



DOESN'T MATTER THAT MY
FIANCEE IS TALLER: ABDU P4

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Narayana Gowda

WITNESSING THE NORTHERN LIGHTS IN THE UK WAS TRULY MAGICAL: PAWAN KUMAR



Pawan Kumar and his wife, Sowmya Jaganmurthy witnessed the Aurora Borealis in all its glory from the UK

Sridevi S

Actor-director Pawan Kumar's family vacation in the UK took a magical turn when he unexpectedly witnessed the Aurora Borealis or the Northern Lights. On Saturday, a solar storm had triggered an unusual event, bringing the Northern Lights, typically visible in countries like Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Iceland, to lower latitudes. Speaking to us

from the UK, Pawan shares that as soon as he heard about the phenomenon from a friend, he raced to see it, along with his wife danseuse Sowmya and the rest of his family. "From the terrace, we could only see a faint light but then, we drove to a dark place in the city to see the spectacle in all its glory. When you've seen the sky one way all your life, seeing the colour pop, is indeed a magical experience," he says.

We were extremely lucky to have witnessed this celestial spectacle, especially because we weren't chasing it and felt like it just came to us

- Pawan Kumar

Childhood fave beverage gets a refreshing twist



One of the iconic summer drink brands, Rasna, has recently revealed its highly anticipated 2024 marketing strategy featuring Tamannaah Bhatia as its brand ambassador. Tamannaah, well-known for her vibrant personality, expressed her excitement for the partnership, describing the brand as more than just a drink - "it's an emotion that brings back cherished childhood memories".

She says, "It's not just a drink; it's an emotion. From cherished childhood memories of saying 'Love You Rasna' to now representing this iconic brand, it's a dream come true."

The brand's management team says, "The campaign aims to offer a blend of taste and nutrition, showcasing innovative flavours and health-conscious options." So, get ready to enjoy the essence of summer with the beverage brand for an unforgettable experience.

Tamannaah Bhatia

Upendra and Ajaneesh rope in 90-piece Hungarian orchestra for their next film

Madhu Daitkota



Ajaneesh

Upendra

In a first for Kannada cinema, actor-director Upendra and music composer Ajaneesh Loknath are set to fly to Budapest to record with a 90-piece orchestra from the Budapest Scoring group, for their upcoming film *UJ*. About this collaboration, Ajaneesh says, "We will have male and female choirs lending Eastern European music to Upendra's artistic vision. A touch of Bulgarian melody will also be lent."

Upendra adds, "It feels most perfect to have this Hungarian orchestra lending its tone to a Kannada film. Today, cinema is all about innovative storytelling and universal appeal. As a director, I have constantly strived to give fodder to the minds of the audience and with this film, I will be going a step further: I have attempted to craft a story that won't just be multicultural, but also, universal."



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Let's talk about daily RDA of some vitamins & minerals, taking example of women.

Daily RDA requirements*

Calcium		3.3 cups of milk (825 ml)
Iron		425 g of Black Raisins
Vitamin A		100 g of Carrots
Vitamin B 12		265 g of milk powder
Vitamin C		25 g of Amla
Vitamin D		73 g of Mushrooms
Vitamin E		40 g of Almonds
Zinc		490 g of Red Rajmah



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*Approx. calculated food equivalence values considering ICMR NIN 2020 RDA in Women (sedentary activity). **Globaldietarydatabase.org/data-download, accessed 10th May'24.
**Source: Nicholas Hall's Global CHC database, DB6 Q1'23. Creative Visualization. PM-IN-CNT-23-00048.

Beverage brand celebrates happiness with every sip



Beat the heat with orange popsicles



A name synonymous with childhood memories and refreshment beverages, Rasna has reinvented itself. The brand's management team says, "The beverage is now infused with essential vitamins - A, B, D, K, and Vitamin Love, into our array of beverages. This special ingredient is more than just a nutrient; it's a testament to our commitment

to enhancing joy." The team adds, "Under Piruz Khambatta's leadership, our brand has expanded its offerings. Our strategic marketing efforts include a significant presence on digital and television platforms, including targeted ads during the IPL 2024 on JioCinema, sponsorships of popular TV shows, and collaborations with regional and children's channels."

"Rasna's journey has always been about innovation and inclusivity," says Piruz Khambatta, Chairman of the brand. "Our latest campaign and product range aren't just about refreshing glasses but about refreshing memories and lifestyles. With Vitamin Love, every glass becomes a celebration of life's little joys and a potent reminder of the power of togetherness."



Promoting an inclusive future through sports



Abhinav Singh (L) with the visually impaired players

As part of their Global Month of Volunteering, Amazon India, in collaboration with Samarthanam Trust, organised a cricket match for the visually impaired. "The event showcased the company's dedication to social responsibility while also highlighting the power of sports in empowering persons with disabilities," said a spokesperson from the event. "One innovative aspect of the event was the use of a sound-generating cricket ball, designed specifically to aid visually impaired players," he added.

The match culminated in Samarthanam Trust emerging victorious. Abhinav Singh, vice president of operations at Amazon India, presented them with a trophy and a cash prize of ₹1 lakh.



The cricket match in progress



Amazon leaders present the trophy to the winners from Samarthanam Trust



Kavya Shetty, Deepa Rao Acharya, Ramesh Dembla and Shalini Chopra at the match

Zen and the art of travelling light



The Kolkata airport recently announced a super affordable courier service for excess baggage. Elsewhere, a couple of airlines cut back on their baggage allowances, while some budget airlines are encouraging flyers to travel light with special fares.

This begs the question: Why do we carry so much baggage? Our overhead cabin compartments groan under the weight of handbags stuffed with anything from *soan papdi* to mangoes, duty free bottles to devices. These bags may look compact but pack in a lot of weight - pun very much intended. We also travel in large heterogeneous groups. And that means food containers inspired by Russian dolls. You could easily find a three-course meal for three generations with a wide range of food habits packed into one bag.

Then there are gifts for family and friends: fruits from the Himalayas, coffee from the South, Mysore pak, Nagpur oranges, spices, shawls, *ghee*, tea, *sandesh* and other must-carry items ranging from hotel soap and shampoo dispensers (a favourite with travellers) to kitchen utensils. In short, we love to carry our world with us.

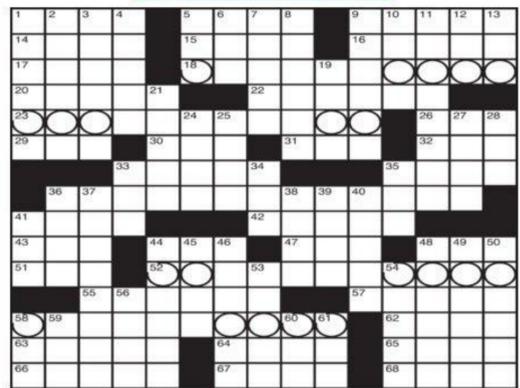
There is perhaps some genetic memory at play here. Those of a vintage would remember the good old days of train travel when families carried a contraption called the 'hold-all'. Made of sturdy canvas, it was essentially a versatile bag-cum-bed where you could pack your blankets, your pillows, some clothes, a transistor (aka radio), cutlery, books and even a small kid. But now we carry smart strollers with USB ports and celebrity-approved suitcases that look like a Van Gogh painting. And yet, given a chance, we would pack in a mini stadium in there and pray we are able to stuff it into the overhead cabin, when no one's looking.

We have legit reasons to highlight how the airlines are getting things wrong. But it would also help if we were a little mindful about how we pack. And how much. Travelling light helps reduce the time waiting for takeoff and at the conveyor belt, besides making things just a little more pleasant for everyone.

Pack what you must. For the rest, there's always a courier service.

Agree? Disagree? Got a POV idea? Write to us at: pov@timesgroup.com

THE DAILY CROSSWORD



By Susan Gelfand

13/05/2024

- ACROSS**
- 1 Graceful long-necked bird
 - 5 Hoover Dam lake
 - 9 Colorful quart
 - 14 Roof spot for holiday lights
 - 15 Moreno who owns the MLB's Angels
 - 16 Like some pools
 - 17 Cabbage side often served in tiny cups
 - 18 "Online journals for D'Yers"
 - 20 "The Little Mermaid" role for Halle Bailey
 - 22 Take up again, as a case
 - 23 "Warm alcoholic beverages with sugar and spices"
 - 26 Back in time
 - 29 Twisty letter
 - 30 Neckline shape
 - 31 "I" topper
 - 32 Cereal container
 - 33 Update to reflect new districts, say
 - 35 Nondairy spread
 - 36 Step in for another, and what the answers to the starred clues literally do
 - 41 Printer stoppages
 - 42 The "C" of CEO
 - 43 Signs off on
 - 44 "C" la vie!"
 - 47 Turkish title
 - 48 Gibbon or gorilla
 - 51 Former GM division with a globe in its logo
 - 52 "Horse-drawn excursions"
 - 55 Respectable
 - 57 Divination deck
 - 58 "Low-effort posts of vacation pics, say"
 - 62 Brood
 - 63 Charitable sort
 - 64 Uncommon
 - 65 Peevishness

Saturday's Puzzle Solved

FOSTER FAIL SPCA
ANTIPIRACY ERAS
SALVADORAN WEBS
DUO MONDE TAI
SAKES ANTEATERS
PREDICT SWEET
YES BUOY STINTS
SATIRE KIWI OHS
ATARI BADSPOT
MAKEAPILE ELEGY
ICE NINER INN
SANE VAVAVAVOUM
EMIT ONETIMEVOSE
NANA TELEPORTED

- DOWN**
- 1 seed bun
 - 2 Arctic mammal with tusks
 - 3 Makes use of)
 - 4 Banister post
 - 5 Apple desktop
 - 6 Make a mistake
 - 7 Pong producer
 - 8 Stick up for
 - 9 Optimally
 - 10 Arizona river
 - 11 Cute as can be
 - 12 Identify, as on Facebook
 - 13 Above-the-street trains
 - 19 James of "The White Lotus"
 - 21 Be honest (with)
 - 24 First stage in many an HGTV renovation show, informally
 - 25 Gradually stop nursing
 - 27 for it: takes a chance
 - 28 Kitchen gadget brand
 - 33 "Treasure Island"
 - writer's monogram
 - 34 Bench press muscle, for short
 - 35 Gut punch reaction
 - 36 Art world fraud
 - 37 "This is it for me!"
 - 38 Hair or carpet style
 - 39 Express relief
 - 40 Artichoke core
 - 41 Get some exercise on the track
 - 44 Compact Ford succeeded by the Focus
 - 45 Snow coaster
 - 46 Time in office
 - 48 Skillful
 - 49 Human beings
 - 50 Regard highly
 - 53 "That could happen"
 - 54 Poetic feet in Shakespeare
 - 56 Venerable British school
 - 58 Kissing in the park, briefly
 - 59 Harley bike
 - 60 Post-opposite
 - 61 French "his"

SPELLATHON

Today's Ratings:
10-average | 11-good | 13-outstanding

How many words of four or more letters can you make from the letters shown in today's puzzle? In making a word, a letter can be used as many times as it appears in the puzzle. Each word must contain the central letter. There should be at least one seven letter word. Plurals, foreign words and proper names are not allowed. British English Dictionary is used as reference.

Letters: L, I, N, A, G, S

EVENTS

MEETING
Recovery from drug addiction, an online meeting, is held every day, from 7 pm to 8 pm. Zoom meeting ID is 8421668628. For login password, call: 9880590059

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SUDOKU CHALLENGE

Level: Medium

HOW TO PLAY
Fill in the grid so that every horizontal row, every vertical column and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1-9, without repeating the numbers in the same row, column or box. You can't change the digits already given in the grid. Every puzzle has one solution.

TIMES HITORI

HOW TO PLAY
1. A number may appear just once in each row or column. Eliminate repeat numbers by darkening cells. (see example)
2. Darkened cells must never be adjacent in a row or column.
3. Unmarked cells must create a single continuous area, undivided by darkened cells.
4. Every time you darken a cell, you can automatically circle its vertical and horizontal neighbours, which means they cannot be eliminated.
5. Any cell "sandwiched" between neighbours of the same value can be circled. (e.g. 6 6 6)
6. A "triple" is a special case of sandwich. Circle the centre cells, and darken the ends. (e.g. 6 6 6)

Example grid with numbers and circled/darkened cells.

LOOP THE LOOP

RULES

- Connect adjacent dots with vertical or horizontal lines, creating a single loop (Fig A).
- Crossovers or branches are not allowed (As shown by dotted lines in Fig B).
- Numbers in the puzzle indicate the number of lines that should surround it, while empty cells may be surrounded by any number of lines.
- You can't draw lines around zeroes.
- Each puzzle has just one unique solution.

HOW TO BEGIN:
Example (Fig A) - Begin with the zero next to 3. Since no lines can be drawn around zero, mark crosses around it, as shown. Now there is a cross in one space around 3. So we know the three lines of 3 can only be drawn in the remaining three spaces. Next, these lines can only be extended in one direction each. Continue, using the same logic.
Hints: Keep eliminating possibilities by marking crosses in spaces between dots where a line isn't possible, i.e., if you have already completed required lines or where a line extension may create a branch or cause a deadend (Fig B).

SCRAMBLE

Rearrange the letters in the four word jumbles, one letter to each square/circle, to make four ordinary words

IEEER
TVIIS
LODNSU
AELDDP

Better be ___ for too anxious apprehensions, than ___ by too confident security. - Edmund Burke (8,6)

HOW TO PLAY
Now arrange the letters in the circles to form the answer to the riddle or to fill in the missing word as indicated

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SORRY, I'M NOT CLIMBING YOU TODAY
IF ONLY I COULD DO A HAPPY DANCE

SOLUTIONS TO GAMES/PUZZLES

TIMES SUDOKU

LOOP THE LOOP

TIMES HITORI

SCRAMBLE

SPELLATHON

DENNIS THE MENACE

"WOULD DINNER AND A MOVIE MAKE YOU FEEL BETTER?"
"I THINK I JUST NEED A BAND-AID AND A HUG."

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See what the stars have in store for you - according to your moon sign.

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TAURUS: One of the challenging days; you can wade through the difficulties. Make some very positive decisions. Look for alternative ways to achieve a healthy balance between your need for excitement and the responsibilities. Contacts you make now could help you move ahead.
GEMINI: You may be meeting influential people. You are in a powerful and meaningful world of emotions. Don't put much value on your irrational hunches and do not try to swim against the tides. Listen to the advices you get.
CANCER: Review your professional achievements. You might think of ways to improve and perhaps be more effective in your career. It is important to listen your colleagues in financial matters. This evening you will be occupied with your hobbies and spiritual matters.
LEO: You are in an adventurous and outgoing mood. Intuition is a fact of life for you. Someone needs your guidance. Everything points to your taking the initiative. Concentrate on what you can achieve. Don't trust unreliable people.
VIRGO: It's only now that you're beginning to understand the nature of the unexpected twists and turns of the past week or two and, even more, how they'll help you disentangle yourself from restrictive arrangements.
LIBRA: You are successful at revealing the answer to difficult situations. Your problem-solving abilities are high today. There are new thoughts and sudden insights available for you. You must act in a clear and direct manner. It seems someone else is setting your priorities.
SCORPIO: Obviously you dislike leaving decisions to those who are ill-equipped to make them. Yet, recent circumstances gave you no choice. That being the case, stay in close touch with individuals in question. Make it clear that you'll be happy to discuss plans.
SAGITTARIUS: Embark on new beginnings. Seek constructive outlets for your energies. Make the right decision about something that has puzzled you recently. Be discreet, detached and diplomatic. You will find a new way forward.
CAPRICORN: Reach out to others instead of waiting for them to reach out to you. You can play the waiting game like no other sign, but the real question is: Does this behaviour really serve you? Be willing to make the first move.
AQUARIUS: A news you hear today could put you in a strong position. Postpone all decisions and let others take the lead. You will achieve more in the long run if you give yourself a break. Release the arrow of intention and let your feelings sail into the open. Results bring you gratification.
PISCES: This morning seems very rushed; patience should be in order. Your personal life hinges on pursuing your own growth and success. This is a time to take risks and dare to be a little unconventional. It may not be a productive day, as you would want to be.

Being a mother can feel like the ultimate challenge sometimes: Olympic champion Valerie Adams



Valerie Adams with her daughter and son

Anna Fernandes

For Valerie Adams, becoming a mother has both challenged her and inspired her in more ways than one.

The retired Olympic shot put champion, who has also received the female equivalent of a knighthood for her service to sport, says: "My mum and later, my children were my biggest inspirations to succeed on the world stage. Four Olympic medals and two children later and using the values instilled by my mum, I showed the world that being a mother as an athlete isn't a barrier for your goals."

In a chat with us, the athlete who was in Bengaluru for an event, talks to us about the joys and challenges of motherhood. Excerpts:

'LOSING MY MUM AT 15 SHAPED ME IN PROFOUND WAYS'

Growing up, my mum showed me what hard work and determination looked like as she juggled work, a young family and fundraising for me to compete at my first World Youth Championships. Losing her at 15 shaped me in profound ways, forcing me to become independent at a very young age. It instilled a sense of self-reliance that I carry to this day.

'IT'S TOUGH TO BALANCE WORK AND FAMILY AS A SINGLE MOM'

As a single mother, the real challenge is juggling everything. My children have special needs. My son has type 1 diabetes, and my daughter is on the autism spectrum. So, how do you support your kids, navigate their needs, and look after them full-time? There's pressure, yes. But, I believe life is like a tricycle. Each wheel represents a part of your life: family, work, self-care. Put equal effort into each, and you'll move smoothly. Neglect one, and things get wobbly.

I like to think of life as a tricycle. Each wheel represents a part of your life: family, work, self-care. Put equal effort into each, and you'll move smoothly. Neglect one, and things get wobbly

- Valerie Adams



Valerie shows off the mehendi on her hands

'B'luru was an adventure'

Bengaluru is amazing! I went on a tuk-tuk ride today - for you guys, this would seem normal but for me it was a whole adventure. The people are fantastic, the markets are bustling, and the food is incredible. I tried a dosa for the first time which was amazing! I also got my hands decked up with mehendi - I love it.

- Valerie Adams, on being in Bengaluru

IN TOWN

'YOU CAN HANDLE MORE THAN YOU THINK YOU CAN'

Of course, sometimes I reach a breaking point, feeling overwhelmed. But here's the thing: we all doubt our capacity at times. The key is to believe you can handle more than you think. Have I always been relentlessly positive? No. But I strive to be kind, helpful - it's in my nature, even if it's sometimes misused. Ultimately, doing good matters most, especially as a role model for my kids. I've sought help, because we're all human. Yet, if I can inspire, enlighten, and fill a room with laughter, that's my mission.

'YOU DO FEEL SCARED FOR YOUR CHILDREN IN THIS CRAZY WORLD'

I am 6'4"; I knew I wasn't going to fit in anywhere. But you shouldn't have to fit in. I tell my kids, you shouldn't have to shrink yourself to belong. Success gave me a voice. As I achieved more, I used my platform to share my story and advocate for change. All of us have the chance to be role models for our children, to give them a strong foundation in this life. And let's be honest, the world is going crazy. As a mom of two young children, I'm scared for them. But I also acknowledge a powerful responsibility to equip them for life's challenges.

Neuralink's first human brain implant develops a data loss issue

On Wednesday, Neuralink stated that the chip implanted in the brain of its first human patient had developed a data loss issue. Elon Musk's startup, Neuralink, has built a brain-computer interface that could help patients with paralysis control external technology using their minds.

In January, Neuralink implanted the device in an Arizona-based patient named Noland Arbaugh (29) as part of a trial called Precise Robotically Implanted Brain-Computer Interface (PRIME) Study.

The company's device, Neuralink implant (Link), records neural signals using 1,024 electrodes across 64 threads that are thinner than human hair, as per its website. According to news reports, a number of threads have retracted from Arbaugh's brain.

To overcome the technical issue, Neuralink stated in the blog



Noland Arbaugh, first human brain chip implant patient

post that it has modified the recording algorithm, enhanced the user interface, and worked to improve techniques for translating signals into cursor movements.



Elon Musk

CHIP IMPLANT JOURNEY

- In January, Neuralink implanted the chip in Noland Arbaugh (29)
- As per Neuralink's blog post, Arbaugh has since been able to browse the internet, use his computer, and play video games such as Chess, Civilization VI etc

- Compiled by Anagha Sawant

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Hridhu on All We Imagine As Light's Cannes selection: I'm on cloud nine



Roopa Radhakrishnan

It's been a learning experience for me," says up-and-comer Hridhu Haroon about working on Payal Kapadia's *All We Imagine As Light*, which is the first Indian film in nearly three decades to compete for the Palme d'Or award at the Cannes Film Festival. Excerpts: **'NONE OF US EXPECTED THAT THE FILM WOULD ENTER THE MAIN COMPETITION'** Since *All We Imagine As Light*'s director Payal Kapadia's last documentary, *A Night Of Knowing Nothing*, won the Golden Eye Award for Best Documentary in 2021, we did expect a screening for the film. But none of us expected that it would enter the main competition. I was also working on other projects. So, when I heard the news, I was on cloud nine.

'WORKING WITH PAYAL KAPADIA WAS ENRICHING'

The process for this film was unlike any other because there were a lot of workshops that were taking place before the shoot. If we had a one-week shoot, we would have had a one-month workshop before that. The workshops started from morning and went on till night. It was a safe and open space. Payal was very convinced about what she wanted to do. So, she'd give us a brief idea and we'd work on it together as a team.

'I BELIEVE IF I WORK WITH A GOOD TEAM, I'LL BE APPROACHED FOR GOOD CHARACTERS'

My main priority is to work with a good team. I want to do quality work. Earlier, I would have said that my main priority is to do a variety of characters. But I believe that if I work with a good team, I will naturally be approached for essaying good characters. I want to do good cinema and meaningful work.

I will be going to Cannes along with the team for the premiere. I'm very excited about that. The excitement still hasn't sunk in yet



Hridhu Haroon; (inset) a still from the film

My fiancée is taller than me, but that doesn't matter: Abdu

Tanvi Trivedi

Abdu Rozik, a musician from Tajikistan who was last seen on *Bigg Boss 15*, is set to tie the knot with Amira, who hails from Sharjah, on July 7. The two met in Dubai four months ago and became friends. They got engaged on April 24 in Sharjah.

'SHE IS VERY UNDERSTANDING'

The 20-year-old says, "I am lucky I have finally found love. I met Amira at an eatery and I instantly liked her. She is pretty, has long hair and beautiful eyes. We have known each other for four months now. She is a student of Business Administration." Sharing why he decided to take the plunge so soon, Abdu says, "I realised that I had found the one. She is very understanding and we have good compatibility, so I decided to take it to the next level."

'WE BOTH LOVE AND RESPECT EACH OTHER A LOT'

Abdu, who is a little less than 4 feet, shares how his height is not an issue. "I am 115 cm tall while she is 155 cm (5 feet) tall. There are many people in this world who are specially-abled and they do find their companion. When I was younger, I thought it would be difficult to find a partner. But with God's grace I have found someone who maybe taller than me, but that has never come in the way of our relationship. We both love and respect each other a lot," he says.



Prathamesh Bandekar

Abdu Rozik; (below) the engagement post shared by him



'Salman Khan sir called to congratulate me'

Abdu and Amira will have a grand wedding in Dubai in July. He reveals, "I plan to call all my friends from showbiz and Salman Khan sir will also come to the wedding to bless me. He already called to congratulate me. We plan to have a big celebration and I am looking forward to this new chapter in my life."

This announcement is not a PR strategy! We are not promoting any music video or my work. Maybe people find it hard to believe that a small guy like me has found love

Go Goa Gone gave me confidence as a writer: Kunal

Kunal Kemmu's zombie apocalypse movie *Go Goa Gone* has clocked in 11 years. The actor, who recently made his directorial debut with *Madgaon Express*, said, "Raj and DK are exceptional filmmakers and deserve all the recognition. I am glad that I could contribute more than just acting to the film. As an actor, I learnt so much more about filmmaking and writing through this film. Previously, I only wrote for myself, but *Go Goa Gone* changed that, giving me confidence as a writer too. It's truly a film that brings me immense happiness and pride." The film also features Saif Ali Khan, Vir Das and Anand Tiwari in pivotal roles.

Go Goa Gone remains one of the most special films in my career. We embarked on this journey with a passion to bring this film to life with all our hearts



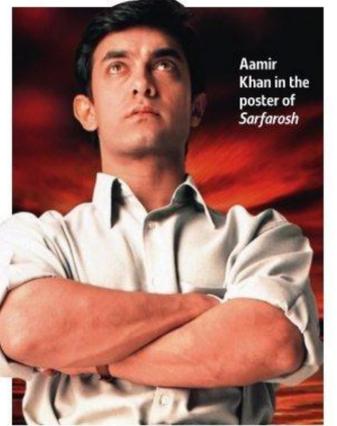
Go Goa Gone released in May 2013

We'll definitely give it a shot now: Aamir on making Sarfarosh 2

Aamir Khan on Friday said he has been trying to make a sequel to his classic movie *Sarfarosh* for a long time and the team is now more than serious about developing the follow-up. The John Matthew Matthan-directed movie completed 25 years recently.

"I've been telling John (director) for many years to make *Sarfarosh 2*. Also, the film ended in such a way that we could make part two of this film. I've told John that if he writes a good story, then we can make a *Sarfarosh 2*. This time he told me he was trying," Khan said ahead of the screening of the film in Mumbai. "I can commit one thing, that we'll definitely give it a really serious shot now, coming up with the right script and the right kind of film for it (part two)," he added.

Sarfarosh is a very important film for our country and society



Aamir Khan in the poster of Sarfarosh

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 670 Hemant R T	 670 Namana MR	 670 Samarth Y S	 670 Shreyas Prasad C	 670 Yashwanth H H	 665 Honmane Sneha	 665 Preksha S Gowda	 660 Keerthan Kumar	 660 Darshan P	 660 Keerthana M J	 660 Mithun K N
 660 Mohammed S H	 660 Poojashree V R	 660 Varun Hiremath	 659 Srajan J Sallan	 655 Almas Fatima N H	 653 Harshith T S	 652 Bhuvan S R	 650 Dhanushree M S	 650 Maruthi M	 650 Sachin B Bhosale	 650 Shreyas Gowda B
 650 Subash Reddy	 650 Subhash Chandra	 650 Suhas H R	 650 Tarun Gowda C	 649 Danamma Khobri	 648 Arun P	 646 Jeevika H	 645 Jeevitha Y	 645 Yash Raj	 643 Pramod Kumar B	 640 Amarnag M
 640 Arpitha N	 640 Darshan K H	 640 Ganavi T	 640 Mohan D Gowda	 640 Santosh R H	 640 Sneha Allgi	 640 Srinivasa D H	 640 Abhishek C M	 640 Preetham Gowda	 638 N A Akash	 638 Sindhushree L
 637 Padmashree S	 637 Rahul H K	 636 N Rajath Kumar	 636 Shashank S N	 635 B R Kushi	 635 Guru Srivatasv	 635 Kiran R Patil	 635 Lavanya S	 635 Yogitha Gowda	 632 Siddarth S	 632 Sumanth B S
 631 Samarth Akki	 630 Adarsh C L	 630 Bharathesh P B	 630 Deekshith Gowda	 630 Harshith C	 630 Mallikarjun N	 630 Navadeep V	 630 Prajwal R	 630 Sachin R H	 630 Tharun S	 630 Varun Bellad
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Education TIMES

AICTE's model curriculum for BBA will standardise the course

A few institutes are concerned over the need for infrastructure requirements, which could lead to a significant tuition fee hike

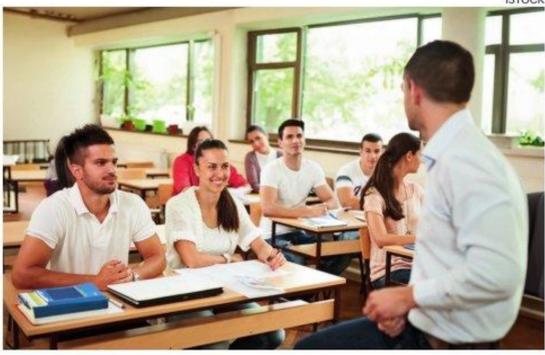
Sonal.Srivastava
@timesgroup.com

To standardise management education at the bachelor's levels, introduce electives in emerging technologies, and bring flexibility, the All India Council of Technical Education (AICTE) has recently launched the model curriculum for the Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA) programme.

"There is an emphasis on the new areas, including Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS), HR, and Business Analytics in the model curriculum. Additionally, there is scope for specialisation in different domains that management education encompasses at the bachelor's level. The framework has been created for the 3-year and 4-year BBA programmes. The UGC recommendations regarding skill enhancement courses at the bachelor's level have also been incorporated. A committee has been appointed, and the detailed curriculum will be submitted shortly, which will be implemented at the beginning of the new academic year," says Rajive Kumar, member secretary, AICTE.

The model curriculum makes provisions for structured 6/8 semesters, depending on the choice of a 3-year or 4-year degree. It also includes multiple entry and exit points. The model curriculum encompasses 120 credits for the 3-year programme and 160 credits for the 4-year (Honours and Honours with Research) programmes. It includes a mix of humanities and social science courses, management courses, programme core and elective courses, and open electives.

The course structure introduces a rigorous induction programme, mandatory visits/workshops, and expert lectures. The model curriculum is based on NEP and encompasses environmental awareness, value-based education. It fosters understanding of human behaviour, empathy and social awareness and includes discipline-specific electives such as Data Analytics using R/



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Game changer

Model curriculum will be a game changer for management education. So far, it was not standardised at the bachelor's level and BBA was almost like a catchment area for the MBA course says Rajive Kumar, member Secretary, AICTE.

Python, Neuro-Finance, Neuro-Marketing, and Behavioural testing and training for employee retention.

Mentoring institutions

Earlier this year, AICTE's decision to bring the BBA programme under its ambit was met with resistance from Arts and Science Colleges in Maharashtra, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu, among other states. Several college principals had written to AICTE asking the regulatory authority to withdraw its notification mandating colleges to seek approval to offer BBA programmes.

On the condition of anonymity, an academican from Tamil Nadu, says, "The new curriculum framework for BBA programmes imposed by AICTE is unnecessary and beyond its mandate as AICTE deals with technical education. The in-

frastructure requirements mandated by AICTE would lead to a significant cost increase, potentially resulting in doubling or tripling student fees, which will subsequently lead to a decline in interest in the BBA programme. It is possible to deliver good quality education in a non-regulated environment."

Talking to *Education Times* about Arts and Science colleges' reluctance to transact the new curriculum in classrooms, Kumar says, "We have already approved over 4000 colleges offering BBA programmes, and many more are in the process. There is no panic among the institutions regarding BBA as we facilitate the transition. With AICTE bringing the BBA programme under its ambit, several scholarships will be available for students, particularly female students. Colleges must look at it from the student's perspective, and bachelor's level education must be student-centric. Additionally, we are giving reasonable time to institutions to upgrade infrastructure; if institutions cannot impart relevant education, their existence is questionable. The new curriculum framework will be a game changer for management education. So far, the institutions that have applied have been given approvals, and AICTE will mentor them."

NEET PG introduces time-bound MCQs to combat cybercrime-led paper leaks

With only a month left for the exam, changes in the exam pattern would add to the stress and impact the performance of candidates

Shuddhanta.Patra
@timesgroup.com

With looming cybersecurity threats and concerns over alleged dark web hacking, it has become essential to secure web systems, especially, when it comes to national exams conducted in computer-based format. Recently, the National Board of Examinations (NBEMS) has introduced mandatory time-bound Multiple-Choice Questions (MCQs) for the NEET PG 2024 exam to combat the emerging threats of cybercrimes for exams conducted in Computer-Based Test (CBT) mode.

According to NBEMS, the same format will be applied to all medical exams conducted in computer-based mode including NEET PG, NEET MDS, NEET SS, FMGE, DNB-PDCCET, GPAT, DPEE, FDST and FET.

Speaking to *Education Times*, Prof Dr Minu Bajpai, executive director, NBEMS and former dean (academics), AIIMS, New Delhi, says, "With over two lakh students appearing for NEET PG exams every year, it becomes necessary to safeguard the question papers from potential cyber frauds. CBT mode exams are conducted by a cyber-secure system enabled through government-appointed agencies, possessing advanced IT software and vast experience. With risk of cyber breach always looming, the system is constantly guarding the data against phishing."

"The NBE is constantly on toes, taking updates from these agencies on the advances in cyber security. We learn from global

NMC advanced the NEET PG exam date to June 23 due to the Rath Yatra in Puri

mishaps or their potential related to cybersecurity from the information gathered through discussions with the agencies. Following this, pre-emptive steps are taken if there is any likely risk of cybersecurity breach. The NBE has been successful in maintaining the sanctity of the system and the exams, to remain a step ahead when it comes to cybersecurity. Based upon risk analysis from the provider company, the NBEMS has taken the preventive steps to enhance the safety and security of the forthcoming CBT-based NEET PG examination, in the interest of the examinees," adds Dr Bajpai.

Time-bound sections

According to NBEMS, in the new format, the question paper will be divided into multiple time-bound sections. In NEET-PG 2024, if there are five time-bound sections (A, B, C, D & E) in the question paper, each section will have

Section specific

With the new time-bound rule, the question paper will be divided into sections facilitating the candidate appearing for the exam to concentrate in one section at a time. The candidate will have more mental clarity in this way. But, the NBE could have informed the candidates well in advance, announcing this about 50 days ahead of the exam has created anxiety among aspirants, says Dr Aviral Mathur, president, FORDA.

completion of the allotted time for the previous section. The actual number of time-restricted sections in an examination will vary based on the total number of questions in the question paper and the operational feasibility of creating such sections.

The NEET PG 2024 exam has seen several changes this year. The exam was initially scheduled for March 3 and was later postponed to July 7. The National Medical Commission (NMC) recently advanced the exam date to June 23 due to the Rath Yatra festival in Puri.

Changes must be gradual

With last minute changes in the exam format, the medical associations have vehemently condemned NBEMS and have asked it to reconsider their decision.

Dr Rohan Krishnan, national president, Federation of All India Medical Association (FAIMA) says, "We are against any kind of last minute changes. The NBEMS should refrain from treating young aspirants who are graduates doctors like lab rats. We stand against this last minute modifications in exam/exam patterns. We requesting NBE to cancel this new rule."

"The sudden introduction of mandatory time-bound sections adds an additional layer of stress and uncertainty, affecting the performance and well-being of the aspirants. We believe that such significant changes require adequate time for adaptation and preparation, which the current timeline does not afford. We propose that these changes be implemented gradually, allowing aspirants sufficient time to adapt and prepare effectively," adds Dr Krishnan.



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Global events, tech disruptions impact job market for Engineering grads

While the IT sector has been the worst hit, several new-age technologies such as cybersecurity, data science, AI and electronics have seen a rise in demand

Priyadarshini Gupta
@timesgroup.com

Engineering graduates, including ones from the Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs), are facing an increasingly tough job market. Companies are scaling back their hiring and offering lower salary packages. Media reports claim that fresh IITians are being offered annual salary packages below Rs 10 lakh, which is far lower than what was offered earlier. Placement cells in the IITs are hopeful of better news as the ongoing placement season (likely to stretch till June) may have a turnout of bigger corporates. This year, recruiters picked only a few students, prompting colleges to expand their outreach to more companies.

Manpower needs

The IT sector is the most impacted, due to which most companies that went to colleges for recruitment in 2023, are yet to send out the joining dates, while some companies have rolled back internship and job offers made to the fresh grads. "Uncertainties due to the global economic slowdown have led companies to delay or reconsider their hiring plans to adapt to evolving circumstances. Additionally, companies might be reassessing their manpower needs or restructuring their operations in response to changing market conditions. It is also possible that companies are facing internal challenges, such as budget constraints or strategic shifts, which are affecting their hiring de-

Changing consumer preferences and digital transformations have also impacted companies' strategies

isions," says Balasubramanian G, chief placement officer, BITS Pilani.

He adds that the situation has been grim for a few months now. "Companies hire based on the indicators from the US market; if there is trouble in the US, it percolates down to the Indian market too. Tech companies are also in a layoff mode to suit their budget; 10%-15% of the workforce is being laid off. While the IT sector has been the most affected, the electronics sector has not been impacted that much. With the worldwide chip shortage, supply chain disruptions, Make in India initiative, so many EVs coming up; everything is related to electronics and chips, so it is finding application in every walk of life from EVs to AI to GenAI, etc, hence the electronic segment is growing and hence the jobs are not impacted in this sector," says Balasubramanian.

Avoiding risks

Eswaran Narasimhan, professor and dean, Centre for Industry Collaboration, NIT University, says, "Multiple factors including longstanding conflicts and global

elections can create uncertainty, affecting business decisions including hiring. While the world has almost recovered from the Covid-19 pandemic, business companies are still being cautious when it comes to recruitment to avoid risks in this uncertain scenario."

He adds, "The heightened hype around AI has led some companies to invest more in automation and AI, potentially reducing their reliance on human labour. Despite the challenges, Computer Science Engineering remains a popular choice among students due to its promising career prospects, and specialisations in AI, data science, and cybersecurity."

Different interests

"There is an unnecessary hype around the placements. In the previous years too, there has never been 100% placements. We try to facilitate and achieve good number of placements, however, students have different interests, while some want to go for further studies, others may be interested in cracking UPSC. IIT Delhi is working through faculty contacts, and alumni

Continuous adaptation

The duration of the hiring trend depends on several factors, including the pace of economic recovery, the demand for talent skilled in automation and AI. "While some sectors may rebound quickly, others might undergo structural changes requiring long-term adjustments. Companies will likely prioritise flexibility and efficiency in their hiring practices, necessitating continuous adaptation to evolving market conditions," Sumit Kumar, chief strategy officer, TeamLease Degree Apprenticeship

mar, chief strategy officer, TeamLease Degree Apprenticeship told *Education Times*.

Shifting market dynamics, driven by changing consumer preferences and accelerated digital transformation, have also impacted companies' workforce strategies. "The spurt in hiring post-Covid in specific sectors has also given way to market reality, prompting many to slow down or stop hiring. With industries witnessing layoffs, firms are reassessing workforce needs, with many prioritising flexibility and cost-efficiency," says Kumar.

"There is a slowdown in the IT sector, however, there is an increase in demand for other sectors such as cybersecurity, IoT, data science, and AI. Microsoft conducted the recruitment at our campus exclusively for students from the cybersecurity domain. Amazon hired students from the language domain (BA in French) instead of the software development profile. Placement cells need to keep a watch on the industry hiring and joining business pattern," says Anjali Bhatnagar, deputy director, Amity Technical Placement Centre, Amity University, Noida.

"Supplementing classroom learning with practical knowledge can help in career paths. Industries are increasingly looking at apprenticeships and work-based learning programmes to strengthen talent supply chain, with apprenticeship engagement rising at 35%-40% annual growth rate," says Kumar.



network, and trying to get the students placed based on their interests," says an IIT professor.

"We have reached out to more companies this time as compared to previous years; however, they too must have a workforce requirement. The prestige associated with IITs has not diminished. Students have received good packages; only the number of offers

has gone down this time due to the recession. During the Covid pandemic, when everybody was working from home, many firms did not hire. In 2022-2023, when the workforce started returning to office, there was a need for physical manpower which led to huge recruitment. The placement data during this period is skewed due to the post-Covid effect. Now again, the placement figures are coming back to normal; however, due to recession, the placements are touching over 76%-77% instead of the usual 85%. Another reason is core engineering courses may get lower salaries when they start, however, in five years, their salary will be on par with the fellow IT sector," he says.

"Companies are facing various challenges that impact their hiring decisions. While the global economic slowdown is a significant factor, it is not the sole reason. Technological disruptions such as automation and AI are reshaping industries, job requirements, and business models," says Sumit Ku-

3 foreign exam centres added for JEE Advanced

Rajlakshmi Ghosh
@timesgroup.com

Three new exam centres overseas have been included besides the 229 exam centres in India, as per the exam city list for JEE Advanced 2024 released by the exam conducting institute IIT Madras. The new foreign centres include Abu Dhabi, Kathmandu and Dubai. Post the pandemic, this is the first time after four consecutive years, that JEE Advanced will be conducted on foreign shores. Before 2020, the entrance exam was conducted in multiple centers of foreign countries, including Addis Ababa (Ethiopia), Colombo (Sri Lanka), Dhaka (Bangladesh), Dubai



(UAE), Kathmandu (Nepal) and Singapore.

Speaking to *Education Times*, a spokesperson of JEE Advanced 2024, says, "The three new centres were added to enable foreign candidates to appear in JEE Advanced 2024 without ha-

ving to face logistical issues. The cities were chosen based on the previous record. Moreover, IIT Delhi now has a campus in Abu Dhabi, which makes an exam centre in the city more feasible."

Highlighting the fact

that around 200 students in total have registered at the overseas centres in Abu Dhabi, Kathmandu and Dubai, the spokesperson dismisses the possibility of having additional foreign centres in the Philippines, Malaysia or even Europe. "There are no such centres, nor are we aware of any such plan," he says.

Further, explaining the reason behind conducting the exam in the three overseas centres, the spokesperson says, "Foreign centres were not used for a while, largely because of the Covid situation. We have started the trend again this year," breaking the four-year hiatus which had inconvenienced many international test-takers.

Anti-ragging panels will succeed only with active participation of varsity officials

Institutions should have committees to ensure counselling and support services for students

Priyadarshini Gupta
@timesgroup.com

Reiterating that ragging is a criminal offence, the University Grants Commission (UGC) in a recent notification said that action will be taken against Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) if they fail to take adequate steps to prevent ragging or abide by the commission's anti-ragging guidelines. The HEIs have also been asked to step up a mechanism by constituting an anti-ragging committee and anti-ragging squad, setting up of anti-ragging cell, installing CCTV cameras at vital points, holding workshops and seminars, updating all websites with nodal officers' complete details, alarm bells, among others.

Manish Ratnakar Joshi, secretary, UGC, says, "There are several institutions which still lack such panels to control ragging; we are trying to ensure that all institutions comply with the regulations. This is a routine measure; we carry out such initiatives every year before the new academic session. We need to inform the institutions that there is a need for all of them to form an anti-ragging committee, as the SC directive mandated the formation of such panels."

"Based on the SC directive, the UGC has formed an anti-ragging cell and a 24x7 helpline number for students. As soon as we get calls on this number, we follow it up and ensure that the case is resolved. The UGC has also appointed a third-party monitoring system," says Joshi.

Support system

Students in distress due to ragging-related incidents can call the National Anti-Ragging Helpline: 1800-180-5522 (24x7 Toll Free) or email the anti-ragging helpline at help-line@antiragging.in. For any other information regarding ragging, you may please visit the UGC website i.e. www.ugc.gov.in & www.antiragging.in and contact UGC monitoring agency i.e. Centre for Youth (C4Y) on mobile no. 09818044577 (only in case of emergency).

Routine measure

Rajendra Kachroo, an anti-ragging activist, initiated the campaign after the death of his son Aman Kachroo, a medical student, who died due to injuries sustained during ragging. Kachroo was part of the UGC's National Ragging Prevention Programme from 2012 to 2022. "Appointing district-level and state-level committees are not much of help. These measures have been there since 2009. The

district magistrate and police officers have a lot of things to do; they would not be worried about a couple of students. The main thing is to ensure that the institution is following the guidelines. It is important to check whether the anti-ragging committee exists in the institution or not," says Kachroo.

Confidential surveys

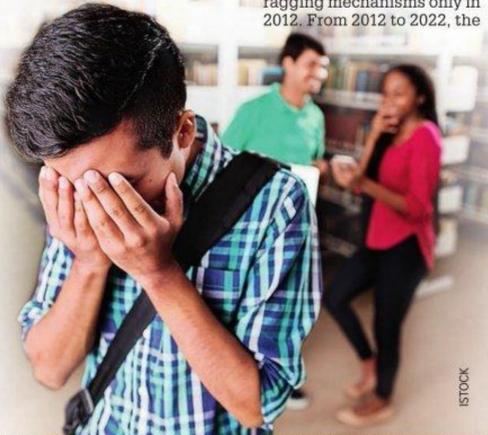
"The UGC got involved in the implementation of anti-ragging mechanisms only in 2012. From 2012 to 2022, the

ragging incidents had come down substantially from 40% to 5% across India. Pockets of ragging areas included Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, and Odisha. The 2023 Jadavpur University was a classic case of negligence as it was known to be a notorious university since 2009. Confidential online surveys were conducted every year. Unless there is proper communication between students, teachers, and parents, the incidents of ragging will never end," says Kachroo.

"The only mechanism is to create an online system to redress the issue. Anti-ragging affidavits were created in 2009 that helped gain access to students, parents' contact details and email IDs. There was real-time processing on every complaint being made. However, after 2022 when the UGC management changed, things did not remain the same," says Kachroo.

The SC judgment of 2009 mandated that compliance of the regulations must be done by a non-governmental organisation, says Kachroo, adding that the appointment of an ombudsman will not help much. "There is a need to have an independent body outside the college who can act impartially," he says.

Criticising that the governance has now become opaque, and one is forced to believe the facts it shows, he says, "Law compliance and regular communication are the two essential things to tackle the issue. A strong, independent monitoring committee is essential."



Bennett University launches the School of Artificial Intelligence

The initiative aims to propel the field forward through fundamental research, innovation, and the cultivation of AI leaders, innovators, and thinkers, writes Prof (Dr) Ajith Abraham

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is transforming the global economy, enhancing productivity, fostering global growth, and elevating incomes worldwide. Recognising the pivotal role of AI education in shaping India's economic development, Bennett University has inaugurated the School of Artificial Intelligence. The initiative aims to propel the field forward through fundamental research, innovation, and the cultivation of AI leaders, innovators, and thinkers.

Highlighting the importance of AI education, Times Group MD and chancellor, Vineet Jain underscores that the School of Artificial Intelligence is pioneering in enhancing the AI revolution in India. Integration of AI education in professional pathways will play a pivotal role in stimulating innovation, improving productivity, and developing a workforce capable of meeting the demands of a rapidly changing economy.

The initiative seeks to rethink AI in terms of basic computing, mathematics, and physics components, and to



develop ties to many industrial and research applications. The cutting-edge curriculum is designed by an academic board comprising members from reputed global universities and industries such as Microsoft, Intel, IBM, etc.

Practical orientation

The first semester students learn AI and practical coding, with an emphasis on the comprehensive foundations of the field and a future-focused strategy. This positions them as creators of AI approaches rather than merely consumers. Every AI course includes a 20% research component,

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(The author is vice-chancellor, Bennett University, and heads the School of Artificial Intelligence)

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HEIs can be instrumental in overcoming unemployment

Promoting entrepreneurship is crucial for economic growth, writes **Kirti Sharma**



India's higher education sector is at a crossroads, facing a significant challenge often referred to as the 'unemployment cliff'. This idea encompasses the increasing dilemma faced by recent graduates who encounter difficulty securing suitable job prospects post their graduation. Therefore, identifying sustainable resolutions becomes imperative for the economic prosperity of the nation.

A key factor contributing to this cliff is the mismatch between the skills students acquire in universities and what industries require. We have established numerous educational institutions, but still, the curriculum appears obsolete and deficient in practical elements essential for equipping students with skills relevant to today's employment landscape. Additionally, many colleges provide education devoid of essential skills and capabilities to meet industry demands.

Addressing skill gaps

A joint survey conducted by Wheelbox, Tagged, and the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) paints a

ent in the absence of parallel advancements in industry-relevant skill-based training and readiness. Most universities have a weak industry-institute interface.

Job availability

Unemployment rates among highly educated Indians remain distressingly high. As of June 2023, unemployment rates for diploma holders were at 12.1% and for graduates at 13.4%. The market's inability to absorb the onslaught of fresh graduates leaves many job-seeking youths in limbo.

Potential solutions

To combat the unemployment cliff, several solution pathways can be followed:

Strengthening industry-academia collaboration: Integrating internships, real-world projects, and industry experts with academic programmes can bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical experience.

Targeted skill development programmes: Implementing skill development programmes tailored to the market's evolving needs will enhance

How students navigate career decisions in the healthcare sector

It is imperative to foster an environment that prioritises the well-being of the medical professionals of tomorrow, writes **Shanker Kaul**

In the bustling halls of medical and nursing schools across India, a silent epidemic is gripping the hearts and minds of students. Burnout, a state of emotional, physical, and mental exhaustion caused by prolonged or excessive stress, is a growing concern among healthcare students worldwide. But in India, the issue takes on a particular urgency with a large and ambitious student population facing a demanding healthcare education system, and the weight of career choices that carry immense societal expectations.

India boasts a burgeoning healthcare education landscape with a generational aspiration attached to the medical profession and a never-ending wave of applicants. However, this surge comes at a cost. The rigorous curriculum, coupled with the pressure to excel, contributes significantly to student burnout.

A report, 'Clinician of the Future: Education Edition', by Elsevier, a scientific research and data analytics company, reveals the extent of the problem: 77% of Indian medical and nursing students feel overwhelmed by the sheer volume of information they need to retain.

Combined with factors like financial strain, long working hours, and limited access to mental health support, fuelled a cycle of burnout and disillusionment among students, the impact of which is undeniable on career decisions.

A concerning picture

Burnout, with its potential to evoke feelings of inadequacy, prompts a re-evaluation of career paths. Students experiencing exhaustion and disillusionment may question their initial motivations and start contemplating alternative career paths. 'Clinician of the Future' report further underscores this trend, revealing that 29% of Indian nursing students are considering quitting their studies, compared to a global average of 21%. This statistic paints a concerning picture, indicating that burnout could potentially lead to a shortage of qualified healthcare professionals in the future.

But switching careers isn't the only alarming thing about burnout among medical and nursing students in India. The severity of burnout's impact on Indian healthcare education is further emphasised by the distressing narratives of suicides among medical students. Data shared by the Union Minister of State for Health and Family Welfare, Bharati Pravin Pawar in July during Lok Sabha session, lays bare the harsh reality of as many as 14 suicides in the past five years within the borders of Maharashtra alone. In the last five years, both Karnataka and Maharashtra have witnessed suicides among medical postgraduate students, revealing the depth of the crisis.



Building resilience

The story of Indian healthcare students is not solely one of burnout and struggle. It is also a narrative of resilience, determination, and a burning desire to make a difference. Addressing the issue of burnout requires a collective effort from educational institutions, healthcare providers, policymakers, and students themselves. The journey from burnout to breakthrough is not easy, but by working together, we can pave the way for a generation of healthcare professionals who are resilient.

Additionally, the dropout rates were equally concerning. As many as 96 post-graduates across 23 colleges and 17 undergraduate students from eight colleges made the difficult decision to drop out of colleges in Maharashtra during this time-frame. This data is a poignant reminder of the pervasive mental health crisis gripping the medical community nationwide. Karnataka leads in the distressing statistic of the highest number of suicides among medical students, closely trailed by Maharashtra and Gujarat, according to the same dataset.

The story becomes more poignant when we listen to the voices of these

students. Overworked, sleep-deprived, and grappling with personal and academic pressures, students cite insufficient counselling services as a major contributing factor to their distress. Rigorous schedules, ranging from 24 to 48 hours of continuous work without proper rest or adequate nutrition, paint a bleak picture of the challenges faced by these aspiring healers.

In response to the escalating crisis, the National Medical Council (NMC) has issued directives to medical colleges, urging them to prioritise the well-being of their students. Meanwhile, earlier in October, the Maharashtra Association of Resident Doctors (MARD) appealed to the government, urging immediate measures to address the escalating mental health crisis among resident doctors in the state.

Incorporating hands-on training

The stark numbers and data provided by the 'Clinician of the Future' report demand urgent attention and concerted efforts to address the mental health challenges faced by medical students. Beyond the statistics, there is a profound need for comprehensive and systemic interventions to alleviate the burden of burnout, fostering an environment that prioritises the well-being of the healthcare professionals of tomorrow.

This shift could include incorporating more hands-on training, promoting peer collaboration, and encouraging critical thinking skills. Navigating these emotional and professional crossroads requires a multi-pronged approach. Educational institutions need to:

- Re-evaluate their curriculum
- Prioritise active learning methods that reduce information overload
- Foster a more holistic learning experience among students

Furthermore, mental health support systems within medical and nursing colleges need to be strengthened.

(The author is Managing Director, Health Solutions, India and South Asia, ELSEVIER)



APAAR ID will be a tangible symbol of knowledge, learning

It will give them the confidence to pursue their dreams, writes **Sasangan Ramanathan**

Imagine a world where every student's achievements, from academic milestones to extracurricular triumphs, are seamlessly captured and celebrated. That's precisely what APAAR ID Services offer – a digital haven where students can proudly showcase their academic bank of credits (ABC). APAAR ID Services and the concept of One Nation, One Student ID Card, envision to transform the educational journey of millions across India. It's not just about grades; it's about recognising the diverse talents and passions that make each student unique.

Students in India will receive their very own Automated Permanent Academic Account Registry (APAAR) card – a tangible symbol of their journey towards knowledge and growth. With a 12-digit unique ID in hand, they embark on a quest to explore, learn, and discover their potential. It's not just a card; it's a key to unlocking endless possibilities. But APAAR goes beyond mere identification – it's a promise of security and trust. In a world where data privacy is paramount, APAAR ensures that students' achievements are authentic and reliable.

Seamless transition

APAAR puts forward the concept of One Nation, One Student ID Card—a concept born out of the desire to create unity in diversity. It's about bridging geographical barriers and fostering a sense of belonging among students, regardless of where they come from. Whether in bustling cities or remote villages, every student is part of a larger educational family.

Think of a student moving to a new school, anxious about starting afresh. With their APAAR ID, they seamlessly transition, as their academic history follows wherever they go. It's not just about convenience; it's about ensuring continuity and stability in the face of change. Behind every APAAR ID is a student, with dreams, and aspirations. It's about



empowering them to take ownership of their life.

Embracing change

But like any journey, there are challenges along the way. Concerns about data privacy and consent must be addressed with sensitivity and care. It's about respecting students' rights and earning their trust every step of the way. Education is not just about imparting knowledge – it's about nurturing hearts and minds.

APAAR ID Services and the One Nation, One Student ID Card concept are more than just initiatives – they are symbols of empowerment and inclusivity. They represent a vision of education that puts students first, honouring their individuality while fostering a sense of community. As we embrace change and forge ahead into the future, let us remember that education is not just about preparing for tomorrow; it's about shaping the world we want to live in, one student at a time.

(The author is dean & HoS, School of Engineering, Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham, Coimbatore)

Integrating internships, real-world projects, and industry experts with academic courses can bridge the gap

concerning picture regarding the skill levels of Indian graduates, with the employability rate falling below 50%. This notable difference results in numerous graduates requiring preparation to fulfil the demands of the fiercely competitive job market.

Data from the 2022 Periodic Labour Force Survey reveals an 8.6% unemployment rate among individuals with secondary education and beyond. These findings highlight the gap between higher education achievement and industry readiness.

Insufficient training

Educational institutions have rapidly expanded to accommodate India's sizable youth population. However, mere expansion is insufficient.

graduates' employability. Initiatives such as the Skill India campaign are designed to equip individuals with the necessary skills, thereby improving their job prospects.

Simplifying regulatory frameworks: Promoting entrepreneurship is crucial for economic growth, job opportunities, and innovation. The government can facilitate this by offering financial incentives and simplifying regulatory frameworks for startups.

Public-private partnerships: Efforts to tackle unemployment must involve collaboration between the public and private sectors. Public-Private Partnerships (PPP) can be instrumental in attracting investments and fostering the creation of job opportunities.

(The author is associate professor, lead, GP Placements, and faculty in charge, PGDM-IB)

they need to be able to access it.

Global practices

Youth fellowship programmes can also be offered to high school students to expand their aspirations and help them strive for a career of their choice. Overall, the educational institutions need to develop programmes that ease the transition of students with disabilities from school to college by breaking away from the past and taking a holistic view of building and updating the norms as per the global advances.

Less likely to participate

As per the UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia's country profile of India titled 'Disability-Inclusive Education Practices in India (2021)', "Students with disabilities are less likely to participate in and complete their education compared to their peers without disabilities."

According to the All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE)

Organisations must support sustainability education of employees

By investing in learning and development initiatives, corporations can contribute to building a secure and prosperous future, writes **Rajnish Dass**

In today's rapidly evolving marketplace, learning and development initiatives have emerged as indispensable tools for organisations striving to cultivate competencies and skills that are not only relevant but also future proof. According to a recent study by Deloitte, 94% of executives and 88% of employees believe that learning and development are critical to the success of their organisations. Recognising the significance of staying ahead of the curve, companies are increasingly investing in employee sustainability education, setting a precedent for corporate responsibility in action.

As organisations navigate through the complexities of the modern business landscape, the need to equip employees with the right skill sets has never been more pressing. Learning and development programmes serve as catalysts for growth, enabling individuals to acquire the knowledge and capabilities necessary to thrive in their roles and contribute meaningfully to organisational success. Moreover, these initiatives are not just perceived as opportunities

Fostering a culture of continuous learning will enable organisations to mitigate the risk of employee attrition

for personal development by employees, they are also viewed as investments in enhancing market value.

In companies that prioritise employee sustainability education, a symbiotic relationship emerges between the individual and the organisation. According to a survey by LinkedIn, 94% of employees

would stay at a company longer if it invested in their career development. Employees are not only empowered to understand their unique learning needs but also encouraged to align their development goals with the strategic objectives of the company. This alignment fosters a sense



of purpose and direction, driving engagement and commitment among employees. Furthermore, by fostering a culture of continuous learning, organisations can effectively mitigate the risk of employee attrition. Employees who feel supported in their professional growth are more likely to remain loyal to their employers, knowing that their contributions are valued and recognised. In essence, learning and development initiatives serve as a potent tool for enhancing

employee retention and bolstering organisational resilience.

However, the benefits of employee sustainability education extend far beyond the confines of the workplace. By equipping individuals with the skills and knowledge needed to navigate sustainability challenges, organisations can play a pivotal role in shaping a more sustainable future. Whether it's through initiatives focused on environmental conservation, ethical business practices, or social responsibility, companies can leverage learning and development as a force for positive change.

Corporate responsibility in action is exemplified through the steadfast commitment of companies to support employee sustainability education. By investing in learning and development initiatives, organisations not only nurture the talent within their ranks but also contribute to building a more sustainable and prosperous future for all. The journey towards sustainability begins with empowering individuals.

(The author is MD, Catalyst Executive Education Institute (CEEI))

Why college-readiness programme is crucial for disabled students

Bridging the divide between inclusive policies and practical challenges faced by students with disabilities is essential for their well-being, writes **Reena Gupta**

The 'd' in the word 'disability' can very well stand for 'differences'. It is a matter of mindset and attitude towards human diversity which are set early on in life. While a child, who may look different from others or may have different ways of learning, can be frowned at, or made to feel inferior, there can be another child in the same situation who is supported for their areas of challenge and valued for their strengths.

In both the above cases, it is mostly the adults who react in a certain way first and then the peers around the child. That puts the spotlight on the value of awareness and education among our community. While seeing a disability as a difference needs well-designed awareness campaigns; education, being fundamental to leading an independent fulfilling life, deserves better attention and effort. It is a well-known fact that a community thrives on education and if it includes its every member, the progress is manifold. However, it is also true that we tend to ignore the value people with disability can bring to the education system, and also the fact that, for them to contribute to the system,

2021-22, the total estimated enrolment in HEIs is four crore, out of which, there are approximately 88,000 students with disabilities enrolled in higher education. This means that out of the total population of students enrolled in HEIs, only about 0.2% comprise those who have disabilities. It also marks a decline in the number of enrolled students with disabilities from 92,000, as in AISHE 2019-20. National Centre for Promotion of Employment for Disabled People (NCPEDP) white paper on India's National Education Policy and Disability 'Inclusive Education, 2021, also highlights the sharp drop in enrolment in higher education, stating that enrolment at secondary school is almost half that at the elementary level.

Disability first

Addressing this issue is crucial to bridge the divide between inclusive policies and the practical challenges faced by students with disabilities in transitioning from



Use of assistive technology is a necessity in today's world, which demands training at an early stage

elementary to secondary and then to higher education. Most of these students grapple with the academic or social demands daily to an extent that there is no time to think beyond a day or a week - for students, educators, parents, and the administrators alike. Planning for the next phase of life sounds implausible. This is also because the adults around, tend to see the disability first before they see the student. They see the limitations first before they see the abilities.

The overall prevailing approach tends to be centred around caregiving and hand-holding, creating a void in fostering an environment conducive to responsibility-taking, self-awareness, and decision-making

for the students. The systematised lack of motivation tends to breed contentment with mediocrity, accompanied by diminished interest and capacity to function at one's best.

Self-advocacy

Developing skills to not-let-oneself fall behind and to self-advocate are essential for college success. For example, parents and teachers worked together to train a second-year student with visual impairment, during her school years towards independent life. She travelled alone, learnt to cook, and managed all her college applications with minimum intervention. From all the options she had, she specifically chose a university that was far from her hometown so that she could learn to live away from home. The girl also learnt to ask for support wherever needed without any hesitation. Today she is miles away from home and excelling not only in her academics, but also in sports, cultural competitions, and social interactions.

It is not that difficult for students to integrate college and future-readiness into their academic activities and daily tasks; however,

their families and schools have a critical role to play there. There is a huge scope of creating programmes that facilitate effective transition of students with disabilities from one stage of their academic life to the next.

We need, not one but many college-readiness-like bridge programmes to be developed, which can offer students a broader range of experiences. As shared by one of the participants, the college-readiness programmes they attended, not only gave them the confidence to opt for specific subjects in school but also helped them explore other areas of personal growth, such as travel, general knowledge, recreation, and politics.

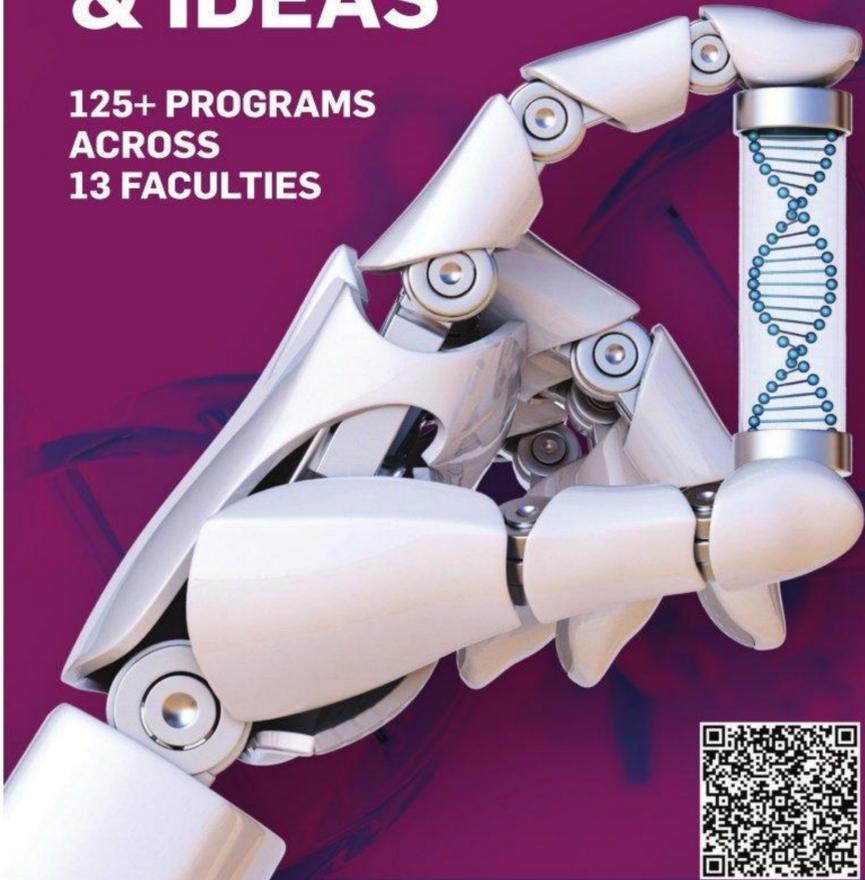
Toolkit of strategies

Specific bridge courses need to be developed that can enable students to start their journey of becoming independent learners early and be future-ready. These courses can help students build their own toolkit of strategies to manage their academics and daily work while they are still at school.

(The author is director, Office of Learning Support, Ashoka University)

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Strategies to crack Ivy League institutions

Take challenging courses, excel in your classes, and strive for high grades, write Kunal Mehra and Benito Rodriguez



The college application process is a daunting task and getting an acceptance to an Ivy League requires a combination of academic excellence, personal distinction, and demonstrated impact in the community. While there is no dearth of advice on application tips, strategic advice for putting together a compelling application is hard to come by.

Emphasis on grades

Focus on academic excellence and maintain a strong academic record throughout high school. Take challenging courses, excel in your classes, and strive for high grades. Ivy League colleges place a strong emphasis on academic achievement.

Pursue your interests

Engage in meaningful extracurricular activities and showcase leadership qualities. Participate in activities that align with your interests and passions. Show depth of involvement, leadership, and im-

Do not run after rankings. Take the time to research the Ivy League and other top colleges that interest you and understand their ethos and values

part in a few select activities rather than spreading yourself too thin across numerous pursuits. Focus on quality over quantity.

Ensure you have personalised and meaningful recommendations from your teachers, counsellors and mentors. Cultivate strong relationships that can provide guidance, support, and letters of recommendation. Seek opportunities to engage with them outside the classroom and demonstrate your commitment to learning and growth.

The right fit

Do not run after rankings. Take the time to research the Ivy League and other top colleges that interest you and understand their ethos and values. Identify colleges that align with your academic and personal goals, and demonstrate genuine interest in them through your application. Do not underestimate the importance of fit when selecting colleges to apply to. Consider factors such as academic programmes, campus culture, location, and resources to ensure that the

colleges on your list are a good match for your academic and personal goals.

Compelling college essays that demonstrate personal conviction and authenticity are key. Write essays that showcase your personality, experiences, and aspirations and use your essays as an opportunity to demonstrate self-awareness, resilience, and the unique perspective you bring to the table.

Solicit feedback

Be open to constructive criticism. Solicit feedback on your application materials from teachers, counsellors, or mentors. Revise your essays, résumé, and other components of your application based on their input to ensure clarity, coherence, and effectiveness.

During the application process, be mindful of certain common mistakes. Most students are prone to making mistakes at some point of their application journey. Watch out for some of those pitfalls.

Be honest

Do not plagiarise or embellish your application. Admissions officers value honesty and integrity, and any dishonesty could have serious consequences for your application and future academic endeavours.

Don't procrastinate on your college applications. Start early, gather materials, and work on your essays and other components of your application well in advance of deadlines to ensure a polished and timely submission. There is a tendency among Indian students to focus solely on academic achievements and standardised test scores, often overlooking the importance of holistic personal development, extracurricular engagement, and genuine self-expression – all of which are greatly valued by Ivy League admissions officers.

(The authors are managing director and CEO of Crimson Education, India, and IVY League admission consultant, Crimson Education and former admission officer at Harvard respectively)

Outreach programmes by HEIs attract more Indian students

India with its democratic ethos and English-speaking population is seen as a natural partner by the UK varsities

Sonal.Srivastava
@timesgroup.com

With Brexit, some of the structured frameworks that enabled student exchange among the UK universities and the European universities were disrupted, leaving the universities in the UK to explore collaborations and partnerships with other countries. India with its democratic ethos and students who are fluent in English was seen as a natural partner by the UK universities that are now increasingly forging academic collaborations with the Indian universities and developing India outreach programmes.

Besides robust democratic values, India has the demographic advantage with a significant proportion of the world's young population living in its cities. "Young people are the foundation of future discovery and its application; hence it is important to forge collaborations with a country that has inherent dynamism. There is a huge investment in Indian higher education including in public sector

It is important to create a domestic workforce that is sensitive to cultural differences and competent to work across continents

universities and private institutions. Some of these institutions might improve their international rankings making them viable propositions for Russell Group universities. There is a shared heritage and language between the UK and India and that makes collaborating with Indian universities easier than some of the other countries," says Charlie Jeffery, Vice-Chancellor and president, University of York, UK. The University has one of the most successful student outreach programmes and it has seen a 62% increase in Indian students over the past five years, the university recorded 550 Indian students in 2022-23, and in 2018, there were only 45 Indian students. An increasing number of international



There is a shared heritage and language between the UK and India and that makes collaborating with Indian universities easier than some of the other countries.
— Charlie Jeffery, VC and president, University of York, UK

Affordable housing

The University has created several new low-cost rooms. It is also working with the city councils and developers to find ways of producing affordable student accommodation. The university also supports students who encounter financial difficulties in various ways including rent.

students in the UK also translates into enhanced international goodwill for the country. "We value the interaction of different cultures and nationalities; it brings value to the UK students and to international students who choose to study here. To have a domestic workforce which is sensitive to cultural differences and can work across continents is important. Most of our international students return to their home countries, and most of them would have built a fondness for the city and the country, and it is invaluable for the UK to have lots of goodwill internationally," says Professor Jeffery.

However, international students in the UK may not always be comfortable as they face escalating rents and the

high cost of university accommodation that may impact their quality of life in a foreign country. "There are a few structural challenges in the UK which are impacting rents and interest rate is one of them. We are working towards making sure that any regulation of the rental sector takes into account the situation of the students," adds Professor Jeffery.

The university also supports students who encounter financial difficulties in various ways including rent. "Second-year students have access to a rent support grant as well as various other funding support opportunities that the university makes available," says Professor Jeffery.

Talking about the future of postgraduate and undergraduate programmes in a volatile world, Professor Jeffery says that universities will continue to offer a comprehensive set of undergraduate programmes, however, in future, it will be in smaller chunks. "Most courses in this university have 20-credit size components. We combine them into an undergraduate degree of 360 credits or a postgraduate degree of 180 credits. In future, we will allow people to get their 180 credits over 10 years. We will have to be responsive to the changing economy," explains Professor Jeffery.

Challenge yourself for incomparable exposure

Assam boy forays into the pulsating financial epicentre for transformation and opportunities

Sachin Baid, hailing from a small town, Bongaigaon, in Assam, is a second-year student at Frankfurt School of Finance and Management. While pursuing a Master's in Management programme, specialising in the Global Strategy Track, he is also working in the Société Générale Frankfurt office, Finance Department. "If one's passion lies in finance or investment banking, Frankfurt is undoubtedly a gem," says Sachin, adding, "It is a pulsating financial hub and immersing oneself here will provide one with incomparable exposure and opportunities in the financial world."

Prior to joining Frankfurt School, Sachin pursued BCom with a major in Management at Gauhati University. "My decision to join Frankfurt School for a Master's in Management was more than an academic pursuit. It was an adventure that would shape my identity and future. It was not merely an academic decision but a step into a new world, filled with opportunities, growth, and transformation," he says, adding, "The diverse students' body and forward-thinking faculty turned Frankfurt School into a melting pot of ideas where innovation thrived."

"The academic experiences paved the way for greater responsibilities. My role as a class represen-



My decision to join a Master's in Management was more than an academic pursuit; it was an adventure that would shape my identity and future.
— Sachin Baid

tative has taught me the art of empathy and communication. I became the bridge between my classmates and management, ensuring every voice was heard," says Sachin. Before arriving in Germany, Sachin was quite apprehensive as he had heard that Germans might be unfriendly or cold. "The reality couldn't be more different. I found a warm, welcoming atmosphere here where people respect and value cultural diversity. The support from the community has been incredible, and to my immense pride, I was elected to the students' council at Frankfurt School," he says.

"Adapting to the practical and hands-on style of education was a bit of a challenge initially since it was vastly different from what I was used to in India. However, with time, and the unwavering support from exceptional professors and academic staff at Frankfurt School, I found my footing," says Sachin. Reminiscing his time at Frankfurt School as a medley of academic brilliance, leadership, friendship, and per-

Robust networking

"At Deloitte Consulting, I stepped into the role of a technology strategy and transformation intern within the Financial Services – Banking Division. Transitioning from Deloitte to my current position at Société Générale in Frankfurt, I have embraced the role of a working student," says Sachin.

sonal growth, Sachin says, "It is a journey I would recommend to anyone seeking to challenge themselves, to grow, and to become a part of something bigger. The Assam boy had also undertaken a summer internship which was a thrilling ride of growth and discovery. "At Deloitte Consulting, I stepped into the role of a technology strategy and transformation intern within the Financial Services – Banking Division. Transitioning from Deloitte to my current position at Société Générale in Frankfurt, I have embraced the role of a working student in the corporate

and investment banking division," he says. "The evolution from strategy consulting to a focus on compliance and accounting within the banking sector has been a valuable expansion of my skill set, equipping me with a versatile understanding of finance that bridges the gap between theory and practice," says Sachin.

Embrace the challenges

For those looking to study in Germany, Sachin says, "Embrace the challenges. Life abroad is not a cakewalk, but it is through these challenges that you will find yourself growing and evolving. Do not be disheartened by obstacles or rejections, especially during job hunts. Resilience and perseverance are key, and maintaining a positive attitude will eventually open the right doors."

An indispensable piece of advice from Sachin is to take German language seriously. "It is advisable to at least complete the basics before arriving in Germany, as initially one might find oneself swamped and lose track," he says. As an international student, Sachin says, "It is imperative to be adaptive to the cultural diversity that Germany offers. This country is a mosaic of traditions and cultures, and respecting this diversity will not only enrich your own experience but will also help you build a robust network of relationships that could be invaluable in your personal and professional life."

Kiran Sahani becomes first South Asian to receive Canada's MacCall MacBain Scholarship

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Kiran Sahani has become the first South Asian to receive the MacCall MacBain Global Scholarship awarded by the McGill University in Montréal, Canada this year. With this, she is now one of the 10 global recipients of the scholarship.

The MacCall MacBain Scholarships are Canada's largest leadership-based scholarships for master's and professional studies. They are the result of a C\$200 million gift (about Rs 1,240 crore) in 2019 by John and Marcy MacCall MacBain, the then-largest single donation in the country's history. Designed to encourage purposeful leadership, the scholarships enable students to pursue a fully-funded master's or

I am committed to leveraging this opportunity to further my mission of advocating for access to education, particularly for marginalised communities.
— Kiran Sahani



professional degree while participating in mentorship, coaching, and a leadership development programme.

Expressing her gratitude, Kiran Sahani, a student of Ashoka University, said, "I am deeply committed to leveraging this opportunity to further my mission of advocating for equity, empowerment, and access to education, particularly for marginalised communities." Kiran will pursue a master's degree in public health at McGill. Born and raised in Kolkata, Kiran holds a bachelor's degree in Biology and a Postgraduate Diploma in Sociology and Anthropology from Ashoka University.

Are foreign students in the US caught in the crossfire

As the nation grapples with pressing challenges and debates its future direction, it is imperative to recognise the integral role that international students play in shaping the cultural and intellectual landscape of American universities, writes Rajiv Dabhadkar

International students in the United States find themselves entangled in a complex web of socio-political issues that often dominate the landscape during election seasons. As the nation gears up for another round of pivotal elections, issues such as immigration, inflation, and rising crime rates come up, shaping the discourse in presidential debates and public discourse alike. However, amidst these overarching narratives, it is evident that international students, particularly those of colour, are not mere bystanders but active participants.

For many international students, the allure of the American dream serves as a beacon, drawing them to the US in pursuit of academic excellence and professional opportunities. Among these students, Indian nationals represent a significant cohort, with a substantial number securing student visas to enrol in American universities each year. Statistics from the previous academic year underscore this trend, revealing that out



of the approximately 1 million international students studying in the United States, nearly 1,40,000 were of Indian origin, reflecting the enduring appeal of American educational institutions.

Uncertain situations

Despite the promise of opportunity, recent events have cast a shadow of uncertainty over the experiences of international students, particularly those hailing from marginalised communities. Instances of discrimination and

xenophobia, fueled by divisive rhetoric and sporadic incidents, have increasingly targeted specific groups of international students. Such occurrences not only exacerbate feelings of vulnerability and insecurity but also challenge the notion of inclusivity and diversity within the higher education landscape.

The tightening of immigration laws and the imposition of restrictive measures not only impede the mobility of in-

ternational students but also contribute to a climate of uncertainty, where the prospect of deportation looms large, casting a shadow over their academic pursuits and prospects. In this regard, the upcoming elections hold profound implications for international students, as the outcomes may shape the trajectory of immigration policies and influence their experiences in the US.

Not a passive observer

Nevertheless, amidst the cacophony of political discourse and policy debates, it is essential to recognise that international students are not passive observers but active stakeholders with aspirations and ambitions beyond the realm of politics. Like their domestic counterparts, international students prioritise their academic and career goals, striving to excel in their chosen fields and contribute meaningfully to society. While political developments may command headlines and shape public opinion, the everyday concerns of international students often revolve around academic deadlines, career opportunities, and personal growth.

International students often navigate complex visa regulations and bureaucratic hurdles

In this context, the disconnect between the political rhetoric of elections and the lived realities of international students becomes glaringly apparent. While policymakers and politicians engage in heated debates over contentious issues, international students remain focused on navigating the complexities of student life, balancing academic commitments with personal aspirations. As the nation grapples with pressing challenges and debates its future direction, it is imperative to recognise the integral role that international students play in shaping the cultural and intellectual landscape of American universities. Policymakers must acknowledge their critical contributions and address the complexities and challenges they face, fostering a more inclusive and diverse higher education landscape that values international students' experiences and aspirations.

(Views expressed are personal)
(The author is founder of National Organisation for Software and Technology Professionals, NOSTOPS)

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NZEA awards

Applications are invited for Education New Zealand | Manapou ki te Ao's New Zealand Excellence Awards scholarships for July 2024. The scholarship scheme is a joint initiative of Education New Zealand and New Zealand's universities that are ranked within the top 3% of universities worldwide as per the QS World Rankings 2024. **Eligibility:** The NZEA awards offer partial scholarships for eligible Indian students to study at the universities from Aotearoa New Zealand. **Application Deadline:** May 19, 2024

Link: <https://www.studywithnewzealand.govt.nz/en/new-zealand-excellence-awards>

Canadian scholarship

The University of Guelph in Ontario, Canada, is providing a new \$2,000 Welcome to Canada President's Scholarship that guarantees residence for all years of study. **Eligibility:** Open to all admitted, undergraduate international students from outside of Canada. **Application Deadline:** May 31, 2024 **Link:** <https://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/studentfinance/aid/international>

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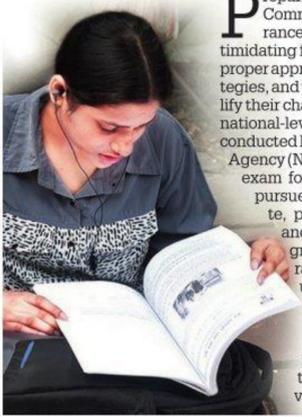
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Good time management can get one into top varsities after CUET

Students must stay focused, disciplined, and believe in their abilities while appearing for the exam, writes **Amitendra Kumar**



Preparing to appear for the Common Universities Entrance Test (CUET) can be intimidating for students, but with a proper approach, preparation strategies, and tips, students can amplify their chances of success in this national-level examination. CUET, conducted by the National Testing Agency (NTA), serves as a critical exam for students aspiring to pursue various undergraduate, postgraduate, diploma, and certification programmes offered by top-ranked institutes and universities across India. With good CUET scores, students can gain admission to their preferred institutions. Here are some invaluable tricks and tips

Analysing previous years' question papers can provide valuable insights into exam trends

to help students prepare effectively for CUET.

Syllabus familiarisation

Gaining a comprehensive understanding of the CUET syllabus is important for the exam. Apart from comprehensive knowledge, students should cover all essential topics and subject areas relevant to the examination. Students should also prioritise topics based on weightage and importance.

Exam pattern

Self-analysis of the CUET exam pattern can provide valuable insights into the structure, format, and distribution of marks across different sections. Understanding the types of questions asked and the allocation of time and resources accordingly can help students score better. Analysing previous years' question papers can provide valuable insights into exam trends and recurring topics.

Preparation plan

Develop a well-structured study plan outlining your daily, weekly, and monthly goals. Break down the syllabus into manageable segments and allocate sufficient time to each

topic. Stick to your study plan to ensure disciplined preparation. Efficient time management is crucial during the exam. Students must practice solving mock papers and sample tests within the stipulated time frame to improve speed and accuracy. Allocate more time to challenging sections while ensuring adequate coverage of topics. Regularly solve mock and sample papers to familiarise yourself with the exam format, question types, and difficulty level. Analyze your performance, identify areas of strength and weakness, and focus on improving your weaker areas.

Study material

Use reputable preparation guides or reference books specifically designed for CUET preparation. These resources cover all relevant topics, provide practice exercises, and offer solutions for comprehensive learning. The exam will be conducted in a hybrid mode with some papers going offline depending on the registrations. CUET takes place once a year, with the upcoming exam scheduled from May 15 to May 31, 2024. By adopting a systematic approach to preparation students can boost their confidence, competence, and overall performance in the examination. Students must stay focused, and disciplined, and must believe in their abilities.

(The author is the product head, Career Launcher)

Choose the right B-school for better job opportunities

Exercise caution when evaluating programmes that lack accreditation, writes **Pratik Modi and Akshita Arora**



The admission season is underway, and aspirants are seeking advice from professors, coaching centres, and seniors on selecting the right business school. Choosing the right institution is crucial as students invest considerable time, effort, and money in this journey, which can significantly impact their career prospects. An MBA programme is a two-year course designed to equip individuals with both technical and interpersonal skills that are essential for their professional growth. This transformative journey can help students transition into polished professionals. This article offers key criteria for graduates to consider when making their decision.

● **Placements:** While placement records provide valuable insights into the companies visiting campus and the packages offered, they do not capture the full trajectory of your career. The initial placement might secure your first job, but a solid foundation of knowledge and holistic professional development is crucial for sustained success and long-term career growth. Make sure

initiatives. A robust alumni network can provide valuable connections and career support. Assess if alumni have successful careers in their respective fields and whether they maintain a strong connection to the school. This network can be instrumental in providing insights, practical guidance, and mentorship throughout your academic and professional journey.

● **Curriculum:** A comprehensive curriculum prepares students for the realities of professional life. Ensure that it is regularly updated to reflect current industry requirements and that the specialisations align with your interests and aspirations. Investigate the school's emphasis, whether in innovation, entrepreneurship, sustainability, or other specialised areas. The school should prioritise experiential learning, industry exposure, and practical pedagogy to equip students for real-world challenges. Seek courses that encourage collaboration, creativity, and problem-solving strategies.

● **Campus visit:** A prospective student should visit the campus before making a final decision. It

Top IT careers you can pursue without a formal tech degree

Knowledge of data, ML can unlock high-paying data science jobs, writes **Abhinanda Sarkar**



Information technology remains a core part of our tech-driven world, offering several opportunities and a way for professionals to build aspirational careers. With India continuing as a significant IT hub, the market is robust and expansive enough to survive the inherent volatility. Skilled aspirants with up-to-date industry knowledge will consistently find roles in abundance within the sector.

The reason these skills are valued and in great demand today is due to the IT sector's ever-increasing technicality. In the past, an IT career depended on having a relevant tech background. Nowadays, there is incredible diversity in the job roles. While the work is more technical, organisations value skills over degrees in the face of constantly changing trends and updates. The shift in hiring patterns is good news for non-tech candidates from diverse fields looking for rewarding opportunities. If individuals can showcase initiative and intent, they can grow into various IT roles without any formal education.

A few thriving tech roles that aspirants from non-tech backgrounds can explore are:

● **Data scientists:** These professionals go through complex data for critical insights, helping organisations make the right decisions. They are invaluable to success as today's data-based approach dictates margins. While many data scientists have advanced degrees that cover the domain comprehensively, it's entirely possible to enter the field without them.

If you have a strong foundation in mathematics, statistics, and programming, you stand a good chance of landing a role. Individuals with this mix of computing and mathematical knowledge only have to upskill in data science tools, languages (Python, R), and machine learning libraries such as PyTorch to kickstart a data science career. Learning to visualise data and becoming familiar with machine learning can round off one's foundational knowledge and unlock high-paying data science jobs.

● **Cybersecurity analysts:** As more work and business processes take place online, organisations are always in danger of losing sensitive information to bad actors. While digitisation simplifies operations and streamlines various workplace interactions, there is an obvious security concern. Given the evolving nature of the threats and cyberattacks, organisations want skilled talent who can think on their feet and respond to high-pressure situations. Interested individuals don't need extensive qualifications. Essential certifications like CompTIA Security+ and CISSP will give you a foothold in the domain and set you up for a future-proof career.

● **Business analysts:** A very broad role that can apply to nearly every industry, business analysts can perform their roles without specific qualifications. These professionals use data to make strategic business choices—they usually work across multiple teams and involve other decision-makers like senior managers/external stakeholders to achieve steady and efficient operations. Business analysts have a keen eye for detail and thrive on communicating information clearly throughout the business hierarchy. Professionals who have these soft skills can level up by taking programmes and certifications that teach business strategy, data, and financial analysis. The demand for business analysts is growing, with more organisations choosing data-driven decisions to guide operations and customer relations.

The demand for business analysts is growing, with more organisations choosing data-driven decisions to guide operations and customer relations

cern. Given the evolving nature of the threats and cyberattacks, organisations want skilled talent who can think on their feet and respond to high-pressure situations. Interested individuals don't need extensive qualifications. Essential certifications like CompTIA Security+ and CISSP will give you a foothold in the domain and set you up for a future-proof career.

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In today's digital world, where continuous learning is prioritised, there are multiple ways of launching a successful career in the IT sector. With the right attitude, it is possible to transition into IT roles from different domains. A passion for technology, curiosity to learn, and the ability to adapt to the ever-evolving demands of the IT landscape are perfect substitutes for a traditional IT degree. If you pursue certifications, build a portfolio, and gain practical knowledge through internships, you can break into exciting, hugely rewarding and fulfilling careers.

(The writer is academic director, Great Learning)

Improving language comprehension skills for CUET UG

Comprehension passages are a slippery slope, challenging your understanding of grammar and vocabulary by placing them within real-world context helps, writes **Amit Baveja**

The Common University Entrance Test (UG) is one of the crucial national-level exams that enables candidates to fulfil admission criteria for a wide range of universities and colleges.

While the exam structure encompasses several domains, the common language section, if tackled properly, may give candidates an advantage in scoring higher. Data reveals a 48% surge in the number of students opting for the English language in CUET UG 2024 as compared to 2022, which confirms that the English language segment is an integral aspect of admission selection.

The English language section is predominantly comprehension-based, with 35-40% of the questions testing comprehension skills. Comprehension passages are a slippery slope, challenging your understanding of grammar and vocabulary by placing them within real-world context. However, understanding language in context is the key to acing this section.

Let us forget the rules of simple-past and simple-present in the high school grammar books for an instant. Research shows that traditional rote learning methods have little to no effect on improving students' language

Exposure to authentic English language media, such as movies, television shows, and music can significantly enhance language comprehension skills

skills. Instead, aspirants should work towards constructing an immersive language-learning environment for themselves.

Here are five tips to ace the comprehension section:

Practice modules

Practice makes a man perfect. Go over practice modules and past-exam question papers as many times as possible. Doing so will ease you into the logical thought process required to tackle certain questions and introduce you to logical techniques that may otherwise appear theoretically complex.

Building the context

Contextual grammar refers to language usage in real-life scenarios. An understanding of contextual grammar would enable students to read and decipher comprehension passages insightfully. CUET aspirants should cultivate knowledge of contextual grammar by engaging in activities such as role-play, contextual sentence construction, and analysing English texts. This

would help them develop a strong sense of language comprehension beyond the surface-level understanding of grammar rules.

Multimedia resources

Exposure to authentic English language media, such as movies, television shows, and music, can significantly enhance language comprehension skills. Watching English movies with subtitles, listening to English songs, and engaging with English-language podcasts or authentic language influencers expose students to diverse linguistic styles and accents, thereby improving their comprehension abilities. Moreover, observing the use of correct grammar and composition in media reinforces proper language usage.

Cultivating healthy learning practices

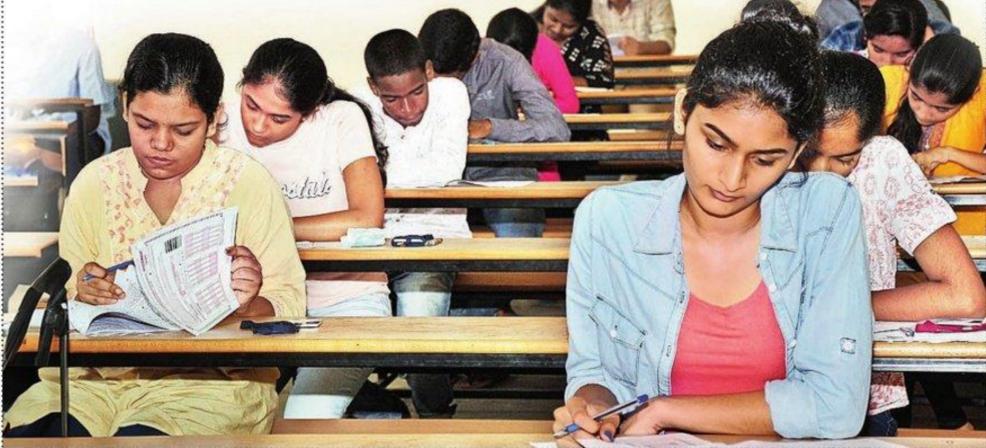
Language acquisition is a life-long process. While the

CUET exam is integral to your future studies, inculcating healthy learning habits such as reading will strengthen your overall communication skills. We advise aspirants to read various forms of English literature, from classic works to contemporary literature. This would not only familiarise them with socio-political and cultural contexts but also enhance their comprehension skills.

Seeking feedback

Aspirants should actively seek guidance from experienced educators and language experts to fine-tune their language comprehension skills. Participation in language workshops, seeking feedback on written assignments and constructive criticism will help students remedy the gaps in their understanding more effectively. Mastering language comprehension skills is not just a requisite for cracking the CUET UG exam but a life-long asset that opens doors to academic and professional success in the long run.

(The writer is Managing Director, Burlington English India & Southeast Asia)



CUET will have enhanced flexibility, security measures

Varied paper combinations will allow for streamlined scheduling that will reduce the number of exam days benefitting students

Sonal Srivastava
@timesgroup.com

To alleviate exam stress and increase flexibility to choose their preferred exam centres closer to home, the National Testing Agency (NTA) will expand the number of examination centres for the CUET UG exam. Additionally, measures will be taken to ensure there is ample time between exams scheduled on the same day.

In 2022, CUET (UG) was marred by several technical glitches, so much so that the National Testing Agency (NTA) had to postpone the exams. In 2023, thousands of CUET-UG aspirants found that they were assigned examination centres that were far away from their hometowns when they had opted for a centre nearby.

In 2024, CUET UG will be conducted in a hybrid mode with OMR sheets for subjects that get a large number of registrations.

"Conducting entrance tests in a hybrid mode can benefit students, particularly those residing in rural areas. The idea behind conducting CUET-UG in hybrid mode is to

Hybrid mode exam

This year, CUET UG will be conducted in a hybrid mode with OMR sheets for subjects that get a large number of registrations. Conducting entrance tests in a hybrid mode can benefit students, particularly those residing in rural areas.

provide more test centres nationwide so that candidates from less urbanised regions can participate in the examination closer to their homes. This inclusivity promotes equal opportunities for all, ensuring that geographical constraints do not hinder students' educational aspirations in rural and remote areas. Additionally, the hybrid mode acknowledges the importance of adapting to diverse testing environments," says M Jagadeesh Kumar, chairman, UGC.

Convenient scheduling

The time gap between two exams on the same day is expected to provide students with a mental and physical break, allowing them to



transition between subjects and reduce stress. "This year, instead of attempting 10 papers, students will be permitted to write a maximum of six papers. The rationale behind this decision is that only a tiny percentage of students have opted for 10 papers in the past years. However, the scheduling of papers becomes very complex, leading to conducting the test over several days. Since students can write six papers in different combinations, such as 4 domain papers, 1 language paper, 1 general test paper or, 3 domain pa-

pers, 2 language papers and 1 general test paper, CUET-UG can be scheduled over fewer days, which is good for the students," says Professor Kumar.

"Just as last year, NTA will announce the cities where the student can write the test a week before the date. Since this time, NTA is conducting CUET-UG in the hybrid mode, we will have more centres in cities, and students will get the centres of their choice. For security reasons, students can download admit cards a few days before the test," says Kumar.

Reducing dependency on coaching

A moderate difficulty level in an entrance test for university admission can contribute to reducing students' reliance on coaching centres. "We want to keep the difficulty level of questions in CUET-UG moderate because students are more likely to perceive it as a fair and manageable challenge. Answering such reasonable difficulty level questions can improve students' intrinsic motivation and self-efficacy, as they believe in their ability to prepare for and perform well on the test with-

Candidates are advised to visit college campus and engage with current students and alumni to gain insight into the institution's ethos

to interpret placement statistics carefully, as some schools may emphasise the average salaries of top-performing percentiles, such as the top 10% or 25%, and the highest salaries, which might not reflect the entire cohort.

● **Faculty:** The faculty is the intellectual backbone of any business school, shaping the minds of future managers. More relevant than infrastructure or facilities, students should consider the intellectual resources available, the curriculum quality, and the institution's commitment to teaching and learning processes. Seek faculty members who are dedicated to fostering a well-rounded, supportive learning environment that encourages critical thinking, creativity. Check for their academic credentials, including scholarly publications and consulting expertise.

● **Alumni network:** Speak with the institution's alumni network and current cohorts about their experiences with the school's holistic development

is crucial to evaluate the school's infrastructure, including smart classrooms, a well-equipped library, laboratories, study spaces, hostels, sports facilities, and cafeterias. Campus visits help you visualise yourself in the environment and determine if it aligns with your expectations.

● **Rankings and accreditations:** Rankings and accreditations are useful when shortlisting business schools. Reputable global and national rankings based on academic performance, faculty profiles, and alumni success can provide clarity and confidence in your decision-making. Exercise caution when evaluating programmes that lack accreditation, and prioritise those vetted by standard national and global ranking institutions. Pay special attention to mandated regulatory accreditations to ensure quality.

(The writers are dean and associate professor of School of Management, BML Munjal University respectively)

hout undue external help. This positive feeling experienced by the students diffuses from one batch to another and reduces their dependency on coaching," says Professor Kumar.

To control cheating and use of unfair practices during the exam as OMR sheets could be manipulated, several measures will be undertaken to protect the integrity of the exam. "We take several measures to prevent cheating in every test centre such as (1) rigorous identity verification processes, including photo identification and biometric scans to prevent impersonation; (2) seating is arranged in a way that minimises communication between students; (3) a sufficient number of invigilators are assigned to monitor the entire examination hall; (4) Random spot checks are conducted during the exam; (5) Unauthorised devices and materials are not allowed to be brought into the exam hall. We also analyse the answers and patterns to identify any unusual trends or similarities among answers that may indicate cheating and take appropriate steps," says Prof Kumar.

Coders and software developers

We have moved on from when a computer science or related degree was a must for a software developer. Now, coding is no longer some arcane knowledge. People have easy access to learning material that breaks down the subject for those without prior training. Many software developers are self-taught or have undertaken coding bootcamps. For individuals going down this path, it is vital to translate learning into action by building a portfolio of projects that showcase they are comfortable with a host of programming languages. Organisations will invest in talent that can code and create software that seamlessly meets varying user needs, whether mobile apps or enterprise cloud systems.





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Mindset towards skill education has evolved over time

With skills being a lifelong-learning process, its integration will help enhance employability and foster entrepreneurship

Priyadarshini Gupta
@timesgroup.com

The National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC), under the Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship (MSDE) is set to host IndiaSkills 2023-24. The competition unfolds through a series of stages at the district, state, zonal, and national levels, culminating at the WorldSkills Competition Lyon 2024.

In an interaction with *Education Times*, Ved Mani Tiwari, CEO, NSDC and MD, NSDC International, spoke about the importance of integrating skill in the formal education sector.

The National Education Policy 2020 reinforced the notion of integrating skill in the formal education sector. Focus is now placed on allowing students to explore vocational subjects as a career prospect. What do you think about this?

The narrative in the education sector has undergone significant shifts in recent times. Skills is a lifelong-learning process, and everyone needs to reskill and upskill all the time to stay relevant at the workplace. The idea was accelerated during the Covid pandemic which induced a massive shift at workplaces and practices. Thankfully, NEP 2020 which was work-in-progress and was ready by 2020, identified that everybody would have to learn skills from class VI onwards. According to the NEP, education must become work-relevant, and that will be possible only when we start respecting vocational subjects, the way we respect academic subjects. In the school context, the National Curriculum

IndiaSkills has acquired a new dimension, and we are trying to inculcate a culture of giving recognition to skills.

Ved Mani Tiwari,
CEO, NSDC and
MD, NSDC
International

NCF brings skill education to schools, allowing children to pick skill subjects as regular subjects

Framework (NCF) has completely reformed the school education. While the NEP stresses that by 2030, at least 50% of our students should have a skill connect, the NCF brings skill education to schools, allowing children to pick skill subjects as regular subjects.

The mentality regarding skill education has evolved a lot over time. The inclusion and integration of skill education, along with massive regulatory changes, specially by the UGC, the AICTE, and the NCTE has been a big gamechanger. In current times, your skill becomes your passport to prosperity other than land or capital.

Please tell us about IndiaSkills and WorldSkills. What is its objective?

Candidates from over 85 countries participate and compete at the WorldSkills competition. It encompasses 60 diverse categories, ranging from construction, and



building technology to fashion designing, hairdressing, baking, and cybersecurity.

Until last year, we used to organise IndiaSkills just to select candidates for participation for this

event. This year, however, it has taken a pivot, and we want to build it as a brand. IndiaSkills has acquired a new dimension, and we are trying to inculcate a culture of giving recognition to skills. We are

trying to take IndiaSkills to the people and our effort is to make skills aspirational in the country. Participation for IndiaSkills comes mostly from the southern states, Odisha, Maharashtra. We have now brought in a flexibility that every state can now add four to five skills. Over a period, as more and more skills start emerging, we will be able to give representation to almost all skills in the country. Until now, IndiaSkills was mostly thought as a medium for craftsmen, and those coming from ITIs, Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana. However, from a campaign perspective, we are reaching out to schools and colleges now. Earlier, IndiaSkills was managed by the Confederation of

Indian Industry (CII). In 2011, it came to the NSDC, and we have moved it from the 39th position in the world to the 13th position.

How did 2023 turn out for NSDC? What were the new initiatives that were implemented?

We made our focus sharper by creating NSDC International which helps find job opportunities to Indians abroad. This was started in 2022, but in 2023, it started maturing because our government signed mobility partnerships with many countries. The USA, Canada, the UAE, Qatar, Oman, Kuwait, Bahrain, Japan, Australia, the UK, Israel, Malaysia, Romania, Finland, Germany, Mauritius are some of them. The Indian government along with the foreign governments has provided a trusted, ethical, legal channel for Indians to get jobs abroad.

NSDC Digital is the online platform, available in the app store as Skill India Digital, but we are trying to rebrand it as Siddh which means 'proficient' or 'Nipun'. Through the app, one can find a job, can find out the required skills to get the job. While there are lots of private EdTech platforms, this stands as a trusted government platform.

Bringing in new-age skills, NSDC Academy is providing opportunities to those students who can afford their skill education. Cutting-edge future skills courses are being taught in the Academy. We cover cloud computing or cybersecurity or 3D printing or crypto, under a phygital (classroom and digital) model. We affiliate training partners who run these future skill programmes. Prestigious institu-

tions like IITs have also joined us. The NSDC Academy acts a bridge between a tier-II and tier-III college students and the faculty and the cutting-edge learning resources.

NSDC Impact believes that every citizen has a right to education. The NSDC Impact is a public-private partnership platform where we are also bringing in private sectors through their CSR programmes. We can pull resources and help provide a subsidised or free skill to deserving candidates in every part of the country.

What are the upcoming projects for 2024? Any special initiatives that will be offered to students?

We plan to scale the existing platforms further in 2024. While we are targeting at least 100 million users to start using the NSDC Digital, we should be able to place over 1 lakh people across the world through the NSDC International. We expect that future-skill courses will touch at least 2.5 million people in this country. The NSDC has partnered with Meta, IBM, Bajaj Finance. With over 1,000 private sectors joining the Skill India Mission, we should be able to achieve that target soon.

Please tell us more about collaborations with state governments and universities.

We are doing a lot with state governments. The NSDC is also working with several states in tribal areas. With an aim to enhance the livelihood opportunities in Janjati regions, it has launched 'Singi Dai Van Vgyan Kendra' — A Centre of Excellence (CoE) for Aromatic and Medicinal plants promotion and processing, and a women empowerment centre in Jharkhand.

AICTE career portal to help students with AI resume builder

Platform will allow college administration to track the outcomes of student application



Priyadarshini Gupta
@timesgroup.com

The newly launched 'AICTE Career Portal' will offer opportunities for university graduates to explore job opportunities at prominent companies. The portal that went live in April is supported by *apna.co* — a job and professional networking platform and has an AI-assisted resume builder to support students from all streams — engineering, management, diploma, design, arts, and science in 12,000+ colleges. Aimed to help students with jobs, internships, resume building and interview preparation, the portal is specially designed for students living in remote areas with

interest in hiring from the portal. Moreover, the existing recruiters registered on *apna.co* are also eager to post job openings for freshers on the career portal.

A career GPS

The portal aims to help over 3 million students access employment and internship opportunities. "The portal will work like a career GPS, offering global opportunities to students. Creating strong resumes stand out in the professional world is a key gap for most students. An AI-assisted resume builder has been developed to create professional resumes from limited inputs. Students can choose a format, highlight achievements, and receive feedback from a resume analyst. Additionally, cover letters can be generated for specific applications," says Sitharam.

The portal also hosts over 180 professional communities consisting of working professionals and industry experts. Students can start a conversation and pop a query related to requirements of jobs, interview preparation, etc with these communities. "A private college community is also being created for each college to bring students and alumni together regarding career resources. The activities and interactions within the community will help students become confident and prepared at the start of their career," says Sitharam.

The platform offers a personalised job search experience tailored to individual needs, creating a unique ecosystem with specialised sections for freshers. Real-time notifications keep students informed about new job opportunities, recruiter interest, and application statuses, empowering them to stay proactive in their job search," says Nimit Parikh, founder and CEO, *apna.co*.

The portal has also been designed to empower youth living in remote areas with poor internet connectivity by prioritising mobile accessibility, ensuring equitable access regardless of device limitations.

Entry to class I at 6 years for child's better learning outcomes, cognitive growth

Academics hail the implementation of regulations, which is aligned with NEP 2020

Priyadarshini Gupta
@timesgroup.com

The Centre has instructed all states and Union Territories to ensure 6 years as the minimum age for children to be admitted to class I from 2024-25 session. This is in line with the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 and the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009. So far, children have been admitted to class I either at the age of 5 or 4 in some states.

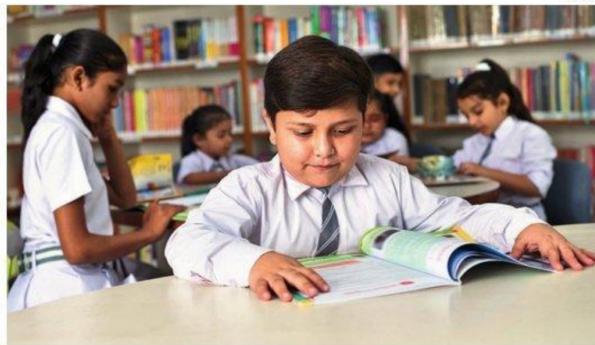
Uniform rules

By mandating 6 years for class I, the Ministry of Education (MoE) wants children physically and mentally grown to take up the academic demands of primary school. All the states and UT will have uniform age for class 1 admissions, which will ensure consistency in educational standards and practices. This, claim experts, will benefit students as they progress through their schooling.

Sudha Acharya, National Progressive Schools Conference chairman and principal of ITL Public School says, "The initiative will help in building a stronger foundation. It will help improve foundational learning and numeracy (FLN) skills among children. Education systems in Finland and other Nordic countries are valued across the globe because the schools here do not begin formal schooling until the child is 7. The academic outcomes in these countries are high."

Supporting the government directive, Delhi Parents' Association president Aprajita Gautam, says, "There is scientific evidence behind the NEP rule. A child's brain fully develops only after the age of five. In class I, a child is introduced to formal writing tools such as pencils and notebooks, hence it is always beneficial for a child if he/she goes to class I at the age of six. Introducing writing tools before the age of six may affect the child's grip to write with a pencil."

Most parents seeking school admission for their wards are looking for clarity over this rule. "Parents are running from



The academic need

The new NEP pitches for a "5+3+3+4" design for formal schooling corresponding to the age groups 3-8 years (foundational stage), 8-11 years (preparatory stage), 11-14 years (middle stage), and 14-18 years (secondary stage). This brings early childhood education (also known as pre-school education for children of ages 3 to 5 years) under the ambit of formal schooling. This effectively means that a child should be 6 years old to be eligible for admission into class I, after completing three years of early childhood education.

pillar to post to find out which school is following which age criteria as not all schools in Delhi have implemented the directive," says Gautam.

Different states, different rules

Several states are yet to follow the NEP guidelines. "Even within the state, many schools are not following the mandate. Every school has their rules and the admission age varies between 5 to 6 years. Many parents want their children to start school early as it allows the mothers to return to work. Also, in many cases,

parents feel that their child should not waste a year and learn all the skills as early as possible. However, this may not always align with the child's developmental needs," says Sree Lakshmi Murthy, principal, Shree Maharishi Vidya Mandir, Maharashtra.

Gap in learning needs

Highlighting the gaps in addressing the learning needs of children between classes I-III, Ratna Viswanathan, CEO, Reach to Teach, a social organisation, says, "These are very critical years since the actual learning, the personality development of a child happens between the ages of 3 to 7. Hence, if children are not dealt with appropriately during their critical years, a lot of skills, including behavioural skills, may go wrong." "There is nothing wrong with bringing children into the formal school space at the age of six instead of five. Nowadays, parents are obsessed that they need to send their wards to school early. If a child comes in at the age of six, there is a certain cognitive growth that has happened, which usually helps the child socialise better, engage better, and learn from peers," she adds.

The larger focus should be more on what the child is learning and putting it into application, adds Viswanathan.

SMART 2.0 to ascertain treatment adherence of Ayurveda drugs

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

The Central Council for Research and Ayurvedic Sciences (CCRAS) has joined hands with the National Council for Indian Systems of Medicine (NCISM) to launch the Scope for Mainstreaming Ayurveda Research among Teaching Professionals (SMART 2.0) programme to qualitatively enhance the research ecosystem to increase the efficacy of Ayurvedic medicines. The AYUSH ministry has allotted Rs 2 crore to research one disease.

As part of this programme, teachers from 25 Ayurveda colleges will be trained by the research officers of CCRAS. The training will include conducting clinical trials to suggest an Ayurvedic cure to diseases such as abnormal uterine bleeding, Bal Kasa, insufficient lactation, osteoporosis in post-menopausal women. Last year, SMART 1.0 was initiated by the CCRAS which focused on diseases such as rheumatoid arthritis, dyslipidemia, non-alcoholic fatty liver disease and psoriasis. Dr N Shrikant, deputy director general, CCRAS, says, "The aim behind launching the SMART 2.0 initiative is to ascertain the tolerability and treatment adherence of Ayurveda medicines focusing on women and child health. It is pertinent to enquire about the effectiveness of the medicine that will be administered to the patients."

The programme has been introduced to check the efficacy of the Ayurvedic medicines. "In the coming two years, a large sample size of the population will be taken from the study sites of the hospitals



The programme will qualitatively enhance research ecosystem

attached to Ayurveda colleges for this purpose. The programme also aims to inculcate the research aptitude among the teaching faculty. The teachers while conducting research will get familiarised with the requisite medical ethics," said Dr Shrikant.

Sanjeev Sharma, vice-chancellor, National Institute of Ayurveda, Jaipur, says, "Many Ayurveda colleges have been conducting clinical research related to various diseases in collaboration with various institutes of national importance like AIIMS and CSIR. Apart from this, many research proposals of the AYUSH Ministry are going on with several branches of AIIMS. The introduction of SMART 2.0 will act as a catalyst for all the clinical research initiatives that are undertaken by the students enrolled in Ayurveda colleges across the country. The most common diseases for which clinical research is being undertaken are pre-diabetes, hypertension, and cancer."

Functional curriculum to make special children inclusive

In the pilot phase, the curriculum will be introduced in 15 Delhi govt schools to observe the implementation and results in target students

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

The Delhi Directorate of Education (DoE) will introduce the functional curriculum for students with intellectual disabilities in Delhi government schools from the 2024-25 academic session. Under the initiative, students from classes I to VIII will get to have an inclusive curriculum helping them overcome disabilities. The functional curriculum has been divided into seven domains, including emotional development, physical development, social development, community interaction, recreational skills, community mobilisation and independent living skills. The students will be taught through an inclusivity-compliant Learning Management System (LMS) by special educators of DoE.

An expert committee comprising special educators working under DoE was set up to devise the functional curriculum. Students with intellectual disabilities

and special needs with their cognitive abilities and adaptive functioning impacted will benefit from this initiative. The initiative includes having a special system comprising of 14 resource centres, which will encourage schools to help students with special needs. The system will also help in offering speech therapy, physiotherapy, occupational therapy, and counselling.

Speaking to *Education Times*, a source in Delhi Directorate of Education on the condition of anonymity,

Seven domains

The functional curriculum has been divided into seven domains, including emotional development, physical development, social development, community interaction, recreational skills, community mobilisation and independent living skills

The students will also be engaged in experiential learning and assigned activities

says, "The basic aim behind introducing the functional curriculum is to initiate the teaching of functional academics for students with intellectual disabilities and challenges in Delhi government schools. These se-

ven domains will provide requisite functional skill sets to students which is essential to enable students with intellectual disabilities and challenges to undertake daily routines. Besides helping in developing their emotional skills, the students will also be engaged in experiential learning and

assigned activities such as shopping through e-banking, gardening and other community visits for their holistic growth. Along with the special educators, even the class teachers will be involved in strengthening the functional skills amongst students."

The DoE will be training teachers to address the special needs of the student. The functional curriculum is

meant to give a tailored learning experience to students with intellectual challenges. "The curriculum will be instrumental in strengthening practical skills such as communication abilities, independent living skills, vocational training, and social interaction among the students. This will ensure the inclusivity of students with intellectual disabilities in the educational sphere. Depending upon the baseline level of the student, teachers will select activities across domains of functional curriculum. For instance, autistic students will be assigned an activity wherein they will be required to participate in a group discussion with their peers. Whereas children with cerebral palsy will be involved in balancing activities related to gross motor skills," said a special education teacher working in a Delhi school. All the seven domains in the functional curriculum are in sync with the objectives of NEP 2020.



MSDE pushes Drone Didi Yojana to upskill 500 women

The Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) will conduct two pilot programmes under the initiative Drone Didi Yojana to upskill 500 women in batches of 20 women. The 15-day curriculum, approved by the Directorate General of Civil Aviation, will be conducted by Remote Pilot Training Organisation (RTPO) instructors at National Skill Training Institutes (NSTI) in Hyderabad

and Noida. The programme is being conducted in partnership with Mahindra & Mahindra. Drone Didi Yojana, announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in November 2023, aims to train 15,000 women to operate drones for agricultural purposes such as fertiliser sowing, crop monitoring, and seed sowing. "NSTIs in Hyderabad and Noida have been chosen for the pilot programme to empower rural women in agriculture," says Atul Kumar Tiwari, secretary, MSDE.

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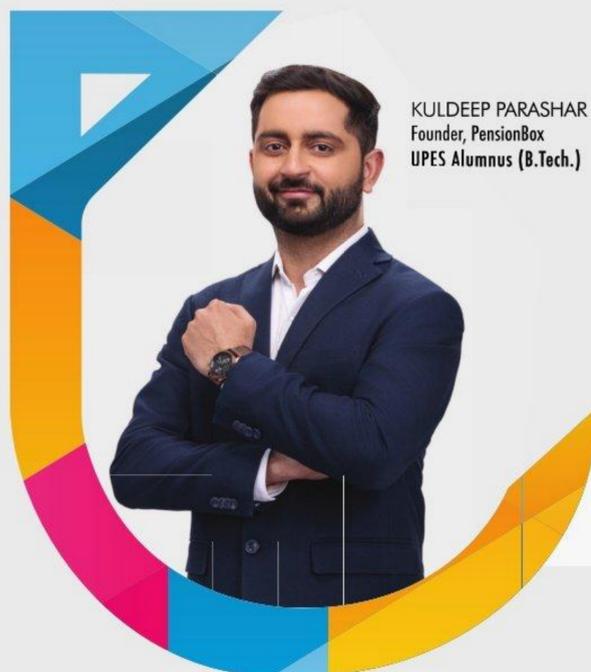
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