

Using AI to increase student enrolment

The AI-powered campaign is aimed at spreading awareness about advantages of studying in the State-run school; the headmaster gets the idea from her daughter, who is studying B.Tech

P. Sridhar

RAJANNA SIRCILLA

In a novel campaign to boost enrolment in the Zilla Parishad High School at Vattemla in Rajanna Sircilla district of Telangana, the school headmaster K. Suryanarayana is spearheading an AI-powered campaign on social media to increase student enrolment in the State-run school in the next academic year.

The novel idea struck him when his daughter, who is studying in third year B.Tech at IITDM-Kancheepuram, explained to him about



K. Suryanarayana. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

the multifarious applications of AI during her recent visit to her native place for summer vacation.

Translating the idea into action, he claimed to

have created a 'virtual AI anchor', a computerised avatar, to highlight the benefits of studying in the ZPHS, Vattemla.

"The 'AI anchor' reads out a text in Telugu

highlighting the salient features of the ZPHS such as English medium instruction, well-qualified teachers, mid-day meals, free textbooks, two pairs of school uniform, digital lessons through T-Sat channel and so on," Mr. Suryanarayana said.

He said efforts are on to increase student enrolment in the school.

The campaign is aimed at spreading awareness about the advantages of studying in the State-run school endowed with well-qualified and experienced teachers. The ZPHS, Vattemla, recorded 100% results in the SSC exams last year.

A matter of backwardness

Calcutta High Court's judgment on OBC reservation for Muslim backward classes fails to acknowledge that the quota is aimed at substantive equality



FAIZAN MUSTAFA

THE INDIAN CONSTITUTION promises social justice and permits the state to make special provisions in favour of the underprivileged to achieve substantive equality. Largely due to electoral compulsions rather than constitutional promises, successive governments led by various political parties have been coming up with reservation policies. The "appeasement" tag, however, has been deployed only in cases of reservation for Muslim backward castes or pasmanda Muslims and not when Patidar, Gujjar, Jat, Marathas, EWS reservations were announced. The story of the inclusion of various castes in the Backward list or their transfer to the Scheduled Caste (SC) list tells a similar tale. Both Akhilesh Yadav and Yogi Adityanath, as chief ministers of Uttar Pradesh, announced the inclusion of 17 OBC castes in the SC list.

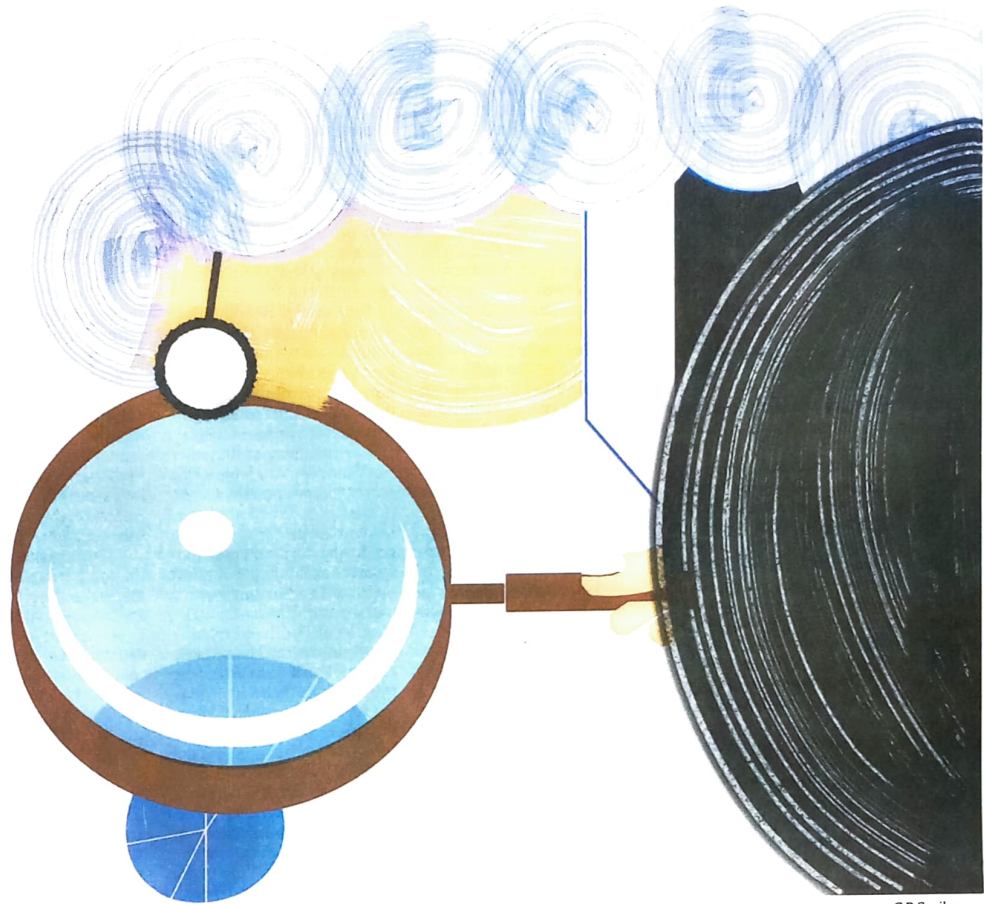
A closer look at the judicial response to reservation policies demonstrates two trends. First, our judiciary has not been supportive of such policies. It opposed reservation in promotions and introduced exclusion of the "creamy layer" (*Indra Sawhney*, 1992), brought in the 50 per cent upper limit (*M R Balaji*, 1963) and stuck down the "carry forward" rule (*B N Tiwari*, 1964). In fact, it has generally been more sympathetic to the cause of general candidates and emphasised "efficiency". In several cases dealing with reservation for Muslim Backward Classes (BCs), the Court appeared to lean towards the strict scrutiny test and undertook a microscopic evaluation of such "policies". This even though the apex court had rejected similar procedures in other cases of affirmative action in *Ashok Thakur* (2008). The 211-page judgment of Justices Tapabrata Chakraborty and Rajasekhar Mantha of the Calcutta High Court has once again not only stuck down the inclusion of some Muslim BCs but has also torn apart the recommendations of the West Bengal State Backward Class Commission.

Interestingly, the initial decision in this case was made not by Mamata Banerjee but by her predecessor, Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee, when 41 out of 42 Muslim castes were included within the Backward Class category between March 5, 2010, and September 24, 2010. On September 24, 2010, 56 castes were included within OBC (More Backward) and 52 under OBC (Backward). Banerjee took oath as Chief Minister on May 20, 2011. On May 11, 2012, 35 castes were included in the BC list of which 34 were Muslim castes. An Act was passed in 2012 which sub-categorised 77 OBC castes into Backward and More Backward.

The Bench struck down the above decisions primarily on four grounds: First, the inclusion of these castes was made by executive orders; second, the West Bengal Backward Class Commission was not consulted on sub-categorisation; third, the recommendations of the Commission were not based on an in-depth empirical survey of the entire population; fourth, the "inadequacy of representation" in state services of these castes was not fully examined.

The High Court rightly noted that the West Bengal Commission for the Backward Classes Act, 1993 had made the recommendations of the BC Commission mandatory but the 2012 Act had diluted this requirement to "where the government reached it". The court made it mandatory in all cases.

But Justice Chakraborty's scrutiny of the minutes recorded in the BC Commission's reports, the time taken by them in disposal



C R Sasikumar

of applications, etc., go beyond the usual judicial review of expert bodies' recommendations.

Interestingly, the court overlooked the fact that the Supreme Court in *Indra Sawhney* said that reservation can be provided by the executive's order and, therefore, their finding that state government means "state government in the discharge of legislative functions and in consultation with the BC commission" is a bit controversial. The President of India has been given the power to include any caste or tribe within the SC or ST category under Articles 341 and 342 in consultation with the governor.

The High Court's rejection of the Sachar Committee's findings on the ground that its 2006 data cannot be relied on in 2010 is strange as in such matters, we do not get data on an annual basis. Even the Census is done every 10 years. In 1991, the Mandal Commission's Report 1980 was relied on to give 27 per cent reservation to OBCs using 1931 Census data. How can the High Court ignore the less than four-year-old Sachar Committee report?

The High Court's criticism that just 5 per cent of the population was surveyed by the BC Commission is equally surprising as the Mandal Commission had surveyed just two villages and one block in 405 of 406 districts. The High Court errs in its interpretation that the Sachar Committee had recommended an Equal Opportunity Commission just "for the Muslims" (Para 106).

Since the High Court went into the details of the functioning of the BC Commission, it should have done a similar dissection of its recommendations with respect to non-Muslim castes and examined whether public hearings were held, the inadequacy of representation was examined or survey of entire castes was done on the 11 parameters laid down by the Mandal Commission.

Since the High Court went into the details of the functioning of the BC Commission, it should have done a similar dissection of its recommendations in respect of non-Muslim castes and examined whether public hearings were held, the inadequacy of representation examined or survey of entire castes was done on the 11 parameters laid down by the Mandal Commission. Similarly, overlooking the fact that many of these Muslim BC castes had already been included in the BC category not only by the Mandal Commission, but also by the central government on the recommendation of the National Backward Class Commission has made this judgment controversial.

Similarly, overlooking the fact that many of these Muslim BC castes had already been included in the BC category not only by the Mandal Commission, but also by the central government on the recommendation of the National Backward Class Commission has made this judgment controversial.

Also, the fact that some of these occupational Hindu castes are SCs was an important one that the judgment acknowledged but refused to appreciate on the ground that SC and BC reservations are different. Moreover, the court refused to accept the argument that many of these Muslim castes are converts from the Scheduled Castes. The inclusion of such occupational castes within the SCs is proof of their backwardness, which was accepted even by the Supreme Court in *Jarnail Singh* (2018).

The judgment raises an irrelevant question on the timing and motive of their conversion. These conversions date back nine centuries or so. The BC Commission was right in not probing the motive of conversion as changing religion is a private choice.

The judgment overlooked the fact that the "Christian converts from SCs and their progeny" have been recognised in West Bengal by the central government in 2000 as Backward. Several upper-caste Hindus, including Brahmmins, too have been recognised as BCs in central and state lists without the kind of scrutiny that the court did in this case.

Reservation for the entire Muslim community for no reason other than religion would certainly be unconstitutional. However, Muslim BCs are given this reservation not due to their religion but their backwardness. Let "backward" Muslims get the same privileges as their non-Muslim counterparts.

The writer is vice-chancellor of Chanakya National Law University, Patna.

Views are personal

Science archives preserve our scientific legacy



BIJU
DHARMAPALAN

Establishing a National Science Archives Centre in India is crucial to safeguarding our scientific heritage for future generations

As an ever-evolving discipline, science continually shapes our understanding of the world and our place within it. Each discovery, innovation and technological advancement contributes to the present and builds the foundation for future generations. Most scientific activity in our laboratories may become part of tomorrow's history. People who have seen and overcome the COVID-19 pandemic may understand the hardships people faced during the pandemic. The innovations and discoveries developed to combat the global pandemic are now part of scientific history. Similar is the case with most of our scientific discoveries and inventions.

Scientific knowledge is inherently cumulative. Each generation of scientists builds upon the work of their predecessors, advancing our understanding of complex phenomena. For instance, the development of quantum mechanics in the early 20th century paved the way for modern advancements in quantum computing. Scientific developments also



help in driving the economy and civilisations. We can see the imprint of the scientific strength of our pre-historic period through archaeological pieces of evidence.

Science is a critical component of our cultural and intellectual heritage. It reflects our collective curiosity, ingenuity and drive to understand the world around us. Historical scientific documents, such as Darwin's notes on evolution or Einstein's manuscripts on relativity, are valuable for their scientific content and cultural artefacts that highlight the intellectual milestones of humanity. Preserved scientific materials handled by great scientists serve as invaluable research and educational resources. Original research papers, laboratory notebooks, communications with contemporary researchers and policymakers, email communications and prototype instruments can

highlight the pain the researchers undertook during that time. It can act as an inspiration for future researchers to move forward. Unfortunately, we dig into the past of a scientist only when their work gets global recognition. By this time, we might have lost all resources related to the discovery except for the research publications available on the public database. Science archives are essential for preserving human knowledge's vast and intricate tapestry. They store various materials, including research notes, correspondence between scientists, experimental data, publications and even artefacts such as laboratory equipment and specimens. This preservation is critical because it ensures that valuable scientific information is not lost over time. For example, the archives of the Royal Society in London contain records dating back to the 17th century, chronicling the early days of modern science. These documents provide insights into the time's experimental techniques and intellectual debates, allowing historians and scientists to trace the evolution of scientific

thought and practice. In India, the Archives at NCBS (<https://archives.ncbs.res.in/>) serve as a novel initiative to preserve the scientific history of modern India. The centre has over 250,000 processed objects across 30+ collections in various forms, ranging from paper-based manuscripts to negatives to photographs, books, fine art, audio recordings, scientific equipment, letters and field and lab notes.

The documents stored in volatile electronic or digital storage are susceptible to being permanently erased by a single button press or the malfunction of a hard drive. If these artefacts are not systematically conserved, they will be permanently lost, leading to what has been referred to as the Digital Dark Age. The Government should also make it mandatory for every researcher to periodically submit the documents to archives so that age and memory don't fade the significance of their research work.

(The writer is an adjunct faculty at the National Institute of Advanced Studies, Bengaluru; views are personal)

TN govt scheme to benefit 2.73L female students for higher education

AGENCIES

CHENNAI, 27 MAY

The Tamil Nadu government said on Monday in a statement that 2.73 lakh girl students benefitted from the Moovalur Ramamirtham Ammaiyar Higher Education Assurance Scheme or 'Pudhumai Penn Scheme' launched by Chief Minister M.K. Stalin in 2022.

The statement also added that this scheme launched by the state government has led to a 34 per cent increase in enrollment of female students in the higher education sector of the state.

The Pudhumai Penn scheme aims to provide a monthly aid of Rs 1,000 to



female students, who have studied from Class 6 to 12 in state government-run schools and are pursuing higher education.

The government in the statement said that 1,960 proposals were received under

the Chief Minister's Research Grant scheme and added that several students were benefiting from the Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Research Fellowship scheme. The statement also added that the Higher Education Department was con-

structing an auditorium to be named after former Chief Minister M. Karunanidhi at the Presidency College in Chennai.

The 2,000-seat capacity auditorium spread over 5,500 sq.m was being constructed for Rs 63 crore.

The statement also said that the Naan Mudhalvan scheme of the state government had benefitted more than 27 lakh students and over 1.9 lakh students had gained employment opportunities.

The Tamil Nadu government has introduced curriculum courses for the students of government-run polytechnic, engineering, and arts and science colleges in collaboration with the Tamil Nadu Skill

Development Corporation under the Naan Mudhalvan scheme.

'Naan Mudhalvan' provides information for college students on course and industry-specific skill offerings that would help them to get trained in their chosen field of interest that will help them in achieving their career goals.

The state government has also extended financial aid to the tune of Rs 213.37 crore towards hostel and other expenses of 28,601 students who have benefitted from the 7.5 per cent reservation in professional courses provided to those who have studied in government-run schools, it said.

sttd

New higher education system will create a new India: TN Guv

AGENCIES

OOTY, 27 MAY

Tamil Nadu Governor RN Ravi attended the Vice Chancellor's conference in Ooty on Monday, a two-day conclave focused on research excellence, innovation, and entrepreneurship.

In his address, Governor Ravi said, "We should not wait for the next annual conference there should be your meeting at a smaller level and continue with this spirit of building a new higher education system for a new India, this should be our goal."

Reflecting on India's educational challenges, he remarked, "The country which was far behind has left us far behind. If we continue like this, we have no future."

Governor Ravi highlighted



the historical context and progress with time and said that with time state university's conditions are improved.

"A country which, At the time of independence despite all the exploitation by the colonial parts we were the sixth largest economy in the world. In the subsequent 6 decades, we were reduced to the 11th economy. Fortunately, with new initiatives coming, we have become the 5th largest and we are very hopeful that in the next years, we will be the 3rd. We have lost a lot of time bez we have been following the education system which was largely bequeathed

to us by the colonial rulers," Ravi said.

This conference marks the third such conclave of university leaders in Tamil Nadu.

Ravi explained, "When I came in 2021, and as chancellor when I started looking at the working of the universities I was disappointed that our universities were mostly working in isolation. I am talking about state universities largely. Each university was struggling with its problem and there was a strange lack of communication among these institutions. And that's why we thought that at least once a year we should have a get-together of all the eminent leaders of higher education. Because this is how knowledge prospers we prosper," Ravi said.

Earlier on February 23, speaking on the cultural unity

of India, RN Ravi said that Bharat is a cultural and civilizational evolution. He was speaking at an event organised to celebrate the foundation day of Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram here.

"About 600 years back a great person from Kamrup in present-day Assam Maha Purushankar Dev at the age of 30 came to Rameshwaram. He came to Kanchipuram and then went to Kashi and then returned to Assam. He then wrote a poem, 'Dhanya Dhanya Bharat Bhoomi'... People have been moving from one part to another living here, living there as a family. This is precisely what Bharat is," Governor RN Ravi said.

"Bharat is a cultural and civilizational evolution. This sense of familyhood is what makes this country Bharat," he added.

Kyrgyz Crisis

The recent fracas owes its genesis to some initial issues (viral videos) of local students versus Egyptian students. The tensions soon exacerbated and spiraled to a generic 'locals-versus-foreigners' narrative. The ability or the will to differentiate between nationalities did not seem to exist and the unfortunate inclusion of the naturally large number of Pakistani and Indian students who fill up these universities as 'foreign students' became collateral damage



Scholar-soldier-statesman of unmatched distinction, the late Jaswant Singh, wrote a hauntingly riveting travelogue, *Travels to Transoxiana - In lands over the Hindu Kush and Across the Amu Darya*. In it, he lives his childhood dream of wanderlust in the Central Asian Region of the erstwhile Soviet Union (now, modern day countries like Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan et al) to discover the land that he insists "altered the course of our history".

Jaswant vividly describes the relative rawness of Kyrgyzstan within the region by describing, "The bazaar of Frunze bustles with activity but it lacks the colour, the originality and native vitality of the bazaars of Uzbekistan. The Kirghiz, strangely for a horse-loving mountain people are far less friendly".

The coldness of the Kirghiz in particular is captured by noting, "As a nomadic people, the Kirghiz have neither had any script nor any written history of their own. They do, have legends and lifestyle that has evolved over the centuries, but none of the other outer manifestations of nationhood".

After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, fifteen countries emerged and the erstwhile Khanates of the Central Asian Region themselves accounted for five of those breakaway countries. Largely isolated from the world with primitive exposure and understanding of the world outside, Kyrgyzstan still shadowed the Kremlin initially to ensure a modicum of continuity and order in the affairs of state.

The newly signed Alma-Ata Protocol of expanding the formulation of Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) ensured the same.

Only after many illiberal stutters, governance challenges and coup attempts, did Kyrgyzstan come into its own beyond the looming shadows of Moscow. Kyrgyzstan warmed up to the 'West' and went as far as allowing a US-run Manas Air Base or Transit Center to support US military operations in Afgha-

nistan - it was only closed down as the US was practically outbid by the Russians in terms of financial support.

However, the Kyrgyz economy was always predicated on the basic agricultural sector as the once-thriving industrial infrastructure of Soviet times suffered due to breakdown in supply chains and disruptions owing to the newly created countries. The agriculture sector was subsistence based.

Basically, Kyrgyzstan had inherited the industrial investments, infrastructure, and know-how of the once-mighty Soviet state and those assets had to be squeezed in order to survive.

One such relatively developed and potentially leverageable sector was the medical education infrastructure, as it had sufficient capacity to accommodate a large number of foreigners.

Commercially, it was a no-brainer opportunity to open up the universities and colleges to the financially attractive proposition of attracting foreign students - almost all the Central Asian Republics did so.

Foreign students pursued the latent opportunity of education (especially medicine) in hordes - some from sub-Saharan countries partook educational opportunities that did not exist in their own countries, as did others from countries in the Indian sub-continent or Egypt which had quality infrastructure in their own countries, but where the competition was so steep that many who could not make it but could afford to pursue a foreign degree took to enrolling in Central Asian countries like Kyrgyzstan.

Importantly, the cost of pursuing medical education in Central Asian countries also worked out to be cheaper as opposed to pursuing medical edu-

cation in private colleges within countries like India.

It took the tragic Russia-Ukraine war to showcase the huge scale of Indian students in such countries who risked various socio-cultural differences (and costs) to pursue medical education in these lands. Ukraine is believed to have hosted over 80,000 foreign students (nearly a quarter from Africa) and about 19,000 from India.

But the recent unrest in Kyrgyzstan is starkly different from Ukraine. For one, there is no 'war' in Kyrgyzstan unlike in Ukraine, and only internal tensions that have pitted the locals against the nationality-agnostic group of 'foreigners'. Also, unlike Ukraine, which was more decidedly westernized, integrated with the outside world, and developed (till recently) - Kyrgyzstan is still emerging, raw, and poorly connected with the rest of the world. This underlying setting challenges its own ability to welcome, accommodate and accept new sensibilities that are inherent with the advent of foreigners. The lay of the land is decidedly rougher, cruder, and unaccepting of anything that could be construed as 'alien' to its own traditional sensibilities.

While the recent fracas owes its genesis to some initial issues (viral videos) of local students versus Egyptian students, the tensions soon exacerbated and spiraled to a generic 'locals-versus-foreigners' narrative.

The ability or the will to differentiate between nationalities did not seem to exist and the unfortunate inclusion of the naturally large number of Pakistani and Indian students who fill up these universities as 'foreign students' became collateral damage. The prevailing socio-economic morass in such countries with high unemployment,

polarising politics, and resultant xenophobia did not help matters either. The concept of vigilantism is well established in Kyrgyzstan and the same had reared its head with internal strifes in 2005 (Tulip Revolution), 2010 (April Revolution) and 2020 (October Revolution) causing much unrest, instability and lawlessness in society.

The ability of the Kyrgyz state to firmly deal with unruly mobs is also tested as the government does not want to be seen to be taking on its 'own' especially in times when 'othering' is the global norm, and 'foreigners' are easy targets.

Accepting the larger national tensions and issues that beset such incidents, the Kyrgyz President contextualised the incident by saying, "The demands of our patriotic youth to stop the illegal migration of foreign citizens and take tough measures against those who allow such activities are certainly justified".

He also alluded to domestic politics with opposition leaders who ostensibly instigated the dissonance, "those who were unable to come to power, do not approve the fight against corruption, those in prisons specifically created WhatsApp groups and fake accounts to spread provocative information". While this makes for typical reasons and reactions that afflict similar unrest with 'foreigners' in almost all countries, the hapless students get invariably caught in the crossfire. In today's age of social media, it is also important to not end up earning a sovereign perception as exclusivist, majoritarian or supremacist as those suggestions could also put our own students in harm's way, with implied attributions.

Clearly in this unfortunate incident, the Indian students were the inadvertent and unintended target who got lumped together as part and parcel of the 'foreigner' denomination. Their safety is as important to the Kyrgyz authorities if they want to retain their country as a preferred destination for foreigners, for pursuing education, tourism, or trade. *stax/6*



BHOPIINDER SINGH

The writer is Lt Gen PVSM, AVSM (Retd), and former Lt Governor of Andaman & Nicobar Islands and Puducherry

Admission relief to PwD aspirant whom IP Univ had rejected

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New Delhi: In a landmark ruling, Delhi High Court has extended the reservation benefits under the Persons with Disabilities (PwD) Act to private professional institutions in the city. This judgment quashes the cancellation of a candidate's admission by Guru Gobind Singh Indraprastha University and confirms his admission with all consequential benefits. The candidate had filed a petition and sought admission to Vivekananda Institute of Professional Studies (VIPS).

The judgment was pronounced on May 24.

The twenty-year-old student, diagnosed with mild mental retardation, has been at the centre of a legal battle for disability rights in higher education. He received educational support as per CBSE guidelines, including studying one compulsory language, extra exam time and some leniency for spelling and grammar errors. Despite these measures, he faced challenges in securing admission to Guru Gobind Singh Indraprastha University.

The case hinged on the interpretation of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPwD) Act, 2016, and the Delhi Professional Colleges or Institutions (DPCI) Act, 2007. While the RPwD Act applies primarily to govt and govt-aided institutions, the high court ruled that the provisions must also apply to private institutions by virtue of Section 12(2)(c) of the DPCI Act.

Further, the 2016 Act requires all govt institutions of higher education and other higher education institutions receiving aid from govt to reserve not less than 5% seats

for persons with benchmark disabilities and to give an upper-age relaxation of five years for admission.

The university argued that the PwD Act was restricted to govt institutions and institutions aided by govt and hence, "no PwD reservation entitlement in the matter of admission to VIPS can be sought on the basis of Section 12(2)(c) of the DPCIA."

However, the high court rejected this argument, emphasising that Section 12(2)(c) should be interpreted to apply mutatis mutandis to private institutions.

The court also addressed the university's demand for additional documents to support the disability certificate issued by a govt hospital. It ruled this demand as "completely unjustified" and "illegal," affirming that GGSIPU could not question the validity of a certificate issued by a competent authority.

The petitioner's documents verified by the university confirmed his status as a PwD candidate, the court added.

Upholding the petitioner's admission, the court stated, "The impugned communications dated Sept 5, 2023 and Sept 6, 2023 are quashed and set aside, in so far as they treat the petitioner as ineligible for PwD reservation for admission to the five-year integrated BA LLB and BBA LLB courses in the VIPS. The admission of the petitioner is held to be regular."

This ruling sets a significant precedent, ensuring that PwD students in Delhi have equal access to education in private professional institutions, thereby broadening the scope of inclusivity and support for disabled students.

IIT-Mandi plans 5-yr integrated MBA course in data science, AI

New Delhi: IIT-Mandi has become the first IIT to introduce a five-year Integrated MBA programme starting from 2024-25 academic year, reports **Manash Gohain**. The course awards BBA degree after three years, a BBA (Hons) on exit after four years and an MBA upon successful completion of five years. The IMBA course will specialise in BBA Analytics (Hons) and MBA in Data Science & Artificial Intelligence.

According to IIT-Mandi, the course has been designed to provide students with a comprehensive understanding of management, alongside skills in analytics, data science, mathematics, and statistics through a curated curriculum.

Let's assure our children they are not commodities



AVUIT PATHAK
SOCIOLOGIST

'private practice'? There seems to be no end to their chronic nervousness and fear. They seem to have fallen into the trap of overthinking. Needless to add, their son, too, is terribly broken. Possibly, for the recovery of his self-esteem and renewal of his life-energy, he needs a qualitatively different kind of environment — an environment that understands him or recognises him as what he is; or an environment that doesn't equate his essence with his marksheet.

The boy I am referring to is not alone. There are many like him — wounded, broken and humiliated. Yes, this is a structural/societal problem — a problem characterised by the scarcity of opportunities and rising unemployment, the normalisation of hyper-competitiveness in everyday life, and the middle-class dream of achieving what a market-driven society valorises — a set of select careers that fetch money or attractive salary packages, and enables one to come closer to a mode of living the cult of consumerism prescribes. But then, this structural problem cannot be combated unless we acknowledge and empathise with the pain of the victims of this system — say, the likes of the boy I am referring to.

Moreover, if we really wish to change this system, and want our children to evolve as humane, sensitive, compassionate and life-affirming beings, we need to radically alter our ways of looking at them



UNREASONABLE: In the age of inflated marks, nothing satisfies students' parents. P71

In this context, let me make three points. First, let us be aware of the danger of the growing commodification of life — the way the logic of the market is fast colonising the most intimate domain of family relations. Even our own children, we begin to think, ought to evolve as 'products' — yes, the

Life has its own poetry and uncertainty, but in the name of 'safety' and 'security', we tend to transform it into straightforward mathematics.

commodities the market values and appreciates. The human essence of your child is not sufficient; she/he must be seen as a 'thing' the worth of which has to be measured through degrees, diplomas, social capital and above all, the job profile or the salary package. No wonder with an appropriate 'price tag', your child becomes your status symbol — the way your SUV or your new apartment in a gated society is. The result is that our children are living with immense mental and psychic pres-

sure. Possibly, some of them begin to think that even parental love is not unconditional, and they fall into the trap of despair and nothingness, if the market refuses to buy them. It is high time we assured our children that they are not commodities.

Second, it is terribly wrong on our part when we impose our own fear on our children. This fear emanates from the belief that many of us as conservative adults uphold — if you do not follow the crowd and walk the same path, you are in danger or are risking your life!

Hence, quite often, we pressurise our children to follow the same standardised path — opt for physics, chemistry, mathematics and biology; join the Kota factory; repress all their aptitudes and emotions; and satisfy the egos of your parents. Naturally, the idea of any other path causes immense fear and anxiety. Possibly, some of them want to become a wildlife photographer, an archaeologist, a social activist or a musician. But then, it is quite unlikely that they will be encouraged by their parents. This repression is creating a generation that is afraid of doing new things or experimenting with life. Life has its own poetry and uncertainty

but in the name of 'safety' and 'security', we tend to transform it into straightforward mathematics. This is nothing but what Erich Fromm would have characterised as 'escape from freedom'. This is anti-life.

And finally as parents when do we realise the gravity of the crisis? The narrative with which I began this article indicates the trend — the obsession with the market-defined notion of 'success' and the unbearable pressure on our children. As we refuse to give any importance to the need for inner-fulfilment, creative joy, the union of work and play and the rhythm of a simple/modest living, our children are compelled to carry the burden of mental fatigue and nervous. No wonder students' suicide is becoming the new normal in the country. As the latest report published by the National Crime Records Bureau shows, over 13,000 students took their lives in India in 2022.

Yet, the game I apprehend, would go on. As adults/parents/teachers we would refuse to introspect. We would fail to initiate a movement for saving education from the life-killing rat race. And our children will continue to be deprived of an emancipatory vision of education, vocation and life.

LET me begin with the mental state of the parents of a boy I am familiar with. They hoped that their son would do extremely well in the Class XII CBSE exams. But then, his 88 per cent marks seem to have brought the entire family into a state of mourning and despair. In fact, in the age of inflated marks (imagine the 'toppers' getting 500/500), nothing — even 98 per cent marks — satisfies the parents. As I converse with them, I realise that they are unhappy; they are anxious; and they are worried about the 'future' of their son.

What adds to their nervousness is that their son could not do so well in the NEET, the screening text for getting admission in medical colleges. Will he be able to become a doctor, or even a dentist? And even if he manages to become a dentist, will he get a job in a good hospital? Or, for that matter, will he be able to earn sufficient money through his

STEM curriculum gets shot of AI, 50 govt schools identified

TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE

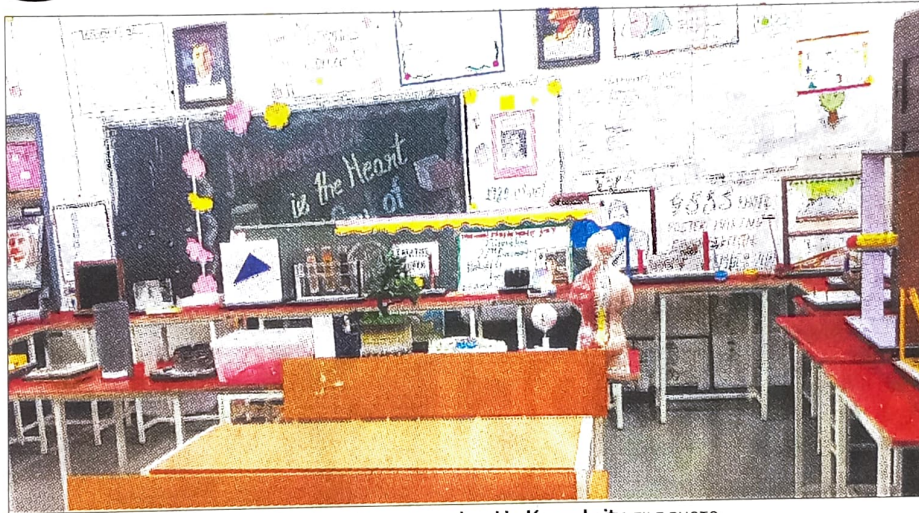
KARNAL, MAY 27

Aimed at enhancing digital literacy and preparing students for future technological advancements, artificial intelligence (AI) has been included in the curriculum of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) labs of government schools.

Tablets are being distributed to students to facilitate this new curriculum, aiming to equip them with essential skills for the rapidly evolving digital age.

As per officials, the AI module will cover a different range of topics from basic AI principles to advanced concepts. Interactive sessions will also be organised for theoretical knowledge in practical scenarios for deeper understanding of the AI technology.

As many as 50 STEM labs have been identified for this step. Each lab will receive 16 tablets from the surplus stock immediately. The heads of the STEM labs are responsible



A STEM laboratory at a school in Karnal city. FILE PHOTO

TEACHERS' TRAINING IN GUJARAT

- Schools participating in this programme include five schools each in Ambala, Gurugram, Hisar, Panchkula, Sonapat, and Faridabad, four each in Rohtak and Yamunanagar; three in Karnal and two each in Nuh, Fatehabad and Sirsa
- Teachers are being given specialised training of one week in Gandhigram in Gujarat to effectively deliver the new curriculum

ble for ensuring that these tablets are used exclusively for STEM activities. The lab in-charges will oversee the safety of the tablets and ensure that both teaching

staff and students have access to them during the lab activities, said Sudesh Thukral, District Education Officer (DEO), Karnal.

The schools participating in

PARENTS HAIL STEP

“This is a positive development for our children, we welcome this step.” – Ravinder Kumar

FATHER OF A CLASS X STUDENT

this programme include five schools each in Ambala, Gurugram, Hisar, Panchkula, Sonapat and Faridabad, four each in Rohtak and Yamunanagar; three in Karnal and

two each in Nuh, Fatehabad and Sirsa, she added.

Teachers are being given specialised training of one week in Gandhigram in Gujarat to effectively deliver the new curriculum, she said.

“The teacher readiness is crucial for the successful implementation of this programme, for which they are being trained for effective delivery of the new curriculum,” said the DEO.

Chhatterpal, district mathematics specialist Karnal, said two periods of students have been fixed for the STEM lab where they will be taught different topics, including AI.

“This step is part of a broader effort to revamp educational infrastructure at government schools. Soon more schools will be included for this step. It will help the students in becoming adaptive to technologies,” he added.

Parents also welcomed the step. “This is a positive development for our children,” said Ravinder Kumar, father of a Class X student.

टेलीविजन पत्रकारिता के क्षेत्र में युवाओं के लिए अकूत रोजगार की संभावनाएं: ऋषि कुमार

बुलन्द संदेश ब्यूरो

मेरठ (जावेद अब्बासी)। स्वामी विवेकानंद सुभारती विश्वविद्यालय के पत्रकारिता एवं जनसंचार विभाग द्वारा इलेक्ट्रॉनिक मीडिया के क्षेत्र में रोजगार के अवसर विषय पर एक अतिथि व्याख्यान का आयोजन किया गया, जिसमें इंडिया न्यूज टेलीविजन चैनल के उप कार्यकारी निमाता ऋषि कुमार ने छात्रों को संबोधित करते हुए कहा कि टेलीविजन पत्रकारिता के क्षेत्र में युवाओं के लिए अकूत रोजगार की संभावनाएं हैं। मीडिया इंडस्ट्री में

- ▶▶ अच्छे मीडियाकर बनने के लिए खबरों पर पैनी नजर रखनी चाहिए-
- ▶▶ राजनीतिक खबरों को जुटाना है चुनौतियों भरा काम

अत्याधुनिक तकनीकी विकास के साथ-साथ कुशल कामगारों की भी आवश्यकता महसूस की जाती है। इसके अंतर्गत विभिन्न प्रकार की सेवाओं के लिए युवाओं को रोजगार मुहैया कराया जाता है। ऋषि कुमार ने कहा कि एक अच्छे मीडियाकर बनने के लिए उसे खबरों पर पैनी नजर रखनी चाहिए तथा लेखन कौशल को विकसित किया जाना चाहिए। उन्होंने कहा कि आज मीडिया में प्रोफेशनल राइटर्स की संख्या कम है। अतः इसे देखते हुए पत्रकारिता एवं जनसंचार के छात्र-छात्राओं को ध्यान देना चाहिए। उन्होंने छात्रों को उद्धोषित करते हुए कहा कि राजनीति की खबरों में राष्ट्र प्रथम ध्येय होना चाहिए। साथ ही नियमित अखबार पढ़ने से ना केवल छात्रों का ज्ञान बढ़ेगा बल्कि अच्छा लेखक बनने के

लिए उनकी वर्तनी भी शुद्ध होगी। उन्होंने कहा कि राजनीतिक खबरों की दौड़ में नए पत्रकारों को बहुत सारे मौके मिलते हैं। बड़े लोगों से मिलने के अवसर मिलते हैं लेकिन यह चुनौतियों भरा काम है। हमें अपनी व्यक्तिगत राजनीतिक सोच को अलग रख असली और सत्य खबर को उद्घाटित करना चाहिए। छात्रों को संबोधित करते हुए वरिष्ठ मीडियाकर्मी



ऋषि कुमार ने कहा कि पत्रकारिता के विद्यार्थी नए-नए आईडियाज विकसित करें। आज मीडिया में नवाचार और नए विचारों की भाषा का अभाव सा हो गया है। अतः हमारा मिशन स्पष्ट होना जरूरी है। एक मीडियाकर्मी को चैनल के इनपुट और आउटपुट अनुभागों के विभिन्न पदों पर कार्य करना पड़ सकता है। इसके लिए भी उन्हें सदैव तैयार रहना चाहिए। उन्होंने मीडियाकर्मियों को रिस्पेक्टफुल होने का मंत्र भी दिया। जिससे एक मीडियाकर्मी सदैव आगे बढ़ता रहता है। विभाग के छात्र-छात्राओं की जिज्ञासाओं का समाधान करते हुए उन्होंने कहा कि ए-आई किसी भी मीडिया के लिए कोई चुनौती भरा नहीं है। समय-समय पर टेक्नोलाजी विकसित होती रहती है। छात्रों को मीडिया का गुरुमंत्र देते हुए उन्होंने कहा कि नियमित अखबार पढ़ना और समाचार-पत्रों पर नजर रखना एक मीडियाकर्मी की आदत होना चाहिए।

अच्छा लिखने वाले व्यक्ति के लिए मीडिया में रोजगार आसानी से उपलब्ध हो सकता है। क्योंकि मीडिया में आपको अवसर कभी भी मिल सकता है। यह क्षेत्र संभावनाओं से भरा हुआ है। आवश्यकता है तो रचनात्मक लोगों की जो कुछ नया कुछ हटकर कर सके। अगर आप एक अच्छा पत्रकार या एंकर बनना चाहते हैं तो आपको स्वयं के निर्माण पर ध्यान देना होगा। एक मीडिया परिवार का हिस्सा होने के नाते आपको अभी से स्वयं को इस क्षेत्र के लिए तैयार करना होगा। साथ ही उन्होंने बताया कि एनिमेशन और ग्राफिक्स के क्षेत्र में भी अपार संभावनाएं हैं यहां केवल आपकी रचनात्मकता और स्मार्टनेस को देखा जाता है। कार्यक्रम के दौरान उन्होंने

छात्रों को कुछ विशेष टिप्स भी दिए, जिसके जरिए छात्र स्वयं को जल्द-से-जल्द तैयार कर सकते हैं। कार्यक्रम का शुभारंभ मां सरस्वती के चित्र के समक्ष दीप प्रज्वलित कर किया गया। पत्रकारिता एवं जनसंचार विभाग के विभागाध्यक्ष प्रो० (डा०) एस.सी थलेडी ने सभी का स्वागत करते हुए कहा कि इलेक्ट्रॉनिक मीडिया के क्षेत्र में वर्तमान में रोजगार की कोई कमी नहीं है। मीडिया का सफर काफी रोमांचभरा होता है। क्योंकि यहां हर दिन आपको कुछ नया करने और जानने के लिए मिलता है। इस प्रकार का आयोजन मीडिया के छात्रों को व्यावहारिक ज्ञान प्रदान करेगा और मीडिया की विभूतियों से रूबरू होने का मौका देगा। जिससे विद्यार्थी अपने मीडिया कौशल का विकास कर सकेंगे। इस अवसर पर वरिष्ठ मीडियाकर्मी ऋषि कुमार को विश्वविद्यालय की ओर से अंगवस्त्र व मोमेंटो भेंट कर सम्मानित किया गया।