, National Medical Commission (NMC) has decided that all PG students will be eligible for a weekly off and at least 20 days of casual leave per year.

The gazette notification issued on January 1, however, did not define “work hours” for resident doctors, which has been a demand of associations across the country. It mentions that doctors have to work for “reasonable working hours” and that they will be provided “reasonable time for rest” in a day.

“We have been raising the issue of defining mini-



The National Medical Commission notification also mandates post-graduate medical students to spend at least three months in a district hospital as part of their course curriculum

mum and maximum working hours for a long time. It is sad that this crucial issue hasn't been addressed properly in the new notification,” said Aviral Mathur, president of the Federation of Resident Doctors Association (Forda).

The NMC notification also mandates post-graduate medical students to spend at least three months in a district hospital as part of their

course curriculum. Officials said the move is aimed to expose them to rural health-care services.

Also, the notification states that all rounds of counselling for admission in PG courses have to be carried out by government agencies and through online mode so that all the admissions are on merit and transparent manner with no chance of corruption in admission. 205

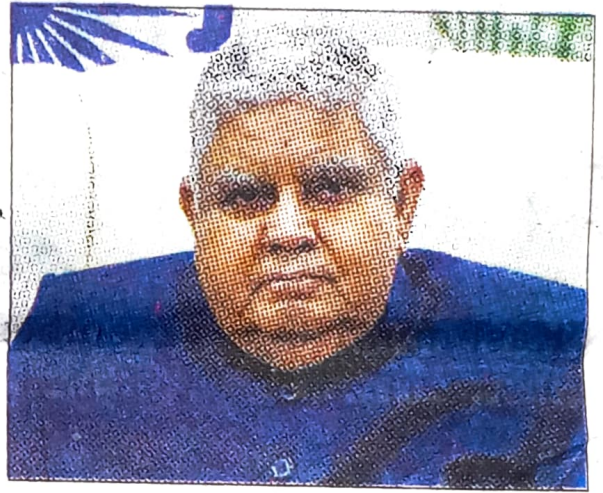
Vice-Prez Dhankhar to visit NIT tomorrow

OUR CORRESPONDENT

HAMIRPUR, JANUARY 4

Vice-President Jagdeep Dhankhar would address a gathering of 9,000 students at the National Institute of Technology (NIT) here under the Ek Se Sreshtha programme of Union Minister for Information and Broadcasting Anurag Thakur on January 6. As many as 1,000 police personnel and 36 police officers would keep vigil at every nook and corner of Hamirpur town during the Vice-President's visit, said SP Akriti Sharma here today.

The SP said that all people coming to attend the Vice-President's function would have to park vehicles at the ground of Polytechnic College at Baru after all passengers had alighted at Dosarka. She added that no one would



Jagdeep Dhankhar

not be allowed to carry prohibited items to the NIT.

She said that traffic on some routes in the town would either be diverted or restricted to ensure smooth movement of the Vice-President's cavalcade.

Meanwhile, helicopters of the Indian Air Force conducted trial sorties for the VVIP landing at the NIT ground today. Two helicopters were seen performing repeated landings at the designated helipad for the movement of the Vice-President. Tri

प्रेरणा कार्यक्रम की हुई शुरुआत

■ विस, नई दिल्ली: शिक्षा मंत्रालय के स्कूल शिक्षा और साक्षरता विभाग ने 'प्रेरणा: अनुभव पर आधारित एक शिक्षा कार्यक्रम'



की शुरुआत की है। इसका उद्देश्य छात्रों में नेतृत्व के गुणों की पहचान करना और उसे

■ बढ़ावा देना है। प्रेरणा भारतीय शिक्षा प्रणाली के सिद्धांतों और मूल्य-आधारित शिक्षा के दर्शन को जोड़ने के लक्ष्य से जुड़ा है।

प्रेरणा कार्यक्रम 9वीं से 12वीं कक्षा के चयनित छात्रों के लिए एक हफ्ते तक चलने वाला आवासीय कार्यक्रम है। यह सर्वोत्तम श्रेणी की तकनीक के साथ छात्रों के लिए एक अनुभवात्मक और प्रेरणादायक शिक्षण कार्यक्रम है। देश के विभिन्न हिस्सों से हर हफ्ते 20 चयनित छात्रों का एक बैच इस कार्यक्रम में हिस्सा लेगा। कक्षा 9वीं से 12वीं तक के छात्र prerana.education.gov.in पर रजिस्ट्रेशन कर सकते हैं।