Delhi Times

MONDAY, MAY 27, 2024
ADVERTORIAL, ENTERTAINMENT INDUSTRY
PROMOTIONAL FEATURE

OF INDIA

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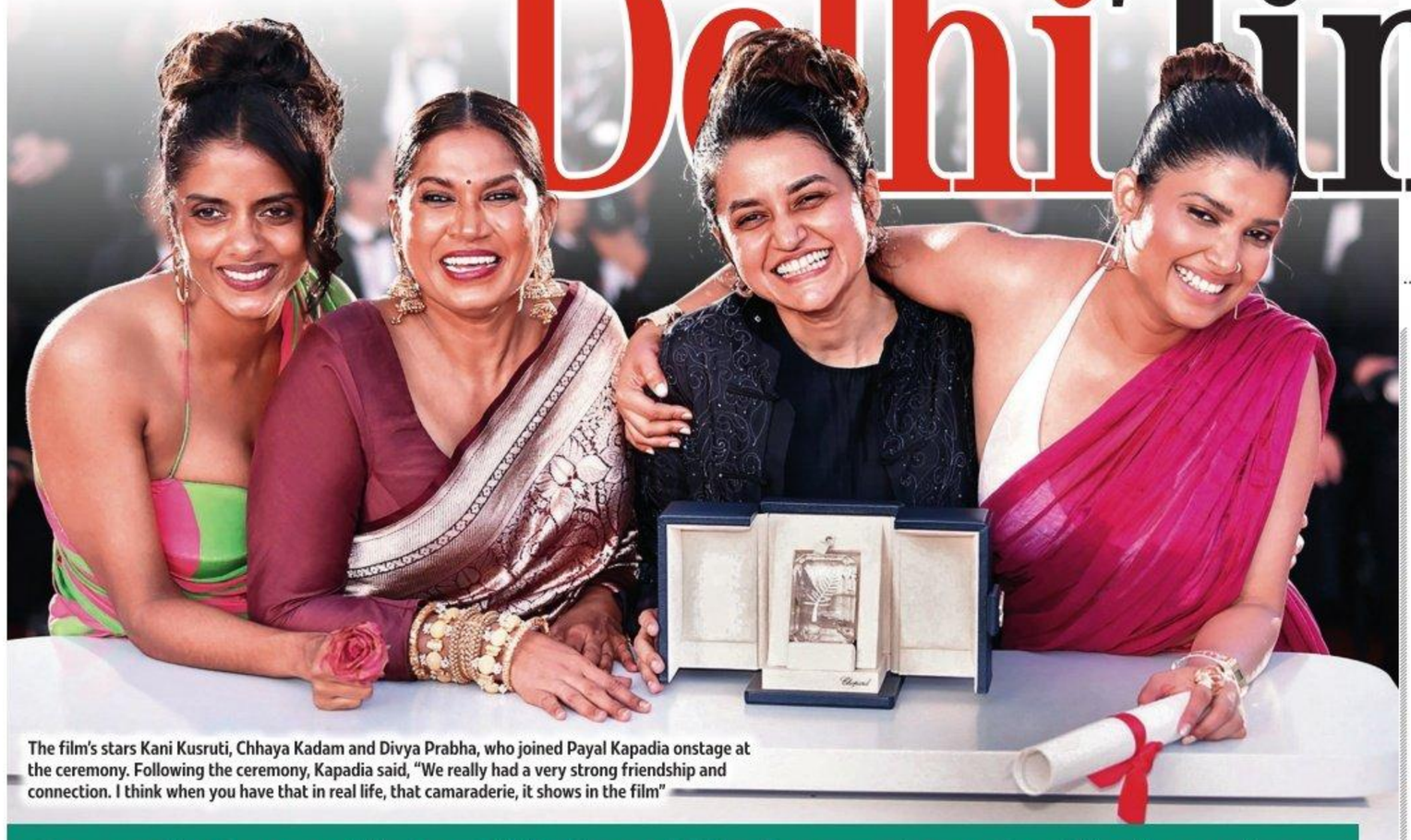
NICKI MINAJ BRIEFLY DETAINED AT AMSTERDAM AIRPORT FOR CARRYING DRUGS



The film's stars Kani Kusruti, Chhaya Kadam and Divya Prabha, who joined Payal Kapadia onstage at the ceremony. Following the ceremony, Kapadia said, "We really had a very strong friendship and connection. I think when you have that in real life, that camaraderie, it shows in the film"

Payal Kapadia's All That We Imagine As Light wins Grand Prix, the second-highest honour at Cannes

'Please don't wait 30 years to bring another Indian film to Cannes'

Payal Kapadia scripted history on Saturday by becoming the first Indian filmmaker to win the prestigious Grand Prix at the Cannes Film Festival. The competition jury, led by Greta Gerwig, awarded the festival's second-highest honour to Kapadia's *All That We Imagine As Light*. At Cannes, Payal was asked for the nth time why it took India 30 years to be selected for the competition section.

She asserted, "There are interesting films being made in India, and I'm only a product of that. There are a lot of films, a lot of interesting filmmakers, and a variety of work that is taking place in all languages and not just Bollywood. Every state has a strong film industry. We (the Indian film industry) have been around for a long time, but for some reason, it took 30 years to be selected. There is just amazing work going on in our country, and I'm really glad that we see the cinema that we do from India."

CONTINUED ON 4

> Thank you very much, Cannes Film Festival, for having our film here. Please don't wait another 30 years to have another Indian film. This film is about friendship between three women, and oftentimes women are pitted against each other. This is the way society is designed, and it is very unfortunate. But for me, friendship is a very important relationship because it can lead to greater solidarity, inclusivity, and empathy towards each other
>
> – **Payal Kapadia** in her acceptance speech

> It was an *adbhut* feeling. The team's red carpet dance wasn't planned. I was a little nervous, but as we were posing for pics, I heard a peppy song playing and couldn't stop myself. Then came the standing ovation for our film, which was surreal and exhilarating
>
> – Chhaya Kadam, one of the three leading ladies of the film

P4

'Unbelievable, historic'

RichaChadha @RichaChadha

HISTORIC!!! 🥹 Just beaming from this news! Congratulations Payal Kapadia, Ranabir Das, Kani Kusruti, Divya Prabha, Hridhu Haroon, Chhaya Kadam and the whole team of ALL WE IMAGINE AS LIGHT! Just overjoyed! Independent filmmaking at any point of time is hard, but now is actively scuttled , and then to win a GRAND PRIX ! Ooof. Just thrilled. 🎉 🎈 🥳

वरुण @varungrover

Unbelievable day for Indian cinema. An independent filmmaker - from much hated FTII - whose first film was a poetic love letter to the idea of dissent in a democracy, wins the second highest honour at the biggest film festival in the world.
Payal Kapadia's ALL WE IMAGINE AS LIGHT wins GRAND PRIX.
Magical to see four Indian women on stage at Cannes.
Dissent, in art and in life, is a tough path to choose. But sometimes it does create magic.

anuragkashyap10
Congratulations Payal Kapadia .. you're the hope and the inspiration ..

sujoy ghosh @sujoy_g

YEEEEEESSSSSS!!!!
well done payal and zico ... so so so so proud of you...

parambratachattopadhyay We watch in an awe and reverence, as two independent artistes , working patiently and silently, miles away from the spotlight of their respective industries, have brought maximum honour to Indian cinema!
While we sought other glories , they created history , without making any noise of it!
Bravo and thank you! ,

I HOPE THIS BRINGS MORE WOMEN TO THE FOREFRONT: ANASUYA IN DELHI AFTER HER CANNES WIN

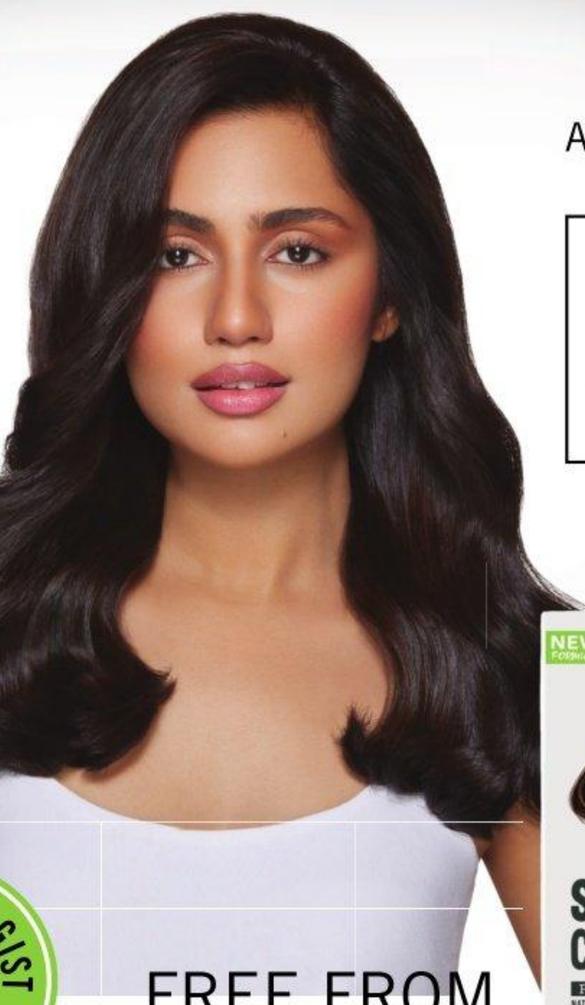
Ajay Kumar Gautam

Barely an hour after landing in Delhi to a warm welcome, Anasuya Sengupta, who created history at Cannes as the first Indian actor to win an award for Best Performance in *The Shameless*, shared her excitement with us. "I am absolutely elated. To have been able to play a character like Renuka was an absolute privilege. Konstantin (Bojanov, the director) must be a magician to have cast me, despite me being tucked away behind the scenes for so long. What makes it even more special is the fact that it isn't my win alone. I get to share this moment with Payal (Kapadia), Kani (Kusruti), Chhaya (Kadam) and Divya (Prabha), women who I deeply admire and adore. Though we went with different films, they made me feel like one of their own," she shared, adding, "To have ended up doing something historic is far beyond what I could have ever imagined. I hope this can contribute to more women being pushed to the forefront – which is really where they belong."

– As told to Raima Ganguly

Schwarzkopf

YOUR HAIR DESERVES A ZERO



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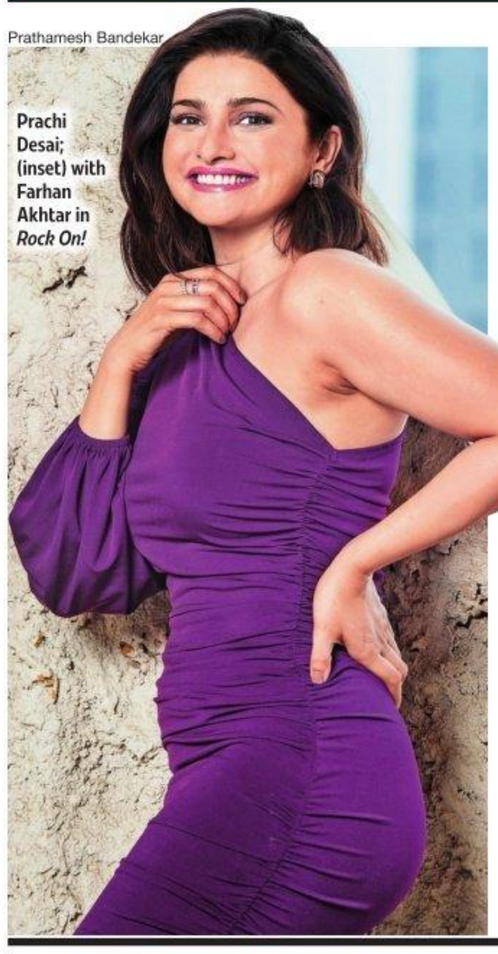
schwarzkopf_athome

Prathamesh Bandekar



Prachi Desai; (inset) with Farhan Akhtar in *Rock On!*

After Rock On!, I got slotted in the older age bracket: Prachi

Tanvi Trivedi

Prachi Desai became a household name with her debut TV show *Kasamh Se* (2006) and later began her Bollywood journey with *Rock On!* (2008). She followed it up with films like *Once Upon A Time in Mumbai, Rock On 2, Azhar* and *Bol Bachchan*. However, that didn't translate into more interesting work on the big screen, but now she is back with OTT and hopes to make the most of it. In a conversation with us, she talks about the transition from TV to films, her career choices and the lack of guidance in her Bollywood journey.

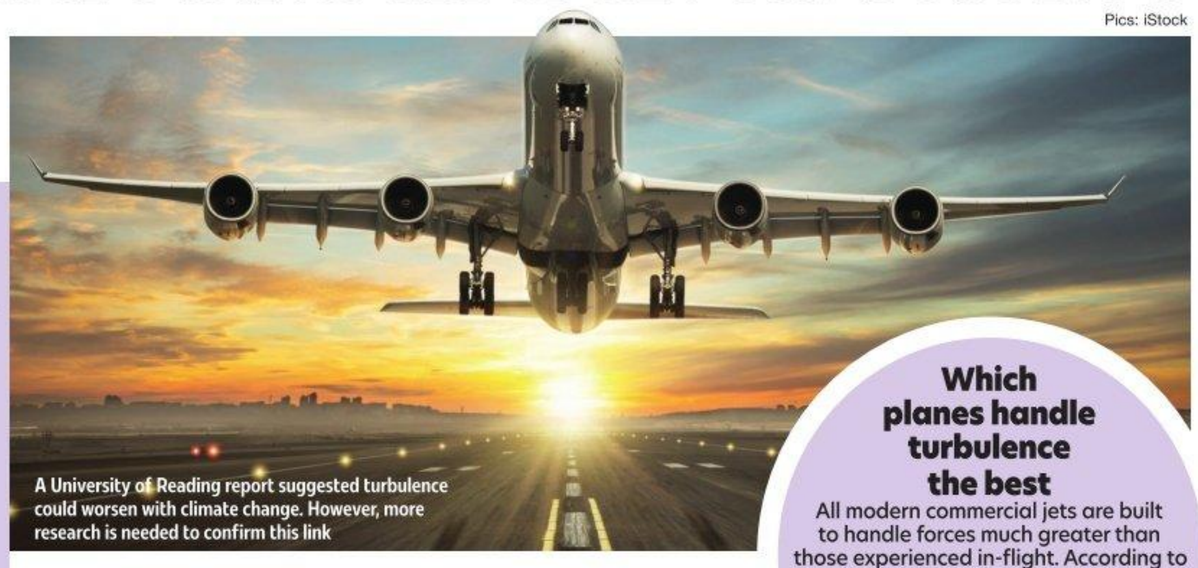
CONTINUED ON 3

> I have found this freedom and independence, which I am enjoying right now. When I find a companion, my parents will be happy, too, but I am not craving it

Insights to understand aircraft turbulence

Countless travellers have experienced the distinct anxiety-inducing sensation of turbulence on flights: eyes squeezed shut, hands clamped to the armrests for dear life. Recently, one passenger died of a suspected heart attack after a Singapore Airlines flight hit severe turbulence. Here's what we know about turbulence and its implications. Reuters

Pics: iStock



A University of Reading report suggested turbulence could worsen with climate change. However, more research is needed to confirm this link

Understanding turbulence

The interior of Singapore Airline flight pictured after an emergency landing from hitting severe turbulence

Turbulence refers to pockets of disturbed air caused by various factors, notably unstable weather patterns that trigger storms.
Clear Air Turbulence (CAT) is a sudden, severe disturbance without visible warning, making it hard to predict.

Which planes handle turbulence the best

All modern commercial jets are built to handle forces much greater than those experienced in-flight. According to Turbli, the Boeing 787-9, with its "Gust Alleviation System," ranks first for handling turbulence, followed by the Airbus A340-500/600. The Boeing 777 family has a strong safety record and uses traditional weather radar.

How often is it

Turbulence-related incidents are common. A 2021 US National Transportation Safety Board study found that from 2009 to 2018, turbulence accounted for more than a third of reported events, often resulting in serious injuries but no aircraft damage. Fatal turbulence incidents are extremely rare, with the last one recorded in 1997.

> The Singapore Airlines incident is an unusual one. It's over 25 years since a passenger was killed by commercial airliner turbulence
> – Paul Hayes, Director at an aviation data group

> Such invisible pockets of air can appear without warning and are hard to predict
> – Mark Prosser of the University of Reading

How do pilots respond

Pilots plan ahead by studying weather forecasts, loading extra fuel if needed, and monitoring weather radar during flights. However, sudden CAT can leave little time to react.

Is there any new technology

NASA is developing an early-warning system to detect clear-air turbulence. However, industry experts caution that these technologies require rigorous testing before they can be widely adopted.

> Too early to definitively blame climate change
> – Paul Williams, University of Reading

What does it mean for seatbelts

Flight and cabin crew stress the importance of wearing seatbelts whenever seated. Among the most exposed to injury are crew who must tour the cabin to check seatbelts have been fastened when signs go on.

TIMES interact

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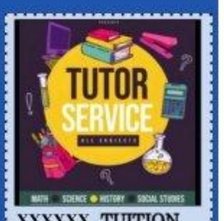

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TIMES interact

POV

Raising an entitled generation. One incident at a time

Porsche teen's dad tried to make driver take crash blame: Pune police commissioner

In his seminal book, *Why We Die*, Nobel laureate Venki Ramakrishnan speaks of how humans have the longest childhood among all species. Which means, we are designed to remain in caregiving mode for longer than other creatures. But if you are an Indian parent, you not only remain in that mode well past your best-by date, you make it a life-long mission, unwilling to let go even when it may not be appropriate.

Which brings us to the parents of the boy accused in the Pune hit-and-run case, who find it legit to put out videos pleading with the nation to 'protect' their son, or try to shift the blame onto someone else.

Beyond the social media storm around the incident, what emerges is a picture of a generation that enjoys considerable freedom, but has little sense of where their entitlement ends. Whether it is about a road accident or a career opportunity.

We encourage our children to follow their heart - a luxury many of us may not have afforded in our youth. But many social scientists also opine that in our quest to be likeable 'woke' parents, we may have raised a generation used to abundance, but indifferent to accountability, results.

As per reports, by 2026, 64.8 per cent of India's population would be in the working age of 15-64 years. At 440 million, Indian millennials make for the largest cohort in the world. But the same report suggests 70 per cent of Gen Z and millennials are likely to switch jobs every year. Talent managers grappling with resource crunch across professions will tell you, constant need for validation, self praise and gratification are the biggest challenges in the creation of a bankable metropolitan workforce.

This is not just limited to work, career goals. The Election Commission has observed that less than 40 per cent of first-time voters have registered for the ongoing elections. Lack of awareness or unwillingness to engage with anything beyond 10 seconds of reel time?

Our frustration with the young is perhaps legit. But let's not forget, Indian parenting is also about extremes. If on the one hand you have a JEE aspirant who dies by suicide, leaving behind a note of apology to her parents, on the other, you have a boy who thinks he can get away with murder.

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

LEISURE

EVENTS

EXHIBITION
India Habitat Centre: *Quintessence - 2* - An exhibition of paintings by Kalidas Satardekar. Till May 31, Convention Centre Foyer, IHC

DANCE
India Habitat Centre: *Stories Of The Sacred Rivers.* Bharatanatyam by Marie Elangovan and troupe. 7pm, Today. Stein Auditorium, IHC

Email us at tims.delhitimes@timesgroup.com

SUDOKU CHALLENGE

Level: Medium

			9		2	8	1	
						4		
	8	2		6		7		
			6	3				9
7								3
1				8	5			
		7		1		6	2	
		8						
	1	9	4		8			

HOW TO PLAY

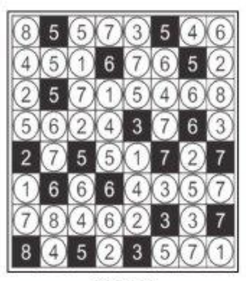
Fill in the grid so that every horizontal row, every vertical column and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1-9, without repeating the numbers in the same row, column or box. You can't change the digits already given in the grid. Every puzzle has one solution.

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 4 6)
6. A "triple" is a special case of sandwich. Circle the centre cells, and darken the ends. (e.g. 6 6 6)

1	6	9	1	9	4	5	3
1	3	9	1	7	4	2	1
4	4	1	8	3	9	6	7
4	1	4	7	4	8	4	6
1	2	3	4	8	7	1	9
7	9	9	5	9	3	4	1
7	7	4	3	2	1	5	5
3	8	3	9	3	5	7	2

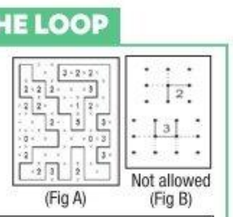


Example

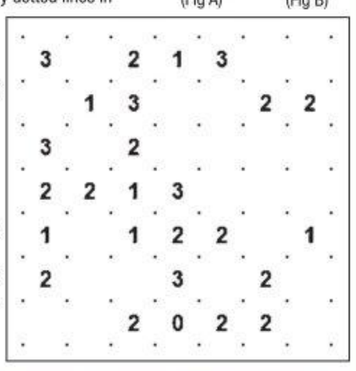
LOOP THE LOOP

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.



(Fig A) Not allowed (Fig B)

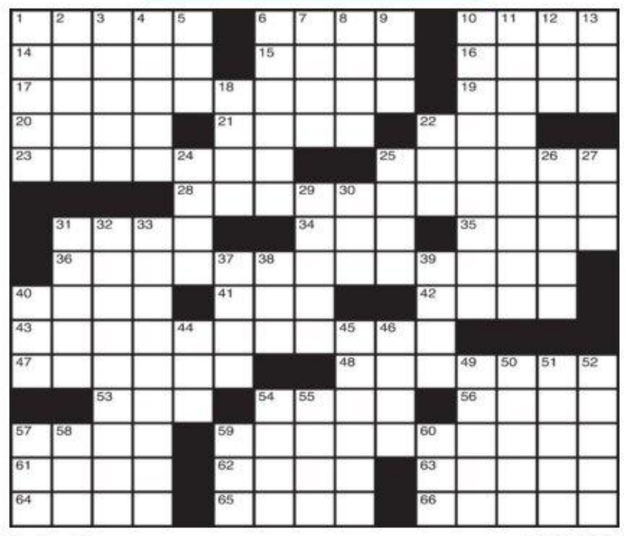


HOW TO BEGIN:

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)**.

THE DAILY CROSSWORD



By Mary Crane 27/05/2024

ACROSS
1 Gave a darn
6 Personal bearing
10 Spongy earth
14 __ and kicking
15 Like a quaint shoppe
16 Unknown author, for short
17 Hors d'oeuvre often seasoned with paprika
19 Looped in, on email
20 Corp. VIP
21 Quite
22 Infant's cry
23 Skin pictures
25 Calm and dignified
28 Picnic side dish
31 Double-reed woodwind
34 Charged particle
35 Helena's st.
36 Creamy dip for buffalo wings
40 __ mater
41 "__ moved on"
42 Parrot in Disney's "Aladdin"
43 New England seafood sandwich
47 Securities backed by the govt.
48 Fought
53 Raw mineral in a mine
54 Supermarket area with fresh cheeses
56 Hitchhiker's hope
57 Foggy state
59 Minnesota medical center, or where one might learn how to prepare 17-, 28-, 36-, and 43-Across?
61 Scat legend Fitzgerald
62 Brick __ pizza
63 Tiny spot
64 Overly compliant
65 Floating ice chunk
66 Auto body blemishes

Saturday's Puzzle Solved

S	A	N	D		B	A	H	A		Z	E	B	R	A
I	G	O	R		A	L	E	C		E	G	Y	P	T
C	A	R	E		S	A	L	T		N	O	T	T	E
K	I	S	S	M	E	I	M	I	R	I	S	H		
O	N	E	S	E	C			O	U	T		E	L	F
				S	A	M	A	N	T	H	A	B	E	E
	M	I	S	H	M	A	S	H		S	N	O	O	T
M	A	T	H		P	I	P	E	S		T	O	N	E
I	N	S	U	M		D	I	R	T	B	I	K	E	
C	O	T	T	A	G	E	C	O	R	E				
E	R	R		T	A	N			E	V	I	T	E	S
		I	D	I	D	N	T	S	A	Y	T	H	A	T
P	A	C	E	S		A	H	E	M		A	R	G	O
S	A	K	E	S		M	E	M	E		L	O	L	A
T	H	Y	M	E		E	M	I	R		Y	E	E	T

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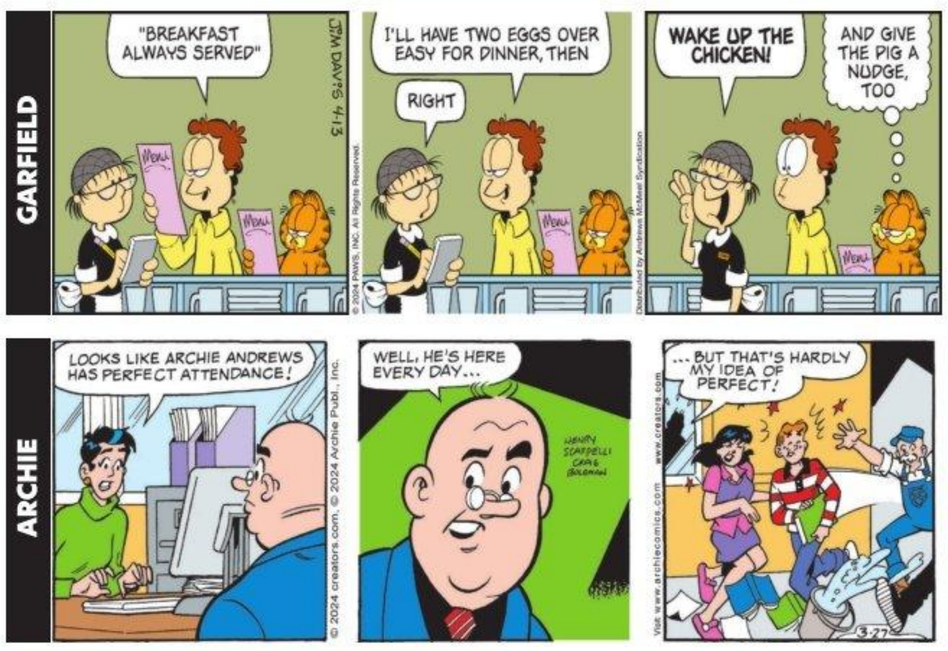
DOWN
1 Military academy enrollee
2 Name said to activate an Amazon Echo Dot
3 Fastener in a girder
4 Kick out
5 Oscar winner Benicio __ Toro
6 Not showy
7 Actor Robert who hosts the podcast "Not Today, Pal" with former co-star Jamie-Lynn Sigler
8 Envelope-pushing
9 Opposite of pos.
10 Expensive nut from Hawaii
11 Advance slowly
12 Fish-to-be
13 Conclude
18 Sauteing acronym
22 Director Craven
24 Oil cartel acronym
25 "The Brady Bunch" trio
26 Dance that takes two
27 NYC summer hrs.
29 TV station, e.g.
30 Shoe front
31 Wrinkle-resistant synthetic fabric
32 Hoodwink
33 Winning game after game
37 Makes haste
38 Binge-watcher's device
39 River sediment
40 PC key near the space bar
44 Casual shirt
45 Like a kiwi
46 Not of the clergy
49 Utter nonsense
50 Lightweight fabric
51 Formal decree
52 Cruise ship levels
54 Singer Grohl who founded the Foo Fighters
55 Watchful sort
57 __ and haw
58 Hoppy beer
59 Disorderly crowd
60 1960s hallucinogen, for short



SCRAMBLE

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

IREEE
YASSS
AIYCTU
RSUCFF

Happy is he who can trace ___ to their __. - Virgil (7,6)

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

ARIES: You can make major decisions about property or residential concerns. Solving problems brings you closer to your family. Rash actions can backfire so be conscious in your movements and slow.
TAURUS: Pleasant things may happen, they will be truly fortunate and will have a big impact. Time to forget sources of pain and trouble. People expect you to be more straightforward in your requests and are more than willing to comply with most of your demands.
GEMINI: An extremely encouraging outlook suggests the chance to restart again. Things at the workplace can get complicated. But, you are blessed with powers of persuasion. Do use your power wisely over the next few days. Some of your colleagues may accuse you of being rude.
CANCER: You are quite capable of summoning great creative and productive energy. You will be very successful indeed in all your ventures. Get right down to the business. There are some things you can do now. You can now be particularly open to the outside world.
LEO: You strive to attain the impossible. Failure isn't on the agenda. But, don't be belligerent now. Seek your own opinion on a crucial matter. Don't drag office politics into your home or issues of work. Take advantage of the solitude to reconsider certain of your patterns towards the people you love.
VIRGO: You are confident and stay within your moral code. It is a time to look within yourself and question your situation. Discover that you have a lot more influence than you think. Think the whole thing over carefully with your innermost source of wisdom.
LIBRA: Let your worries go, act with confidence and there will be no question of defeat. All the best ideas involve taking existing things or adapting them intelligently. There really is no great expert that you ought to be talking to. Focus your energies and attention on the now.
SCORPIO: Grant yourself permission to pursue the smartest solution you can see. Close friends will play an important role in helping you overcome challenges you face at the workplace. Obstacles and delays hamper your projects.
SAGITTARIUS: This is a slow day. Be patient with others. You do have a very clear view of life now. Reach your goal and luck opens new doors for you. Your confidence will grow with your popularity. Avoid subjects that cause annoyance.
CACPRICORN: You are in a challenging mood. You have a lot of energy and it is important to do some rigorous work. This is perfect time to finish a key project or to launch a new one.
AQUARIUS: Everyone around is quick or adaptable. Give others time to think things over and make up their minds. You will enjoy the company of old friends. You will discover more about the world around you.
PISCES: Think about the meaning of your life today. It is important that you fix your eagle eye on the things that need looking at. Influences around now can make you want too much excitement. You have the strong ability to focus in on the small things.

SPELLATHON

Today's Ratings:
07-average | 08-good | 10-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.

DENNIS THE MENACE

SOLUTIONS TO GAMES/PUZZLES

TIMES SUDOKU

7	6	1	9	4	2	8	3	5
1	4	9	6	8	5	7	2	3
8	2	3	5	7	1	9	6	4
5	3	4	7	2	6	1	9	8
4	8	2	1	6	3	5	7	9
9	5	7	3	9	4	6	8	2
2	9	6	4	1	8	3	5	7
3	7	5	8	3	9	4	1	6
6	1	8	2	5	7	9	4	3

LOOP THE LOOP

TIMES HITORI

3	8	1	9	5	7	2	6	4
5	7	4	3	2	1	6	9	8
7	9	6	5	8	3	4	1	2
2	3	4	8	7	1	9	5	6
4	1	7	2	8	6	3	9	5
6	4	1	8	3	9	5	7	2
1	3	9	7	2	5	8	4	6
9	2	1	6	4	5	7	8	3
8	6	5	1	9	4	3	2	7

SPELLATHON

dart, date, dear, deft, fade, fasted, fated, sated, STAFFED, stead

SCRAMBLE

Words: Eerie, sassy, acuity, scruff
Answer: Happy is he who can trace effects to their causes. - Virgil

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I COULD NEVER FIGHT THE IMAGE OF BEING A TV ACTOR, SAYS PRACHI

CONTINUED FROM 1

A lot of actors who found it difficult to navigate their way through Bollywood, believe that OTT has been a blessing. What are your thoughts on it?

During and after the pandemic, OTT changed everything for writers, directors, newcomers and even for actors like Manoj Bajpayee and Vijay Varma, who were known names, but their potential wasn't fully tapped. In my case, I could have never imagined playing an undercover cop in a typical Bollywood film, but web films like *Silence 1* and *Silence 2* gave me the opportunity to break barriers and do something different.

You are one of those few actors who successfully made the transition from TV to films. What made it difficult to land the right projects in Bollywood?

I was only 17 when I started doing *Kasamh Se* and was shooting six episodes a week. My world changed overnight when I won *Jhalak Dikhhla Jaa*. And at 19, I was suddenly the lead actress in *Rock On*, opposite Farhan Akhtar. It was an incredible opportunity, but after *Rock On*, nobody remembered that I was a 19-year-old, and I think I got slotted in the older woman category. I came from a humble background; my parents are teachers, and people didn't realise that unlike others, I did not grow up at parties, and neither did my dad make films. I became a victim of lazy casting. As a young girl, I made mistakes because I wasn't sure what was good and what wasn't. But if I reflect on my journey, I feel gratitude and give myself credit.

> I, too, made errors in choosing the right projects as I did not have a production house or an agency guiding me. I had to make a living, so I accepted what was offered to me

It's often said that TV actors are overexposed, which makes it difficult for them to bag roles in movies. Do you agree?

When I did *Kasamh Se*, I got a lot of love from people in India and abroad. Many people advised me that I should change my image, but I found that forced. I could never fight the image of being a TV actor. In 2006, I was at the peak of my career when I was offered these big-budget films. That's because Farhan and Abhishek (Kapoor, director of *Rock On*) did not have that notion about me being overexposed. Otherwise, the casting process is quite conventional and generic in the industry.

> If I am to do a TV show now, the criteria would be a finite show, not more than six episodes. During *Kasamh Se*, I was younger and had nothing to lose. But now, I have evolved and am a different person

AMAZING WORK BEING DONE IN INDIA: PAYAL

CONTINUED FROM 1

Kapadia added, "I think we have our own vocabulary in cinema, and it's very self-contained in India. We understand the gestures in our communities, and there is not always a need to send a film to a festival because we have our own (film) festivals. Lots of people go out to watch films. This is just one film amongst thousands of films, and it's good that we have all kinds of films – some festival films and some not-so-festival films (laughs). So, everything should exist together. That's what's wonderful about cinema."

Talking about Indian films, she said, "Everything is changing. Even what Bollywood is, is changing all the time. So, there is no one kind of cinema, especially cinema from Kerala has an immense amount of range of the films that are being made."

'THE JOY OF CO-PRODUCTION IS WE LEARN FROM EACH OTHER'

In response to a question on the sound design of the film, Kapadia said, "Sound is a very important element of my work. In Mumbai, if you're from there, you know that it is never silent. Even the sound of silence is specific — there is always the distant sound of trains or construction. Of course, this was torture for our sound recordist from France, who just could not understand why there was so much sound. I think this is the joy of co-production that we learn from each other."

'HOPE FOR MORE FILMS FROM FEMALE FILMMAKERS IN CANNES'

When asked if she thinks that female solidarity and more films by women are happening across the world, Kapadia said that she would like to believe that's true. "It's wonderful that there are more films being made by female filmmakers, female technicians, female sound recordists. We need many more, but change is happening gradually but surely. I think it only makes things more inclusive. And I hope that we could have more films from female filmmakers in Cannes."

Who is Payal Kapadia

While this is Kapadia's first feature film, she is not a newcomer at Cannes. In 2021, her documentary A Night of Knowing Nothing won the Golden Eye for the best documentary film. It was also part of the Directors' Fortnight section. In 2017, when she was at FTII, her short film Afternoon Clouds was shortlisted for the Cinéfondation section (for student films).

(L-R) Chhaya Kadam, Kani Kusruti, Payal Kapadia and Divya Prabha

An adbhut feeling: Chhaya Kadam on Cannes debut

Mihir Bhanage

Chhaya Kadam, who plays a prominent role in Kapadia's films, says, "This is a dream team. Payal is a brilliant filmmaker. We see so many things in our daily life but never pause to find the story behind them. Payal does that." She tells us about the team's red-carpet dance, standing ovation at the premiere and more.

'THE RED-CARPET DANCE WAS IMPROMPTU'

This was Chhaya's first Cannes visit and it was a memorable one. "It was an *adbhut* feeling," exclaimed Chhaya, adding, "Reaching the venue and stepping on the red carpet was something I can't explain in words. I saw my entire career flash in front of my eyes. It was like each character I have ever played was with me at that moment." When asked what led to the red-carpet jig, the *Laapataa Ladies* actress laughs. "It wasn't planned. On the way to the venue, I was a little nervous. But as we were posing, I heard a peppy song playing and couldn't stop myself from shaking a leg. It was all impromptu. Then came the standing ovation which was surreal and exhilarating. All this on my first visit to Cannes," said Chhaya.

'I LIVE LIFE BY MY RULES'

While Chhaya has been part of multiple Marathi films, including *Sairat*, her recent Hindi outings - *Laapataa Ladies, Madgaon Express* and *Gangubai Kathiawadi* - have brought her even more reach and accolades. "I don't know how to react to this love. I am speechless and I owe this to every filmmaker who cast me in their projects, in whatever capacity they deemed fit. I love being part of projects that go beyond the usual stories. Even if they stir up the hornet's nest, it doesn't bother me. I live life by my rules and my decisions are my own, and I don't care what anyone else thinks of it."

Mainstream film industry has nothing to do with this glory: Resul Pookutty

While the country celebrates Payal Kapadia's win at Cannes, Oscar-winning sound technician Resul Pookutty shared a long post pointing out that the Indian film industry had no part to play in this victory. He also reminded people that as Kapadia returns from Cannes, she will go for a court hearing for a case filed against her during her FTII days. In 2015, Kapadia was one of the leading voices behind the almost four-month protest against the then-FTII Chairman Gajendra Chauhan, who the students felt didn't have the credentials to lead the prestigious institute. Excerpts from his note:

It would be interesting to pause for a moment and think, has Indian Film Industry anything to do with this win?! None! who all are been taken to Cannes by Govt.Of India as delegation every year?! The usual suspects and familiar faces from mainstream Industry... What makes Payal's win so important?! Not just that she is from FTII, that she is from a group of people/students enthusiasts who are regular people who come from varied corners of India and signed themselves to be strugglers for the rest of their lives.

While you celebrate #PayaKapadia and her team's win at the Cannes, give it a moment of thought, the mainstream Indian Film Industry has nothing to do with this glory they only looked at us as outcasts. ...

The only reason for this National glory is all the inspiring films we saw at FTII and the atmosphere of that place nurtured by all the brilliant artists from all across the globe visited there and left their energies... My only request is whoever or whatever or whichever dispensation are at the helm of affaires, do not destroy that atmosphere which took generations to nurture.... There are many more Payals and Chidanands, Sathosh Sivans and Shaji Karuns are going to come out. Inspire them, let them show us a mirror that reflect us as a true society where original, logical and scientific temperament is celebrated. Let us create Sovereign minds, that will be a true celebration of cinema and life. #JaiHo my pals: Payal and Chidananad and the likes to follow them.

FootNote: Payal (Accused No.25) comes back from Cannes and next month goes for her court case hearing that FTII lodged against her for striking against the appointment of Mr.Chouhan as the Chairman! Interesting isn't it?!

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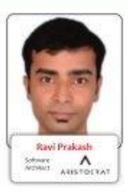

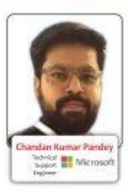

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THE PATH TO EXCELLENCE

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Multidisciplinary education is bolstering out-of-the-box thinking

Educators reflect upon the interconnectedness of diverse streams, claiming it instils confidence among students to pursue their own interests and career trajectories

Since one of the benefits of a multidisciplinary education is its ability to accelerate problem-solving and critical thinking, it is gaining currency among students, as they are able to get a more holistic understanding of the world. Post the implementation of NEP 2020, multidisciplinarity has been a liberating experience as it has removed students from the siloed method of teaching-learning, and fostered collaboration, teamwork and effective communication. It has engendered flexibility in curriculum, facilitating creative combinations of different disciplines. ***Education Times*** spoke to academics to explore how multidisciplinary education can make students more agile and adaptable, in a world where the dynamics of education and industry are in constant flux.

Greater degrees of self-esteem

The most fundamental capacity that holistic, multidisciplinary education gives us is to understand and value a variety of different perspectives. This forms the very basis of a cohesive, collaborative world which can bring people together. Multidisciplinary education is also very important in bringing to light the vast range of capabilities that an individual may possess. Students feel they are able to stand out from their peers by drawing on the strength of their multidisciplinary education. They often have much greater degrees of self-esteem and confidence, with a strong ability to learn from mistakes.

– **Ananya Mukherjee,** vice-chancellor, Shiv Nadar University, Delhi-NCR

Reskilling professionals

Conventional paradigms that defined 'work' and 'learning' are changing fast today; technologies such as AI, robotics and quantum computers are nearly at our doorsteps, and beginning to knock down conventions. For instance, the very meaning of the term 'expert' is evolving, especially with the combination of these technologies potentially far exceeding human capabilities. Consider this, the transition from fossil fuels to the adoption of newer green technology would require reskilling professionals, redesigning business models, reprogramming our policies. Given this context, how do we educate for the future? Rote memorisation and disciplinary specialisation need to give way to the more holistic multidisciplinary model that embraces the interconnectedness of knowledge across diverse domains. Only a multidisciplinary education can develop the ability to discern valuable insights from the vast sea of information.

– **Somak Raychaudhury,** vice-chancellor, Ashoka University

Embracing diversity

It is important to give students the courses of their interest. Many students today want to pursue Computer Science Engineering (CSE) or the EEE branches, mainly because of the availability of jobs and societal pressure. Their own interests may, however, lie in Chemistry or Maths. It is important in such a scenario to offer a dual degree programme or minor degree programmes where the student can pursue a 4-year BTech in CSE and specialise with an MSc in Maths/Chemistry. Many of the students opt for certain programmes because of the notion that it will help get them jobs and the only way to nurture and balance their interests is to provide them such dual degree/minor degree options.

– **V Ramgopal Rao,** vice-chancellor, BITS Pilani group

Scripting their success

A multidisciplinary education, such as an MBA programme that includes students from various streams, such as engineering, arts, commerce, exposes students to a variety of perspectives. When these diverse viewpoints come together in a classroom discussion, they form a collaborative environment that fosters innovative solutions. Through electives or specialisations that align with their personal interests, students are able to tailor their own career paths.

– **Ram Kumar Kakani,** director, IIM Raipur

IKS gives legitimacy

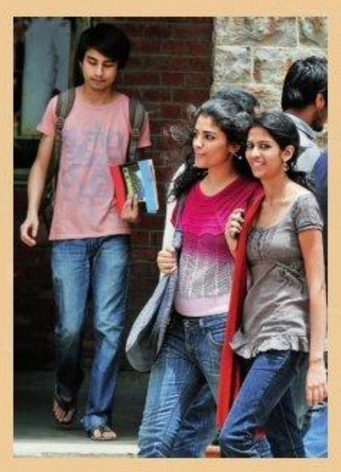
The IKS division of the MoE has been working with NCERT, NIOS, UGC and AICTE to incorporate concepts and accurate information from the IKS into curriculums. It has set up over 50 centres to conduct fundamental research integrating IKS and the contemporary knowledge systems, and develop multidisciplinary courses in line with NEP 2020. All of this will help students connect better with the past and present.

– **Ganti Murthy,** national coordinator, IKS division of MoE and professor, IIT Indore

- Compiled by **Rajlakshmi Ghosh**

How creditisation is a gateway to flexibility in higher education

Credits streamline curriculum design and assessment, facilitating fair student evaluation, writes **Mamidala Jagadesh Kumar**



The college credit system is fundamental for tracking academic progress, with each course representing a workload-based credit value. This system offers students clear milestones towards graduation and the flexibility to tailor their studies. Credits also support student mobility and international exchange programmes, fostering collaboration and a global learning environment. Furthermore, standardised credits aid resource allocation and data-driven policy-making will benefit students and institutions. A well-designed credit system enhances the educational experience for all involved.

National Credit Framework

Last year, the National Credit Framework (NCrF) launched by the UGC brings together all these aspects. The NCrF allows students to choose a credit-based approach, enabling them to personalise their learning journeys. It facilitates credit transfer within India, benefiting students transferring to institutions or pursuing interdisciplinary studies. The NCrF enables the crediting of all learning and tasks, allowing for the accumulation, storage, transfer, and redemption of credits contingent upon assessment. It also establishes academic parity between vocational and general education. Notably, the National Higher Education Qualifications Framework emphasises learning outcomes, ensuring students acquire the necessary skills and knowledge, not just complete course hours. Creditisation, as envisioned under NEP 2020 provides flexibility to students in several ways. Some of these are:

- **Choices to learners**–The NCrF integrates academic and vocational education, allowing students to choose a pathway that aligns with their career goals.
- **Multiple Entry and Exit**– Students can enter and exit programmes at various levels based on their needs and progress.
- **Credit transfer and accumulation**– Earned credits can be transferred between institutions or disciplines, allowing students to customise their learning experience.
- **Mid-course correction**– The focus on learning outcomes and credits allows students to change their course of study midway if their interests or goals evolve.

What is new

UGC has expanded the scope of credits, which now includes class projects, sports & games, on-the-job training (OJT), internship etc through NCrF. With creditisation, students now have more control over their learning journeys and can choose their pace, explore diverse subjects, and transfer credits between institutions. This empowers them to personalise their education and pursue their academic goals more freely.

(The author is chairman, UGC and former VC, JNU)

Long working hours, bonds, and no stipend are triggering the young doctors: NMC survey

Ayushi.Gupta1
@timesgroup.com

A white paper will be prepared, and stakeholders will be consulted to address the red flags and suggest solutions

In a mental health survey conducted by the National Medical Commission (NMC), it was found that around 37,000 medical students are suffering from potentially serious mental health issues. The revelation has prompted the authority to prescribe a range of solutions to prevent and change the existing challenges that are affecting the mental stability of the students directly or indirectly. Issues such as exorbitant college fees, long working hours, less stipend, and service bonds are a few major issues that have been highlighted in the NMC survey by the respondents.

Several experts and students have also shared their feedback on social media as the number of aggrieved students can be much more than the survey. Dr B Srinivas, secretary, NMC told *Education Times*, "Even if the number of impacted students is more than the projected number, we believe that the survey has highlighted the core issues that have been experienced by the students and have caused them discomfort."

PHOTO FOR REPRESENTATION

"The focus is on addressing the concerns raised by these 37,000 students, there are four to five common ethical and professional issues reported by most of the students. These include stipends, long working hours, service bonds with State Medical Councils (SMCs), and inadequate leave. The NMC is compiling these issues and will soon pass them to the recommendation committee to formulate recommendations. Our analysis of the survey data indicates that professional challenges faced during medical education have severely impacted students' mental health. Moreover, the high pressure in the field of medicine disrupts proper sleep schedules, which in turn affects mental stability, thinking, and decision-making."

After the survey, NMC has formed a 15-membered committee to discuss mental health-related issues and draft recommendations. The committee includes some top-level practising doctors, faculty members, college HoDs, psychiatrists, and counsellors.

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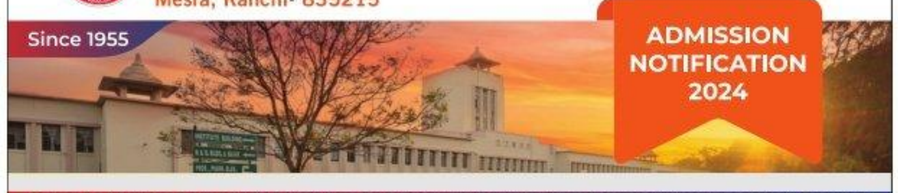

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Doctors flung medical career to get a degree in management

Attacks on doctors, strict bond policies and demanding schedules have pushed several doctors to get into management programmes or take up UPSC exams

Shuddhanta.Patra
@timesgroup.com

With work-life balance going for a toss due to long work hours along with post-pandemic stress, most young medical graduates, residents and PG doctors are facing a critical problem of job burnout, which is leading to emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation, and inability to upskill or perform their duties besides low pay. Several doctors have opted out of the medical profession and are enrolling in management courses at several prominent B-schools.

Speaking to *Education Times*, Dr B Srinivas, secretary, National Medical Commission (NMC), says, "In the past few years, we have noticed that several medical students are opting for a career change to allied healthcare sector majorly due to poor work-life balance and lack of interest in the subject. About 40% of BDS doctors leave the health sector every year while foreign medical graduates (FMGs) also opt for a career change after they fail to clear the FMGE exam which is mandatory for them to be eligible to practise medicine in the country. Besides this, women doctors are also leaving jobs in the surgery section as it is demanding and leaves no personal time due to random emergency calls. The number of doctors in the medical field who are choosing alternate careers is slowly increasing, which is a concerning issue."

According to management schools, there has been a significant rise in the number of doctors getting into management courses post-Covid. In 2023-24, IIM Lucknow had over 20 doctors in health and general management courses, IIM Kashipur had eight students enrolled in MBA, while several prominent private B-schools have doctors opting to study management courses instead of taking up MD, MS or other medical specialisation.

Dr Prof Amit Gupta, AIIMS, Rishikesh, says, "Of late, several doctors are opting out of medicine and seeking non-clinical professions such as medical tourism, healthcare management, medical superintendent and other research-based jobs which offer more flexible schedules and opportunities for personal development and self-care. Sometimes, the career change is also out of compulsion as some MBBS students fail to clear NEET PG, and without a master's degree, they do not see a promising future in medicine. The attacks on doctors in hospitals, strict bond policies and the demanding schedule of a surgeon also contribute to mental health issues in young doctors compelling them to look for an alternate career option. Financial considerations also play a significant role in any career decision. Doctors today are identifying a prospective career in UPSC or management courses, which confirms faster professional growth. Besides this, mid-career level doctors are also looking for an alternate option due to lack of interest in medicine, harsh government policies which are seen as a burden by many."

Doctors are looking for an alternate option due to harsh government policies

With about a minimum of 200 doctors the health sector is losing every year to other lines of employment due to professional hazards, Dr Gupta says that the concern lies with the best brains leaving the medical field which is already reeling under severe crisis. "The trend to opt out of the health sector is also due to the mushrooming of corporate hospitals and the increase in demand for dedicated and trained manpower to administer them efficiently," adds Dr Gupta.

Several medical students are taking management courses considering the increasing demand for skilled healthcare managers with knowledge of technology. Prof Suresh Jakhar, chairperson, PG programmes, IIM Lucknow, says, "The trend of medical professionals transitioning into management jobs reflects upon the need for new skill sets and expertise in the medical technology sector. This trend suggests that medical professionals are becoming increasingly interested in management responsibilities. As a result of their strong analytical talents, decision-making skills, and experience in handling difficult circumstances, physicians are in an excellent position to flourish in management roles." By obtaining management qualifications, they want to position themselves as strong candidates for leadership roles within hospitals, pharmaceutical companies, healthcare consulting firms, or regulatory bodies.

Requesting anonymity, a doctor who has enrolled in IIM Calcutta to pursue a General Management programme, says, "The decision to change career option was majorly due to health issues that I started to suffer due to regular night shifts. Besides this, the salary is also less in this field. Fewer postgraduate seats also add to doctors' discontent forcing them to switch career." She aspires to have her healthcare startup to help rural patients.

Technology boost

The healthcare sector is transforming due to technological breakthroughs and innovation. The creation of various new dimensions and jobs has resulted in the rise of Electronic Health Records (EHR) professionals, tele-health experts, and artificial intelligence (AI) integration positions in areas such as treatment plans, diagnostics, digital health domains, and predictive analytics. With the emergence of medical business establishments and resources, medical practitioners are now seeking to progress their careers beyond clinical practice by taking on management roles that involve leadership and strategic decision-making.

Bashar Al Agha, a dentist, is currently pursuing a PGDM in Marketing at BIMTECH. "I have enrolled in this programme to understand both healthcare and marketing and work with a few organisations to gain experience. In future, I can run my business and follow an entrepreneurial journey," he says.

Management courses for doctors

Medicos often choose to pursue a general MBA to acquire a comprehensive knowledge of business operations, finance, and strategy. This can enhance their ability to improve delivery systems in healthcare facilities, including supply chain management, logistics, and process optimisation. They frequently prioritise courses that incorporate technology integration, technology management, and technological tools.

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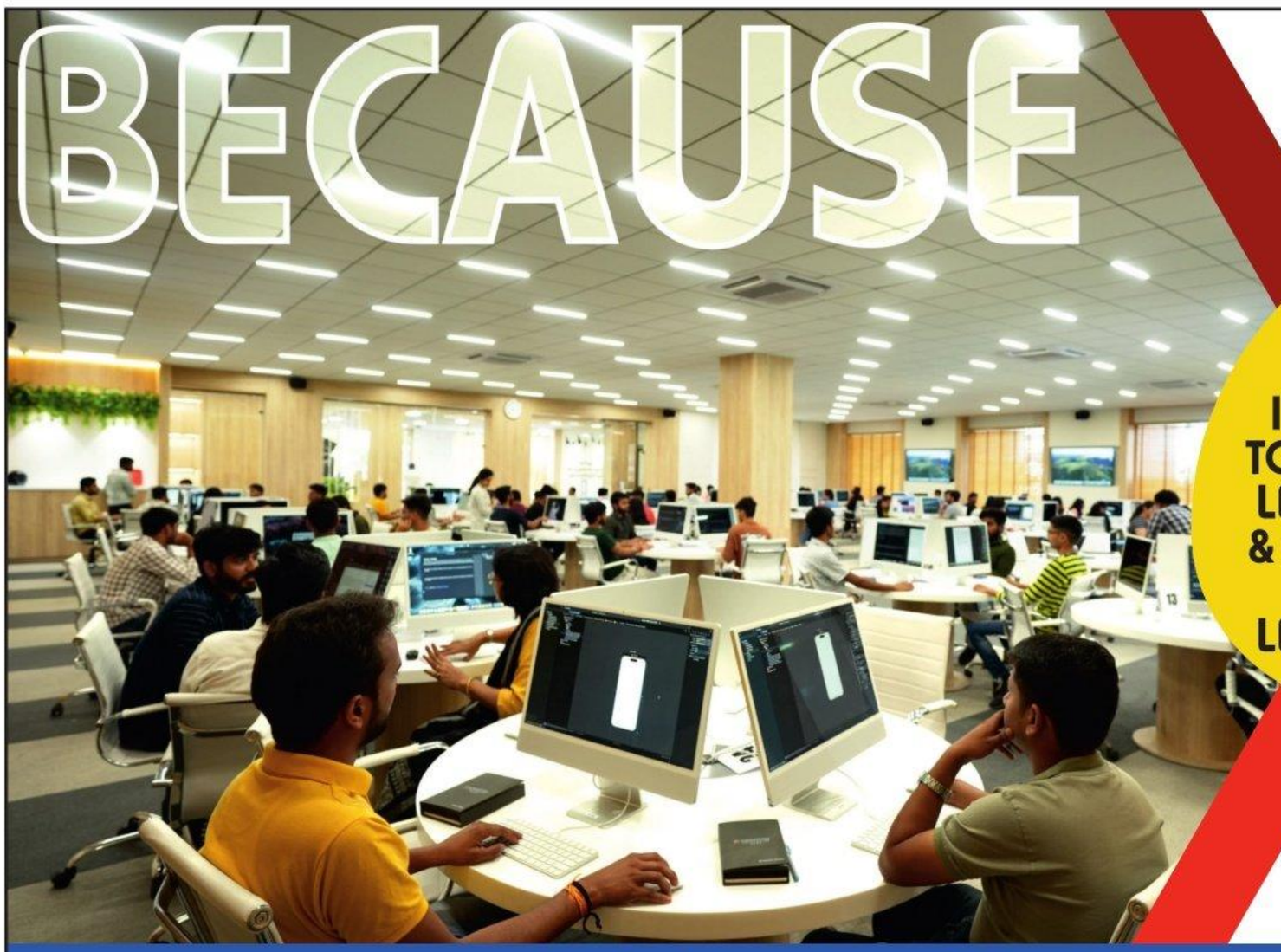

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Rethinking strategies to bridge hiring gaps after MBA is crucial

Embracing diverse perspectives empower organisations to build stronger teams that can navigate complex challenges, writes **Hetaal Palan**

The recruitment gap between MBA colleges and firms often arises from differing expectations, skills, and assessment methods. Colleges in metros and tier-I cities often have stronger industry connections, more resources for career development, and a higher profile, giving their students a competitive edge in the job market. Bridging this gap requires efforts from both colleges and companies to align expectations and provide opportunities for skill development and networking.

Traditional recruitment methods have their limitations, especially in assessing skills like adaptability, problem-solving, and creativity. Firms are turning to alternative assessment methods such as case studies, and behavioural interviews to get a more holistic view of candidates' abilities.

Project-based assessments

Project-based assessments are highly effective for evaluating candidates' practical skills and suitability for a role. By engaging candidates in real-world scenarios, firms can assess their ability to think critically, collaborate with others, and deliver under realistic conditions. The approach alllows candidates to demonstrate their creativity, giving them a better understanding of their capabilities.

Skills-based evaluations

Skills-based evaluations provide a more targeted and meaningful assessment of candidates' qualifications for a particular role. By focusing on relevant skills and competencies, firms can better identify candidates who possess the practical abilities needed to excel in the position. This approach also helps mitigate biases that may arise from relying solely on academic credentials or standardised tests.

Behavioural interviews

Behavioural interviews are invaluable for evaluating candidates' soft skills and assessing their fit for the company culture. Recruiters can gain insights into candidates' communication styles, problem-solving approaches. This approach allows for a more nuanced understanding of candidates' strengths and weaknesses, helping firms make informed hiring decisions.

(The author is assistant director, brand promotions and student relations, Vivekanand Business School)

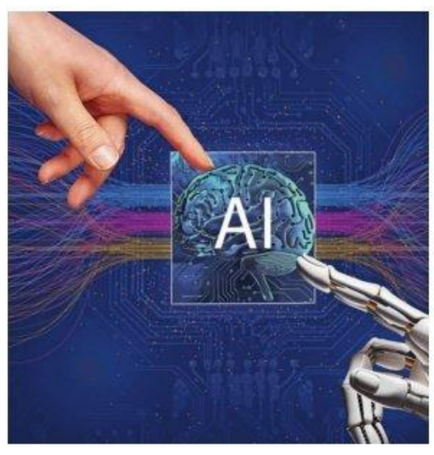
- Only 50% of women leaders enjoy pay parity with male peers
- Family responsibility, stereotyping are the biggest reasons for women failing to fulfil their aspirations

Corporate executives need acumen in AI technologies

B-schools should ensure their graduates can leverage the skills to thrive in the evolving business landscape, writes U Dinesh Kumar

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has a significant and growing impact on the world economy. AI has become a powerful engine that is driving innovation across several industries. Industries use AI in four keyways: fuelling innovation, automating tasks, unlocking insights for solving business problems and decision-making, and augmenting workforce with AI-powered agents.

A study by McKinsey Global Institute suggests AI has the potential to contribute up to $13 trillion to global economic activity by 2030 (Bughin et al, 2018). That is a significant boost, potentially adding more than 1.2% to global GDP growth annually. Research by Manyika and Spence (2023) highlights the potential of AI, particularly Generative AI (Gen AI), to significantly alter how work is done, potentially affecting over two-thirds of jobs. The rise of AI necessitates a global shift in management education to prepare future leaders.



Several top B-schools in India recognise the growing importance of AI and analytics by introducing specialised MBA programmes. This trend reflects the increasing demand for business leaders with business acumen and expertise in AI and Gen AI technologies. Discussions with placement officers across Indian B-schools revealed a clear trend: graduates with specialised skills in analytics and AI are in high demand. Compared to their general management counterparts, these students often secure placements more readily and, in many B-schools, command higher average starting salaries. The surging demand for graduates with expertise in analytics and the anticipated workplace transformation, where AI is expected to augment over two-thirds of jobs, underscores the critical need for B-schools to integrate AI into their curriculum.

Quality instructors

However, the challenge that many B-schools are facing is finding quality instructors in AI. Our obsession with computer programming made us believe AI is another fancy coding tool, but unfortunately, it is not a new coding tool in the market. If used correctly, it can create massive wealth, as already proven by firms such as Amazon and Capital One. AI is the perfect technology for competing effectively in the global market. Indian B-schools must equip graduates for the future by integrating AI into their curriculum. Predictions suggest it will impact two-thirds of all jobs; AI's transformative potential is undeniable. By preparing students with the necessary inputs as part of the curriculum, B-schools can ensure their graduates are not just informed about AI but can leverage it to thrive in the evolving business landscape.

(The author is dean faculty, professor, Decision Sciences Area, IIM Bangalore)

Collaborative skill-building courses

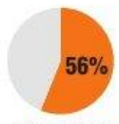
Collaborative skill-building programmes are mutually beneficial for both companies and MBA colleges. By partnering to design tailored curriculum and skill-building initiatives, organisations can directly influence the development of future talent to meet their evolving needs. This not only enhances the employability of graduates but also fosters a deeper integration between academic learning and industry demands.

Diversity and inclusion initiatives

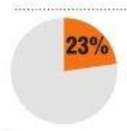
For creation of a dynamic and innovative workforce, diversity and inclusion are the key essentials. By adopting inclusive recruitment processes, companies can tap into a wider range of perspectives, experiences, and talents, leading to more creative problem-solving and better decision-making. Having a flexible and inclusive recruitment approach not only helps bridge the gap between colleges and companies but it also enables organisations to tap into a broader talent pool. Embracing diverse perspectives and talents, empowers companies to build stronger teams that can navigate complex challenges and drive innovation.

- Traditional recruitment methods have their limitations
- Behavioural interviews help get a more holistic view of candidates' abilities

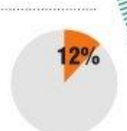
More women in leadership roles; pay parity still a concern



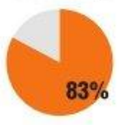
of the surveyed firms have just 10%-30% women in leadership roles, while 9% of them have no women in leadership roles.



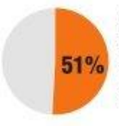
In 23% organisations, the proportion of women in leadership position is 30%-50%.



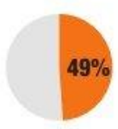
organisations have more than 50% women in leadership roles.



organisations have seen an increase in women leaders in the past five years.



organisation have women at CXO positions.



organisations have experienced a decrease in the dropout rate of women during the past five years.

Source : AIMA-KPMG Women Leadership Report

Stifle critical thinking skills

Several B-schools have debated integrating Large Language Models (LLM) into the curriculum. One primary concern is whether students should be allowed to use LLMs such as ChatGPT and Gemini (Google's AI Assistant) to complete the evaluation components assigned to them. The current debate about AI in B-schools echoes concerns raised in the 1970s with the introduction of calculators. Back then, a few US states even banned calculators from standardised tests, fearing they would stifle critical thinking skills. Throughout history, banning technologies has rarely been successful. Instead, we should focus on adapting them to create more effective learning experiences. Integrating AI and LLMs into management education can better prepare students for tomorrow's AI-driven workplace. Manikya and Spence (2023) claimed that AI has significantly improved workers' productivity and the performance gap between new and seasoned workers is reduced with AI assistants. That is, the AI assistants accelerated the on-the-job training. Given such productivity gains, we expect management education to change globally, in which AI becomes an integral part of the curriculum. AI and Gen AI must be made a core course, and every management discipline should integrate elements of AI in its syllabus and create focused courses on AI and its applications in finance, marketing, supply chain management and so on.

Navigating the international business landscape

Learners must acquire knowledge to grasp the intricacies of doing business on a global scale, writes Prof **Sudeep S**

Globalisation has brought a sense of connectedness to markets and businesses around the world. The organisations have transcended geographical boundaries, ushering in a new era of trade, commerce, and collaboration. With businesses extending their reach to global markets, navigating the intricacies of the international business landscape has become more vital than ever. With the demand, new avenues for candidates looking forward to international exposure have opened. However, to grab these opportunities, individuals require a blend of several skills along with an appropriate educational experience.

Technological innovation

In recent times, we are witnessing a surge of technological developments which are creating new avenues for engaging in international business. The introduction of technologies like the Internet of Things (IoT) and blockchain is ushering unimaginable levels of tracking of the movement of goods and is causing tremendous changes in the global supply chains. There are remarkable advances in the global value chain (GVC) dimensions. The companies are shifting their operations to a globally connected multi-local value chain resulting in the regionalisation of the GVCs. Another emerging technology which is causing a tectonic shift in international business is AI which is helping companies improve their operation efficiencies and decision-making. More and more companies are employing AI in areas like customer service and predicting customer preferences.

Changing markets

Another trend an international business manager should focus on is the changing geopolitical dynamics in the different markets. The world order is shifting from a unipolar landscape in the later 20th century to a more multi-polar one. The trade war between the US and China is creating uncertainties in global trade and is hurting businesses around the globe. The trade war had resulted in changes in the US trade laws and has given rise to opportunities for many countries in the form of diversion of trade from China.

The Indian economy is growing at a good pace and India is expected to attain the third rank in terms of GDP within the next couple of years. India's share in global exports has also increased over the years.

In an era where economies are interconnected, the learners of International Business programmes should emphasise acquiring knowledge in international exposure. They should opt for programme that delivers a diverse array of case studies to the students, which enables them to grasp the intricacies of doing business on a global scale.

(The author is associate professor, IB Area, Fore School of Management)

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Q1. Twenty numbers written in ascending order have an average of 40. The average of the last 19 numbers is 42. Find the first number.
a. 1 b. 2 c. 4 d. 6

Q2. If S is the sum of the first 15828 prime numbers, then S is divisible by
a. 6 b. 8 c. 4 d. None of the above

Q3. A right circular cone is cut parallel to its base at one-third of its height from the top. Find the ratio of the volume of the smaller piece to that of the original cone.
a. 1 : 26 b. 1 : 27 c. 2 : 25 d. 1 : 8

Q4. The number of diagonals of a regular decagon is
a. 45 b. 70 c. 25 d. 35

Q5. If the length and breadth of a rectangle are each increased by 10%, then by what percent will the area increase?
a. 15% b. 10% c. 21% d. 20%

Q6. Find the least number with which 16200 should be multiplied to make it a perfect cube.
a. 36 b. 48 c. 45 d. 360

Q7. The distance travelled by a freely falling body is directly proportional to the square of the time for which it falls. If a body fell 95 m in the 10th second, then it fell in the 14th second by
a. 135 m b. 133 m c. 186.2 m d. None of the above

Q8. A trader, who claimed to sell milk at cost price, mixes it with water and makes a profit of 25%. Find the concentration of milk in the mixture.
a. 60% b. 70% c. 75% d. 80%

Q9. If A is three-fourth of B, B is one and a half times of C and D is one-fourth of C, then A : D equals
a. 9 : 1 b. 9 : 2 c. 8 : 3 d. 8 : 1

Q10. A person takes 20 minutes more to cover a certain distance as he decreases his speed by 20%. The time taken to cover the distance at his original speed is
a. 1 hr 30 min b. 1 hr 15 min
c. 1 hr 20 min d. 2 hr

Answer key for the last week's quiz: 1.(a), 2.(a), 3.(a), 4.(b), 5.(d), 6.(a), 7.(b), 8.(c), 9.(d)

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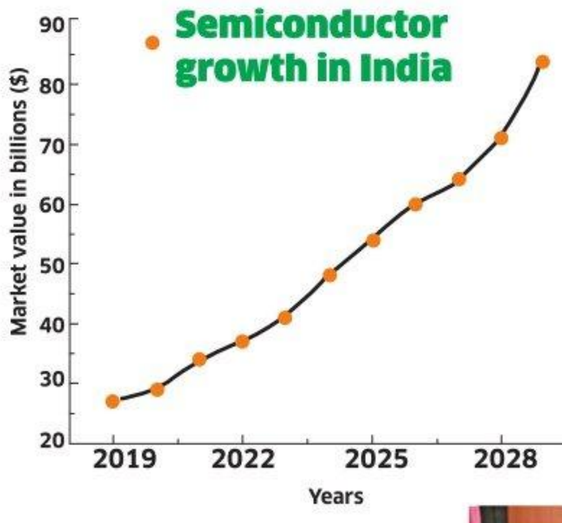
Semiconductor industry will boost job opportunities

India aims to reduce reliance on imports, enhancing resilience to supply chain disruptions, write Kumud Das and Shubhro Chakrabartty

India's workforce faces a multitude of challenges. While headline unemployment rates might not seem alarming, a significant portion of the youth are underemployed, stuck in low-paying informal jobs with little stability. This underemployment stems from a critical skills gap – the education system is not equipping graduates with the expertise needed by companies. Further complicating matters is automation, which threatens to replace some jobs. Additionally, regional disparities create an uneven economic landscape, pushing people to migrate for better opportunities. On the other hand, the leading authority for technical education in the nation has continuously eliminated numerous degrees, diplomas, and postgraduate programmes in electronics and telecommunication due to a perceived lack of student interest, leaving many questioning the future of the field. This trend has left numerous electronics graduates struggling with job uncertainty.

Boosting domestic chip production increases control over critical technology, bolstering national security, enhancing competitive edge to compete effectively



Supporting manufacturing

The government's initiatives in the semiconductor sector offer exciting new possibilities for electronics graduates. The Indian government, recognising the pivotal role of semiconductors in shaping the future of technology, has embarked on a transformative journey towards semiconductor self-reliance. Establishing three semiconductor manufacturing units under the India Semiconductor Mission (ISM), supported by a significant investment of Rs 1.26 trillion (approximately $15.2 billion), is a testament to this commitment. This ambitious endeavour signifies a paradigm shift in India's technological landscape, fostering indigenous semiconductor fabrication capabilities. This transition offers a shining prospect for graduates in the electronics industry. They are no longer constrained by the conventional decision between studying electronics and opting for IT/non-core roles, they have the chance now, to immerse themselves in semiconductor design and fabrication. This shift in perspective holds the potential to rejuvenate the electronics industry and opens doors to a high-skilled, research and development wing, high-value job opportunities.

JOB TRENDS

The semiconductors will be pivotal in India's technological advancement and economic growth. By supporting domestic manufacturing and design, India aims to reduce reliance on imports, enhancing resilience to external factors and supply chain disruptions. Additionally, boosting domestic chip production enhances control over critical technology, thus bolstering national security. Furthermore, a strong domestic chip industry sharpens India's competitive edge, enabling it to compete more effectively in the global market. A growing trend is seen among major manufacturers in the US, Japan, and elsewhere setting their sights on India from China. This shift reflects India's growing readiness to become a global manufacturing leader. The All-India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) has introduced courses for BTech in Electronics VLSI Design & Technology and Diploma in IC Manufacturing. This vital step will guide many premier universities/colleges in launching semiconductor courses. A Randstad Company survey indicates that the total job demand ranges from 40,000 to 50,000 employees. Projections suggest that by 2025, this sector will have an estimated 100,000 job opportunities. The forecast analysis reveals that the Indian semiconductor market is projected to reach $85 billion by 2028.

(The authors are faculty at DY Patil International University, Akurdi, Pune)

Embracing the learning mindset for growth

Collaboration between leaders and organisations is a must for AI innovation, writes **Rakesh Ravuri**

The learning mindset is not just about acquiring new skills; it's about diving headfirst into a culture of curiosity, resilience, and adaptability. In many ways, this journey mirrors the installation of a new 'operating system' for engineers – a necessary upgrade for navigating the complexities of AI integration, where each update equips them with the tools and knowledge needed to thrive in an ever-changing digital landscape. This involves honing skills to redesign or rethink solutions using generative AI patterns. In this regard, there are certain behaviours identified as part of embracing a learning mindset that serve as guiding principles.

These behaviours include:

Being a polyglot: Proficiency in multiple programming languages is crucial in the AI era, as each language offers unique strengths. GenAI makes it easier for engineers to enhance their polyglot skills as AI-assisted tools, such as co-pilots, are available to help with syntax and language-specific intricacies.

Creating efficient solutions: Embracing sustainable engineering involves prolonging resource lifespan and creating efficient solutions. For instance, rather than reinventing the wheel for each project, engineers can reuse existing code libraries and frameworks, thereby saving time and minimising errors. Modular design principles also streamline development by enabling component reuse across projects.

Ability to reduce expenses: This involves minimising resource consumption and costs while maximising functionality. For example, optimising code for efficiency reduces computational resources, leading to cost savings and scalability.

Being a mentor and mentee: Embracing mentorship goes beyond technical skills to nurture the next generation of engineering talent. Experienced engineers can guide and support junior team members, fostering their development and career advancement.

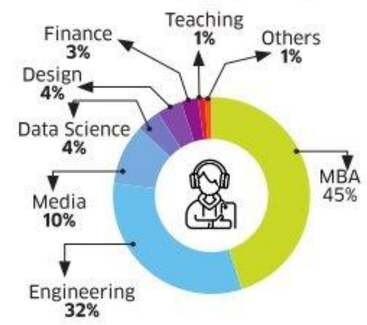
Collaborating in pods: Collaborating in small, cross-functional teams, or 'pods', can surpass individual efforts. For instance, a pod comprising developers, designers, and product managers can leverage diverse expertise to iterate on product features efficiently.

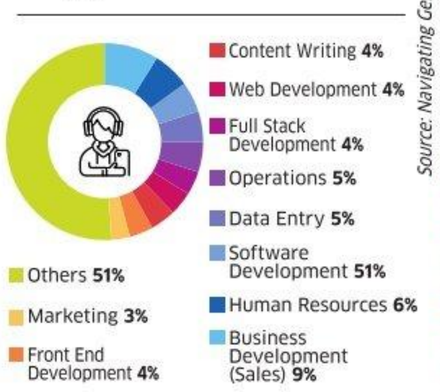
Being multidimensional: Amplifying cross-functional value through multidimensional skills involves leveraging diverse expertise to benefit clients. For instance, a data scientist proficient in machine learning and a specific domain (such as finance) can create tailored solutions for clients in those industries.

(The author is CTO and SVP Engineering, Publicis Sapient)

GenZ job seekers prefer management, engineering roles

According to a survey, a majority GenZ job seekers (57%) viewed AI as a valuable asset capable of bolstering productivity. Around 45% of job seekers gravitated towards management roles. Engineering roles attracted 32% of applicants across various industries. Among GenZ job seekers, the most sought-after job profiles in the past year included Software Development, Data Entry and Operations, Full Stack Development, Web Development and Front-End Development, among others.





Source: Navigating GenZ Workplace Expectations in 2024

Women participation increases the future of EVs

EV companies provide women the tools they have always deserved, writes **Rajeev Chaba**

While the auto sector is still grappling with gender disparity and is considered to be a male bastion, women are bringing about the EV revolution in India. This shift is not just about transitioning from fossil fuels to greener alternatives; it's also transforming the industry's dynamics by addressing the long-standing gender gap. In 2023 alone, EV sales in India reached 1.53 million, with one out of every four EVs purchased by women. This surge in demand for EVs among women is not just about reducing emissions; it portrays a change that has taken place socially and economically. Furthermore, women employees are being recognised for their unique skills, particularly in design and safety. The green sector, including EV manufacturers, offers 35% higher compensation to interested candidates than women in other sectors. This acknowledgement of women's capabilities attracts talent and incentivises more women to pursue careers in the automobile industry.

Their agility, and heightened interpersonal skills bring a fresh perspective to manufacturing processes

BY INVITATION

However, assuming that women's skills can only be limited to designing is also a way to limit their capabilities. Therefore, women should be encouraged to take up skilling programmes to enable them to take up different manufacturing jobs. From technical training on the shop floor to leadership development programmes, EV companies provide women with the tools they have always deserved. Women possess unique qualities that greatly contribute to innovation. Their agility, attention to detail, and heightened interpersonal skills bring a fresh perspective to manufacturing processes, ultimately driving positive product innovation changes. But perhaps most importantly, the EV sector is leading by example. By showcasing the success of women in key roles, from engineers to executives, EV companies are inspiring the next generation of female leaders. By prioritising gender diversity and inclusion, EV companies are not only setting a new standard for the industry but also unlocking new opportunities for growth and innovation. As industry leaders, we must follow their lead and embrace the power of diversity. Our future depends on it. Studies have shown that gender-diverse teams are more innovative and perform better financially. McKinsey & Company's research found that companies with more gender-diverse executive teams are 25% more likely to experience above-average profitability than those with less diverse teams. By embracing diversity, EV companies are doing the right thing morally and boosting their bottom line.

(The author is CEO Emeritus, MG Motor India)

Besides an engineering degree, acquire skills to thrive in AI era

In the age of advanced automation, young engineers must have strong technical skills combined with soft skills to survive in the volatile job market, writes **Nisha P Shetty**

Engineering has come a long way from its days of handwritten computations and physical modelling. Engineers now analyse intricate data, simulate architectures, and refine solutions in significantly less time than before. However, a significant gap has arisen in engineering students' technical and non-technical abilities. Non-technical skills are equally vital for the success of engineering students, especially in the age of AI-driven advancements like GPT taking over jobs. Still, they are often not given enough emphasis. The following skills can help young engineers thrive in the era of AI:

Critical thinking: Engineers must be able to dissect problems, pinpoint important details, and devise solutions. Hence, thinking critically aids engineers in solving issues and maximising performance in a situation where AI systems may occasionally produce unexpected results or faults (hallucinations or biases in AI), akin to how potters refine their work.

Collaboration and communication: No chatbot or AI can replicate the human touch in communication, such as understanding contexts, intuitions, and feelings, along with grasping underlying meanings, tones, and intentions. Humans excel in interpersonal interactions, capitalising on empathy to work effectively with others, which AI lacks.

Education system must be outcome-based and create holistic engineers who are not just people with textbook knowledge

Creativity: AI finds it challenging to imitate human creativity as it frequently includes thinking outside the box, drawing astonishing connections, and investigating complex topics. Human traits like emotions, experiences, and intuition influence creativity, which no training data can replicate.

Adaptability: Like a chameleon changing colours to blend into its surroundings, in the era of GPT, adaptability is the ultimate superpower. Such people are always comfortable adjusting to new technologies, processes, and environments, making them resilient in the age of competitiveness and uncertainty.

Emotional intelligence: Emotional intelligence serves as a cornerstone in crafting delightful user experiences, foreseeing requirements, decoding emotions, and crafting interfaces that are both intuitive and flexible. Furthermore, emotionally intelligent engineers competently negotiate the moral dilemmas exhibited by artificial intelligence, championing fairness, openness, and user confidence.

Fact-checking: With the spread of misinformation online and the proven cases of AI chatbots like ChatGPT providing inaccurate details, engineers must verify the information's accuracy before relying on it. Additionally, engineers must remain vigilant of biases within AI systems.

Leadership: Strong leadership qualities in engineers can stimulate teamwork, and bring about significant change in their organisations. This is one quality that no bot can emulate.

(The author is assistant professor, Senior Scale, Department of Information and Communication Technology, Manipal Institute of Technology, MAHE, Manipal)

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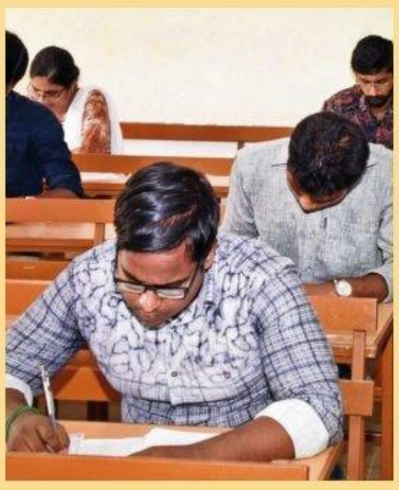
Choosing Sociology as an Optional Subject

Sociology helps UPSC aspirants gain a deeper understanding of the complexities of human society, writes **Pranay Aggarwal**

In the UPSC Civil Services Examination (CSE), choosing the right Optional Subject is crucial. Among the myriad of choices available, Sociology stands out as a compelling option for several reasons. This year, ll India ranks 2, 8, 10, 13, 23, 40, 48, 50 and many others have cleared the CSE with Sociology as their chosen optional. Here are some key reasons why aspiring civil servants should consider it as their Optional Subject:

- **Short syllabus:** Unlike some other Optional Subjects with extensive syllabus, the Sociology optional has a manageable curriculum; it can be covered in 4 to 5 months. It also enables multiple quick revisions and leaves one with ample time for general studies preparation.
- **Relatable topics:** Sociology deals with the study of society, human behaviour and social interactions, making it relatable to everyday life.
- **High-scoring potential:** The subject offers ample opportunities for scoring high marks. Many candidates every year, including this year, have scored more than 300 marks in the subject.
- **Interest area:** The subject matter of Sociology is inherently interesting, as it delves into the complexities of human society. Exploring topics like social change, globalisation, caste, and urbanisation can be intellectually stimulating for aspirants, keeping them motivated throughout their preparation.
- **Overlap with General Studies Papers:** Studying Sociology can provide candidates with a deeper understanding of various topics covered in the General Studies (GS) papers of the



UPSC exam. Concepts from Sociology often find relevance in GS portions of Indian society, women's issues, tribal development, and governance, giving students a competitive edge.

- **Useful in essay writing:** Sociology equips candidates with analytical and critical thinking skills that are essential for crafting compelling essays. The subject provides a sociological perspective on contemporary issues, enabling candidates to present well-rounded arguments backed by empirical evidence.
- **Beneficial for Interview preparation:** During the UPSC Interview round, candidates may be asked to discuss social issues or analyse societal trends in their home state. Having a background in Sociology can give candidates an advantage, as they can draw upon their knowledge to articulate informed opinions and engage in meaningful discussions.

Students from diverse backgrounds choose Sociology as their optional in the IAS exam. In fact, more than 60% of those who choose the subject are from science and engineering backgrounds. Engineering students are increasingly choosing Sociology because it complements their technical background. While Engineering education provides a solid foundation in quantitative reasoning and problem-solving skills, Sociology offers a unique perspective on human behaviour, social dynamics, and social developments.

(The author is director, IAS Gurukul)

Why the UPSC exams need reforms

A Command & Control regulatory Centre run by AI experts will ensure the technology is used to detect likely frauds in the exams, writes JK Dadoo

At the rapidity with which AI is engulfing India, along with other new technologies such as blockchain, Internet of Things (IoT), Virtual Reality (VR), Augmented Reality (AR), and robotics, the manner of evaluating candidates for all competitive exams needs a thorough relook. A Committee with hands-on experts, which can produce a doable report in 4-6 weeks, understanding the linkage between AI and examination integrity, is the need of the hour.

If one were to look at how the misuse of AI can be minimised in UPSC, the mother of all exams, with 10 lakh applicants, here are some of the key suggestions.

AI experts needed

The UPSC Board traditionally has six retired IAS, IPS officers and sometimes, like now, a politician heading it. Without disturbing this holy apple cart, at least two experts may be added to guide the Board on AI related urgent reforms, and these need to be put in place for the Main exam scheduled for November-December 2024. If this is not done quickly, the first casualties through AI may arise this year itself.

Blunting misuse

Examination-centre related reforms are equally urgent as only 24 UPSC centres are involved pan India this year and can be a workable solution for the Main exam. For next year Prelims, UPSC's 80 odd centres can be used as more time is available.

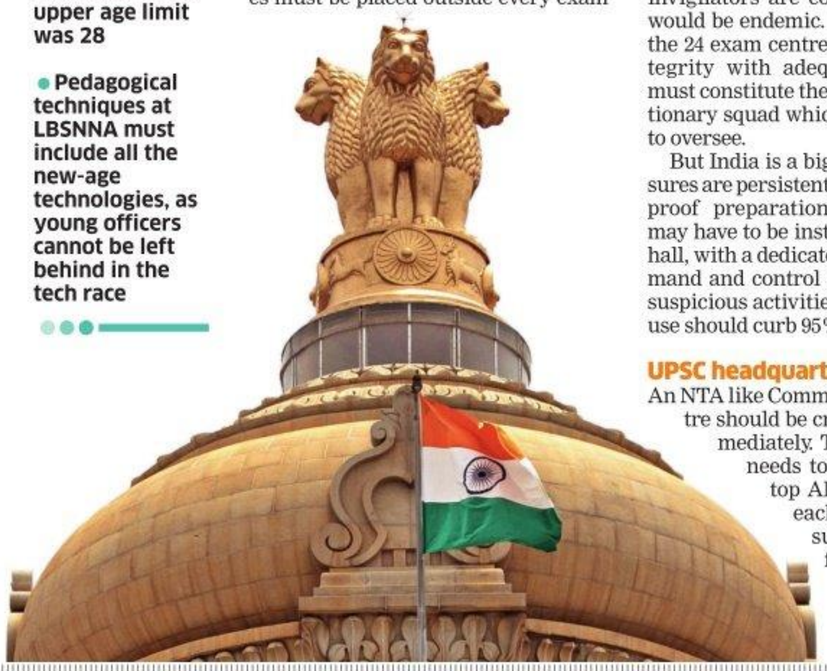
Facial recognition technology devices must be placed outside every exam hall to check impersonation, which will serve as a massive deterrence. Similarly, special metal detectors must be positioned to ensure no mobile phones can be surreptitiously whisked in by smart Alecs, because that can hugely compromise exam integrity. Thirdly, like the *12th Fail* movie, if the invigilators are corrupt, the disease would be endemic. Hence, for each of the 24 exam centres, professors of integrity with adequate police force, must constitute the centre-specific stationary squad which goes to each hall to oversee.

But India is a big country, and pressures are persistently applied. For foolproof preparations, CCTV cameras may have to be installed in each exam hall, with a dedicated team in the command and control centre to check all suspicious activities. Such technology use should curb 95% fraud cases.

Predictive analysis

AI works on past data and since the past question bank of UPSC is available, some AI experts claim they can predict areas from where questions will be asked. Easy counter to this is a clear direction by the UPSC Board to all paper setters, not to repeat any past questions ever. Secondly, if exactly similar answers are found in theory questions, the examiners must smell a rat and check if ChatGPT support was taken. Thirdly, instead of testing memory, paper setters must ask innovative questions requiring thinking on the spot and application of theory, rather than asking definitions.

- The UPSC system should revive the norms of the 1980s, when only three attempts were allowed and the upper age limit was 28
- Pedagogical techniques at LBSNNA must include all the new-age technologies, as young officers cannot be left behind in the tech race



UPSC headquarter

An NTA like Command & Control Centre should be created by UPSC immediately. The regulator body needs to be equipped with top AI experts, ensuring each exam room has surveillance, CCTV footage is being checked and AI is used to detect likely frauds. Provision should be made for immediate direction to 24 stationary squads to close in swiftly, wherever required.

Secondly, in several districts of UP, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, and Andhra Pradesh, it would be necessary to enlist the support of the District Magistrates by the UPSC as ADMs can send a chill down the spine of mischief mongers.

Three attempts are enough

The UPSC system should revive the norms of the 1980s, when only three attempts were allowed and the upper age limit was 28. Unsuccessful candidates could then seek other avenues of work and not waste half their lives, breaking their head against the wall. There are plenty of opportunities today for young people after three solid attempts at the UPSC.

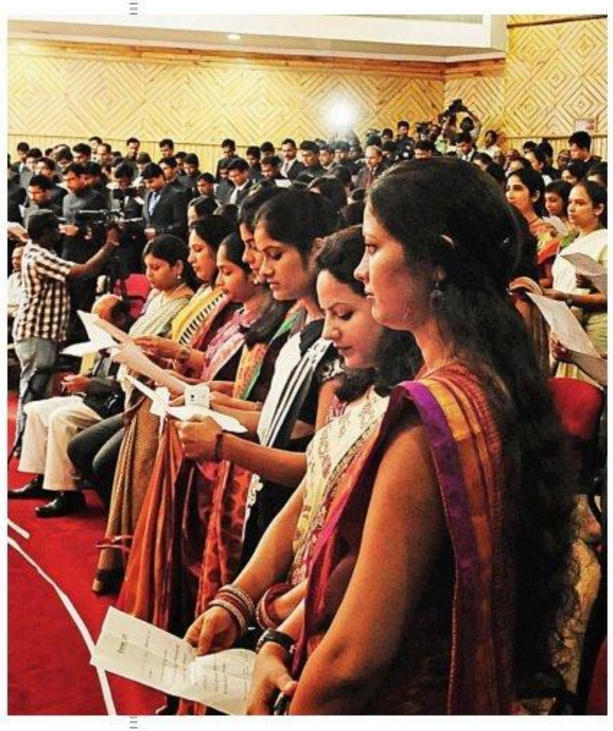
Secondly, pedagogical techniques at LBSNNA (Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration) must include all the new-age technologies, as young officers cannot be left behind in the tech race.

Thirdly, half the Faculty at LBSNAA has to be subject matter experts recruited to teach these courses, while the other half can be dedicated civil servants with the knowledge and passion for teaching administrative skills.

Fourthly, probationers presently go to an army attachment, or they are sent on a village visit, a trek and Bharat darshan. Some rescheduling adjustments are necessary to include a few days' exposure with progressive new technology companies using live robots etc. Few high-quality startups which have turned unicorns are a must to see, as also ISRO, the giant in space exploration technology.

India is rapidly transforming and growing the fastest in a world full of turmoil. Our future administrators need complete exposure to all aspects of changing India, bereft of slogans, as they have to run the country for the coming generations. Let us equip them fully, rather than allow them to blame their tools.

(The author is a retired IAS officer and alumnus of IIM Ahmedabad)



Ethical governance

The introduction of the ethics paper (General Studies IV) highlights a global shift towards integrity and accountability in governance.

Changes in age criteria

Recent trends show a substantial increase in the number of applicants, with around 13 lakh candidates applying in 2023. Changes in age criteria and the increasing duration and intensity of preparation have elevated the social and economic costs associated with UPSC exams. This has profound implications for potential candidates, especially those from lower socio-economic strata. Looking ahead, the UPSC could introduce psychometric testing to better assess candidates' aptitudes, and rationalise the number of attempts to reduce the psychological and financial burden on aspirants.

(The author is chief UPSC mentor and psychology consultant)

Exam pattern has kept pace with changing educational norms

The UPSC can embrace more digital platforms for conducting exams, writes **Ravi Kapoor**

The UPSC Civil Services Exam, known for selecting the future bureaucrats of India, has undergone transformation over the years to meet the demands of governance and administration in a rapidly evolving world.

Complexity of Prelims

Traditionally viewed as the first major hurdle in the UPSC journey, the Preliminary examination has seen a notable shift in its complexity. The depth and breadth of knowledge required to succeed in recent years have expanded dramatically. For instance, questions that once focused on straightforward historical facts or basic governance principles now delve into intricate analyses of economic patterns and international relations.

The Civil Services Aptitude Test (CSAT), a critical component of the Prelims, has been another area of heightened difficulty. The 2023 CSAT notably sparked controversy due to its perceived toughness, leading to petitions in the Supreme Court. This reflects a broader trend of the exam, which tests not just basic aptitude but also a candidate's ability to perform under stress and think critically.

Analytical skills in Mains

The Mains in the UPSC exam remains closely aligned with the prescribed syllabus; however, its focus has increasingly shifted towards questions that require deep analysis rather than rote memorisation. The Mains questions are designed to evaluate a candidate's ability to interlink data and theories from various disciplines to formulate coherent, insightful responses that reflect a deep and analytical understanding of the topics. This approach ensures that future civil servants are well-prepared to handle complex real-world issues.

How Engg professionals are topping the ranks in Civil Services

They are good at deploying the right kind of techniques and handling exam pressure to get maximum output within a given timeframe, writes **Rajesh Kumar Pathak**

Last month when the UPSC released the final results of the Civil Service Examination (CSE) 2023, once again an engineering graduate secured AIR 1. Aditya Srivastava, from IIT Kanpur, clinched the top position, transitioning from a corporate career to pursuing the civil services, and serving as an inspiration to aspiring civil servants nationwide.

In a written reply to a parliament question, Minister of State of DoP&T (Department of Personnel and Training) tabled the data in the Rajya Sabha. The table as indicated here shows a clear trend. About 3/4th (75%) of the total selected candidates have a professional background, the majority being engineers. It may be interesting to note that many engineering background candidates are taking humanities as their Optional Subject in CSE Mains. For example, CSE 2020 topper If an engineering or medical background candidate takes any humanities subject as their Optional, they are starting their journey from scratch in that subject, competing with the humanities background candidates who have studied the subject at their UG/PG level. If they still manage to get through and top the ranks, then the question naturally arises as to how such professionals, especially engineering students, have relatively a very high success rate compared to the humanities background candidates. Here are the answers to these questions:

Bright students opt for science stream: By and large, it is an accepted fact in our society that bright students, who are good in studies during their school days, opt for science stream, except a few who are passionate about humanities subject.

Stream-wise number of candidates recommended in Civil Services (Main) Examination

SN	Year	Humanities	Science	Medical Science	Engineering	Total Selection
1	2017	230 (21.7%)	68 (6.4%)	59 (5.7%)	699 (66.2%)	1056 (100%)
2	2018	199 (24.5%)	56 (6.9%)	48 (5.9%)	509 (62.7%)	812 (100%)
3	2019	223 (24.2%)	61 (6.6%)	56 (6.1%)	582 (63.1%)	922 (100%)
4	2020	193 (23.3%)	66 (7.9%)	33 (3.9%)	541 (64.9%)	833 (100%)
5	2021	188 (25.2%)	64 (8.5%)	44 (5.9%)	452 (60.4%)	748 (100%)

Early exposure to national level competitive exams: Many of these science students crack IIT-JEE, BITSAT or NEET depending upon their interest in maths or biology. These science students have to undergo a rigorous preparation process which provides them an excellent experience of handling exam-related pressure in a national level competition.

Analytical ability and focused study: On cracking IIT JEE (Main and Advanced), the cream of the lot gets entry into the prestigious IITs, especially, Bombay, Kanpur, Delhi, Kharagpur, Madras, Roorkee etc. Their peer group in the IITs also have the same intellectual level with whom they compete in every semester exam. During their four years of engineering studies, these students undergo the toughest possible grind academically; they also learn to handle pressure better and think analytically. The moto is to get maximum output with minimum effort. This is exactly what is required for the CSE. The syllabus of CSE syllabus is vast. Students have to intelligently plan their studies, deploy the right kind of techniques, handle exam pressure in order to get maximum output within a given timeframe. Engineers are good at it.

CSAT: Introduction of CSAT paper from 2011, even though just qualifying in nature, perhaps tilted the balance in favour of engineers. The CSAT includes questions on mathematical analytics, reasoning, comprehensions etc. Each year, the difficulty level of CSAT is increasing which might be costing the humanities students dear since many of them might have done comparatively better in GS paper but failed to qualify in CSAT. Ever decreasing cut-off level at the Prelim stage (116 in 2016 to 75.41 in 2023 for General category) also indicates the above possibility.

(The author is Secretary, Technology Development Board, Department of Science & Technology)

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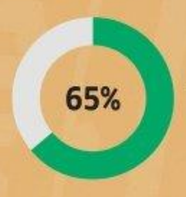
Education TIMES Survey 2024

As education takes one giant leap

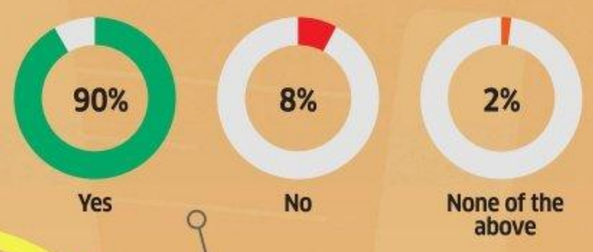
Digital technology has transformed the education landscape and has dramatically changed the classrooms, bridged educational gaps and expanded opportunities for quality learning in the interiors

1 Will a multidisciplinary approach in education give students a diverse perspective?

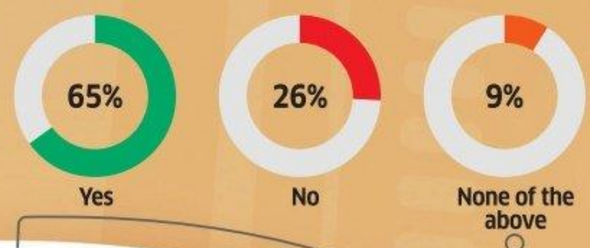
2 Should students be encouraged to use generative AI as part of academic skills development?



3 Institutes are making provisions to provide short-term creative writing, communication skills and other soft skills to students. Will this increase employability?



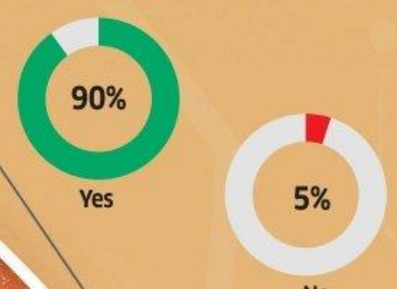
4 By changing the assessment methods and removing rote memorisation at the school level, will we promote holistic growth and skill development rather than rote memorisation?



5 By addressing the disparity in the quality of education offered in urban and rural areas, can India ensure equal distribution of job opportunities?

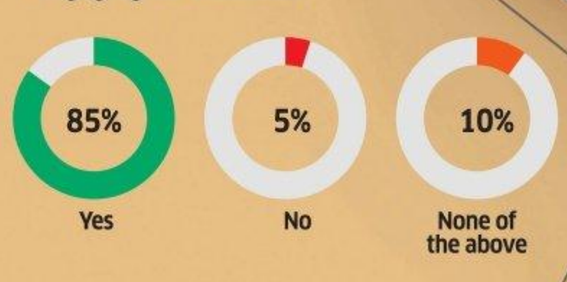
6 Is the Open Book Exams (OBEs) pattern, aimed at bringing in conceptual clarity among students, a feasible idea?

7 Can unconventional learning spaces such as innovation labs play a role in fostering creativity and innovation?

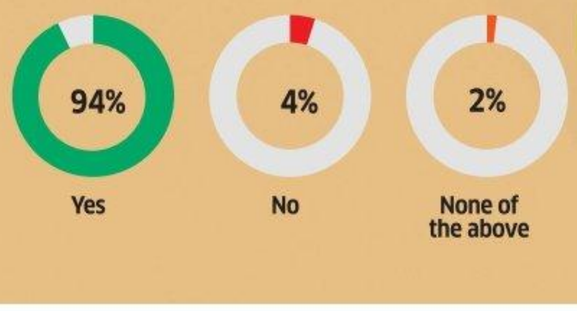


Artificial Intelligence has the potential to address challenges of inequalities in the education sector
– UNESCO

8 Should storytelling, gamification and narrative-driven learning be encouraged to make complex concepts more engaging for students?



9 Should sustainability and green courses be included as an integral part of STEM courses?



AI will supplement educator's work by personalising it for students and liberating teachers from paperwork.
– Bill Gates (Former CEO of Microsoft)

10 Should AI be made an essential part of medical education?

Text: Shuddhanta Patra
Designed by: Manoj Singh
Pic: istock

Agriculture colleges receive 74% female enrolments

Shehwaaz.Khan
@timesgroup.com

The ICAR-NAHEP reserved 33.33% slots for female students in overseas programmes

The number of female students enrolling in agriculture-related courses spiked from 27% in 2017 to around 50% in 2023, according to a survey by the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), the apex body that regulates 76 Agricultural Universities (AUs) across India and has 131 agricultural institutes in various agricultural domains. According to the data, Kerala has the highest enrolment of women in AUs with 74% of female students in agricultural courses due to the higher literacy rate in the state, followed by Himachal Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Manipur, Assam, Jammu & Kashmir, Uttarakhand, Nagaland and Odisha. As many as 12 states and union territories already have a female participation ratio of more than 50% in UG courses in agriculture.

Female candidates prefer courses such as Agricultural Engineering, Biotechnology, Food Technology, Veterinary, Horticulture, and Dairy Technology. The reasons that girls prefer these courses include promotion of gender equality in agricultural institutes, the desire to contribute to rural women empowerment, and the promotion of rights of women in the agriculture sector.

Financial assistance

"As many campuses of AUs and agricultural colleges are outside the main town and cities due to the requirement for wide expanse of farmland, we have made provisions for residential facilities for girls," says RC Agrawal, deputy director general, Agricultural Education, ICAR. Out of the total number of 245 hostels, 140 hostels have been assigned only to girls. For the past 10 years, ICAR has been giving financial assistance for girls' hostels. In 2018, the Government of India started a joint project called the Indian Council of Agricultural Research - National Agricultural Higher Education Project (ICAR-NAHEP) with the World Bank to attract talent and provide quality agricultural education from across India. It aimed at strengthening higher agricultural education on a 50:50 cost-sharing basis. Out of the total 5.15 lakh beneficiaries of ICAR-NAHEP, the share of female participants increased to 44% in 2023 from 28% in 2019. The project also created user-friendly campuses for a secure environment for female students. It launched a portal to address their grievances and helped them raise security concerns on the campuses without any fear. Other facilities for female students include arrangements of CCTV at girls' hostels and campus corridors, and special efforts for internships and placements for female students. Moreover, female students are bagging scholarships provided by ICAR, UGC, and the Department of Science and Technology. "We have a budget of around Rs 90 crore for competitive scholarships. Most of them are bagged by girls," Agrawal says. In UG courses for the academic year 2022-2023, 31 girls submitted applications per seat against 18 boys. "This means that there is more competition among girls," he says. "Out of a total of 2,700 students who visited international HEIs under ICAR-NAHEP, the share of female students is 42% till March 2024," Agrawal adds. About 60% of the girls in the ICAR quota seats are from Bihar with 22%, followed by Kerala (18%), Rajasthan (14%), and Odisha (7%).

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The interest is rising in *Nutrition & Dietetics*

It signals a paradigm shift in our approach to health, writes Gopal C Sharma

In the maze of career choices, few paths offer the blend of personal satisfaction, societal impact, and professional advancement. One such avenue is the field of Nutrition & Dietetics. The trajectory of interest in Nutrition & Dietetics mirrors the evolving landscape of health consciousness in India. Gone are the days when dietary concerns were sidelined in public discourse. Today, they take centre stage, driven by an awakening to the intrinsic link between nutrition and overall well-being. This awakening, fuelled by media exposure, educational initiatives, and a cultural shift towards wellness, has spurred a significant shift in career aspirations.

One primary driver behind this growing interest lies in the expanding scope of opportunities within the field. From traditional roles in hospitals and clinics to innovative paths in sports nutrition, corporate wellness, and food technology, the array of career options is diverse and promising. The rise of digital platforms and the gig economy has further democratised access to jobs, empowering budding nutritionists to carve their niche in the market.

Curricula offered by institutes aim to provide students with a comprehensive understanding of nutrition science, coupled with practical skills and real-world experiences. From exploring macronutrients to understanding dietary planning across various life stages, nutrition degree courses empower students to navigate modern nutrition challenges confidently. A focus on research and innovation ensures that students are equipped to tackle emerging issues and contribute to cutting-edge advancements in the field.

With obesity and diabetes reaching epidemic proportions, the need for professionals skilled in crafting personalised dietary interventions has never been more critical

MARKET MANTRA

Agents of change

Moreover, the strong demand for nutritionists and dietitians underscores the industry's vitality and resilience. This demand is expected to surge in the coming years, outstripping the supply of skilled practitioners and creating abundant opportunities for aspiring professionals.

Even in the realm of chronic conditions like diabetes, people are increasingly recognising the vital role nutritionists play in complementing medical treatments. Beyond merely advising on dietary restrictions, they offer tailored meal plans to stabilise blood sugar levels, mitigate complications, and improve overall quality of life. This collaborative relationship between medical practitioners and nutrition experts underscores the interdisciplinary synergy at the heart of modern healthcare, highlighting the invaluable contribution nutritionists make in managing complex health challenges.

Beyond individual careers lies a broader societal imperative driving this trend. As nutritionists and dietitians proliferate across sectors, their collective impact extends far beyond clinical consultations. They become agents of change, advocating for preventive healthcare, championing community wellness initiatives, and driving policy interventions to promote health consciousness.

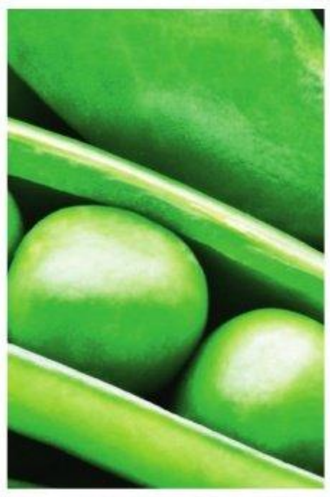
In essence, the surge in Nutrition & Dietetics careers signals a paradigm shift in our approach to health—one rooted in proactive self-care, informed dietary choices, and a holistic understanding of wellness.

Evidence-based practice

As the demand for nutrition experts continues to rise, it is crucial to address misconceptions and challenges that may impede progress. One common misconception is that dietary advice from a nutritionist is a one-time solution. The ongoing consultation should be emphasised with personalised guidance ensuring sustained health outcomes. Additionally, in an era filled with misinformation, students should be committed to evidence-based practice and ethical conduct, ensuring they serve as trusted sources of accurate information and guidance.

The rising interest in Nutrition & Dietetics careers is not just a fleeting trend but a transformative wave poised to redefine our societal ethos and healthcare landscape.

(The author is director, Lifeness Science Institute, New Delhi)



Three reasons why we need nutritionists

A From exploring macronutrients to understanding dietary planning across life stages, nutrition degree courses empower students to navigate challenges confidently. Research ensures that thet are equipped to tackle emerging issues.

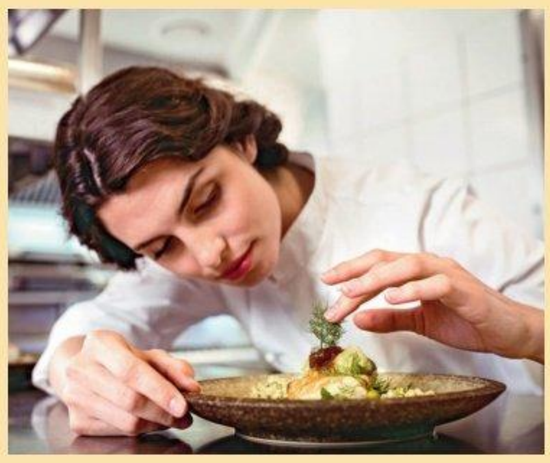
B Beyond individual careers lies a broader societal imperative driving this trend. As nutritionists and dietitians proliferate across sectors, their collective impact extends far beyond clinical consultations. They become agents of change.

C One common misconception is that dietary advice from a nutritionist is a one-time solution. The ongoing consultation should be emphasised with personalised guidance ensuring sustained health outcomes.

ISTOCK

Women are making significant strides and gaining recognition for their culinary expertise, writes **Arjun S Datta**

Female chefs uplift the gastronomic experiences



In the vibrant and dynamic realm of Indian hotels, a captivating shift is underway—the emergence of talented women chefs who are reshaping the culinary landscape. This transformative trend not only signifies a departure from traditional norms but also welcomes a new era of innovation and inclusivity within the hospitality industry. Women chefs are making significant strides, gaining recognition for their culinary expertise, and enriching the gastronomic experiences offered by hotels and restaurants across the country.

Better opportunities

Some of the major contributors of this change are due to better access to hospitality training, more inclusive workplace policies, comprehensive plans for returning mothers including favourable working hours and a steady growth of women chefs enrolling to work in branded hotels has given a rise in women chefs in India. Additionally, the rise of professional culinary institutes in India has also paved the way for aspiring women chefs, where students come from all walks of life. The last decade has witnessed several success stories at both a global and domestic level including those of chefs Garima Arora, the first Indian Chef (female) to earn a Michelin Star in 2017, and Chef Amninder Sandhu, who runs a successful restaurant in Goa. This has further inspired women to enter professional kitchens whether it's with reputed hotel chains or starting their entrepreneurial journey.

UNIQUE TREND

Hotel chains are adopting and promoting various initiatives of showcasing the limitless talent that women chefs have to offer; these include initiatives that identify women home cooks, portraying various cuisines and cultures. Initiatives like these encourage and celebrate the diversity and opportunities for women in this ever-growing industry.

Positive change

The demand for qualified and trained women chefs will be only increase with time. Their unique perspectives, innovative approaches, and commitment to excellence are redefining standards and inspiring positive change across the sector. Women leaders are not only shaping the future of hospitality but also elevating the industry to new heights of success and inclusivity.

Supporting and empowering women in hospitality is not just a matter of gender equality; it's a strategic imperative for innovation, growth, and sustainability.

(The author is MD & COO, International Institute of Culinary Arts, New Delhi)

Involving underprivileged women in beauty and cosmetics sector

Offering structured courses would ensure that cosmetic professionals receive standardised training, writes Shahnaz Husain

India is stepping up to emerge as the 'skill capital', which will take a strong shape by involving under resourced women. We must recognise the vital role that sectors like beauty and wellness can play in contributing to the realisation of these twin objectives.

Girls, especially from the marginalised sections of society with specific skills, creativity and aesthetic sense can explore the fast-expanding beauty sector, to learn the craft and business involved with it. This will open doors for them to learn, and make decisions for their families, besides earning a living. They can advocate for their interests, voice their opinions confidently, and be economically inde- pendent. While this is a strong idea, execution demands a streamlined process and strategies.

Battling challenges

Much as the cosmetics industry is for women, it is not necessarily run by women, which is because of a lack of knowledge and skill. The beauty industry continues to be overlooked in mainstream skilling sectors for several reasons. Some of them are gender bias, regulatory challenges, lack of recognition and perception of frivolity.

The cosmetics industry is often associated with femininity, leading to gender biases that may impact the perceived importance of skilling initiatives in this sector. This bias can contribute to the industry being overlooked in mainstream skill development efforts. The industry is also subject to various regulations and standards, which can vary from region to region. Ensuring that skill development programmes comply with relevant regulations and standards adds complexity to the development and implementation of such initiatives.

Unlike some other industries like healthcare or technology, the beauty and cosmetics industry may not always receive the same level of recognition for its contribution to the economy and employment. This lack of recognition can translate into less emphasis on skill development initiatives for the sector. Historically, there has been a perception that careers in the beauty and cosmetics industry are less serious or less important compared to traditional professions. This perception can lead to undervaluing the need for formal skill development in this sector.

Introducing structured courses would help create a pool of trained beauticians, makeup artists, and skincare specialists

Creating a plan

National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) set up by the Ministry of Finance emphasises on Public Private Partnership (PPP) model has a big role to play in the beauty sector in India. To introduce cosmetic and beautician courses effectively, NSDC could collaborate with industry experts, beauty academies, and relevant stakeholders to design a comprehensive curriculum, provide necessary infrastructure and equipment, and facilitate skill assessments and certifications. Additionally, promoting these courses through an effective outreach programme would encourage more girls to pursue careers in the beauty and cosmetics industry, contributing to economic development.

India's Cosmetic Market was valued at $ 8.1 billion in 2023 and is expected to reach $18.4 billion by 2032, at a CAGR of 3.2% during the forecast period 2023 – 2032. This indicates the need for skilled professionals, which is possible if structured courses needed in the industry, are introduced by NSDC. This will give a timely fillip by providing new economic opportunities to women by creating new jobs, giving standardised training, promoting entrepreneurship and meeting consumer demand. With the increasing demand for beauty and wellness services, there's a need for skilled professionals. Introducing courses would help create a pool of trained beauticians, makeup artists, skincare specialists, etc., addressing the industry's workforce requirements.

Offering structured courses would ensure that aspiring beauticians and cosmetic professionals receive standardised training, equipping them with the necessary skills and knowledge to excel in their careers.

(The author is CMD, Shahnaz Husain Group)

The Rise of Esports

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Esports have captured imagination of millions worldwide. What started a hobby, has grown into a multi-billion-dollar industry with professional leagues, and international tournaments. In just a few years, the esports market in India has witnessed staggering growth. In 2021, it was valued at approximately INR 3 billion (around £30 million). However, this is just the beginning. By 2025, it is projected to reach INR 100 billion, a testament to its immense potential. The India esports market size reached US$200.7 million in 2023, and it is expected to grow to US$919 million by 2032 at a CAGR of 18.42% during 2024-2032 3. This rapid growth clearly indicates the bright future that awaits the Indian esports industry.

The Electronic Sports Federation of India (ESFI), a non-profit organisation, was established to promote, encourage, organise, educate, train, and control esports, provide facilities for training in esports, and build and sustain the esports ecosystem in India. Many international universities now offer scholarships for esports athletes. Additionally, the industry's growth has created a demand for professionals in various roles, including coaching, broadcasting, event management, and game development.

Why CUET is yet to overcome its bottlenecks and glitches

The NTA is trying to focus on training and orientation programmes for city coordinators, centre superintendents and invigilators, to ensure such mistakes do not recur in future

Rajlakshmi.Ghosh
@timesgroup.com

It has been a summer of discontent for Common University Entrance Test - Undergraduate (CUET-UG) Delhi aspirants as their exam, scheduled to take place at Delhi centres on May 15, was rescheduled to May 29. A large influx of aspirants necessitated a revaluation of logistical arrangements, including the availability of adequate infrastructure to accommodate the increase in candidates. In addition, there was a requisitioning of invigilators for the ongoing 2024 Lok Sabha Election duties which led to the last-minute change. The students were hassled, but it seems they are not alone in their predicament. Taking the exams on the revised date are also students from a Kanpur exam centre who were handed the wrong question papers. In Indore too, there were similar complaints that some students were given the Chemistry paper in English despite having chosen to take the exam in Hindi. From Meghalaya, there were complaints of a stampede-like situation due to poor coordination between the NTA and a Shillong exam centre.

The CUET-UG is considered to be the second-largest entrance exam in the country in terms of applicants after the National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET), but its challenges persist despite measures to plug the loopholes. In its debut edition in 2022, the exam was marred by technical glitches resulting in the rescheduling of exams in multiple centres, leaving aspirants stressed over last-minute cancellations. The second edition of the exam was relatively hassle-free barring a few exam centres where the exams got delayed due to delays in the biometric identification process. Even the UGC outlined plans to keep extra computers and extra centres as plan B so that in case there are any glitches, the candidates could be shifted there.

Education Times reached out to the UGC for its comments but was told that the exam is now of a shorter duration, and therefore more streamlined, and if there are any glitches, that too will be overcome with the NTA working on it.

"In CUET, certain subjects have a large count of registrations, and in other subjects, geographical locations need to be considered. Keeping these factors in mind, there could be planning issues. In CBT mode last year, the exam for each paper was conducted in multiple shifts. For instance, the English paper was conducted in over 30 shifts and the geographical distance of the exam centre for the candidates could have been a limiting factor. This time, candidates were given the first choice in terms of exam centres to cut down on travel time which made the attendance so much better as compared to previous years," clarifies Subodh Kumar Singh, director general, National Testing Agency (NTA) drawing attention to the exam's positive facets.

He adds further, "Since we are covering 379 cities and given the size of the exam, there are challenges, which we are trying to address by starting extensive training/orientation programmes from the level of city coordinators to centre superintendents to invigilators. We have also developed some training modules so that such mistakes do not happen each year."

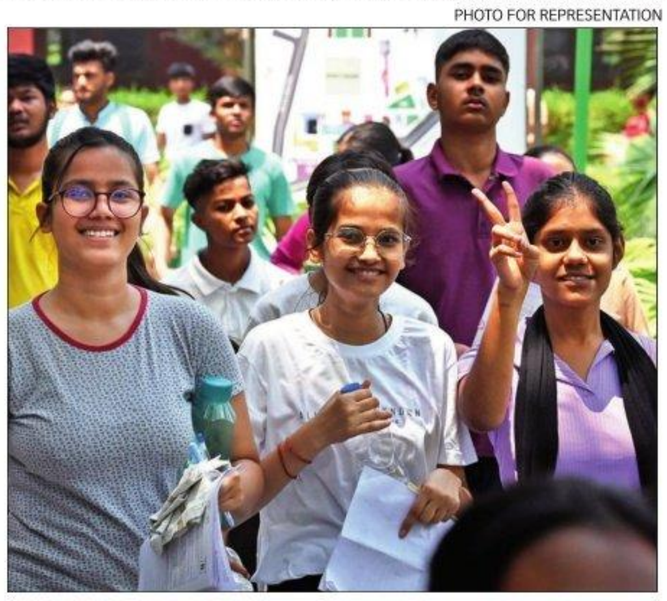
"Overambition, poor planning, frequent changes in the rules of the 'game' even after the 'game' had already begun and lack of sensitivity towards the challenges faced by students are the dominant reasons for such hassles. Failure to think through well in advance further exacerbates the problem," says Furqan Qamar, former secretary general, Association of Indian Universities (AIU). He points to the fact that the authorities made "too many changes rather too frequently – from nomenclature to the coverage and scope; from content to the mode; too many changes too frequently are bound to create confusion." Conducting entrance exams for millions of people and that too in a wide variety of subject disciplines is inherently challenging. "We must realise that our country is too large and too diverse. We must go for a centralised system of admission. At the most, there the NTA must conduct a single test to ascertain aptitude for higher education. This test must be conducted several times in a year to avoid overcrowding and save students the hassles that a one-time test poses."

As for invigilators being requisitioned for election duty, Qamar says, "This was a known factor and must have been addressed." He suggests the need to at least think of a SAT kind of entrance exam which assesses aptitude and allows HEIs to use its score along with other parameters to finalise admission.

Dilemma of Delhi candidates

Aveesha Bahri (17), student of Birla Vidya Niketan, Pushp Vihar, New Delhi, who is taking the exam in Economics, Psychology, Applied Mathematics, Political Science and English was supposed to appear for the exam in English and GT on May 15. "I got the notice on the rescheduling of the exam date on the eve of the exam after dinner time. It was disappointing since I had been preparing for the exam for quite some time and this revision in date disrupted my momentum of studying. My next two papers, Economics and Mathematics on May 16, are content-heavy subjects. But the uncertainty made it difficult for me to concentrate on these subjects," says Aveesha, adding, that even the admit cards were issued at the last minute on May 14, and in the case of some students, the centres were not mentioned in the admit cards, which compelled them to write to the NTA to provide them the necessary details. "With all the confusion around us, the exam got rescheduled, which also meant stretching the exam schedule that otherwise for me would have ended on May 21," she says.

PHOTO FOR REPRESENTATION



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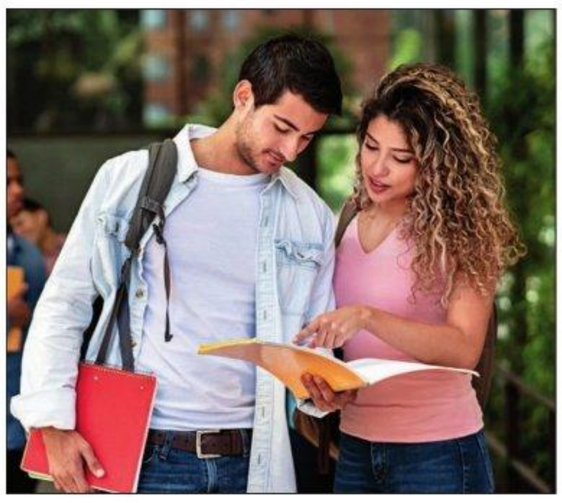
Studying abroad is safe if you follow these simple rules

An indepth understanding of laws pertaining to, but not limited to driving, drugs, dress codes, etc will help students avoid legal or cultural misunderstandings, writes **Saurabh Arora**



Studying abroad is an experience that offers students the opportunity to immerse themselves in new cultures and broaden their horizons. As per the University Living Indian Student Mobility Report 2023-24, 1.3 million students from India pursued higher education in overseas destinations in 2023, out of which an estimated 58% are enrolled across Canada, US, UK and Australia. While we all have access to information, navigating unfamiliar territory can present its own challenges if not treaded with caution. It is essential to prioritise one's safety and tick simple check boxes at the planning stage itself.

Research and plan ahead

A thorough research of the destination country and specific city is a must before leaving your home country. If possible, speak to some people in the destination country who can familiarise you with the law of the land, customs, cultural shift, and potential safety concerns. This will enable one to make informed choices and reduce chances of landing in trouble.

Book verified accommodation

Accommodation plays one of the most crucial roles in an international student's journey. Since 'safety' and 'comfort' both reflect on criteria filters of international students, one must always opt for, and book verified accommodation only. Start by looking for accommodation near the university or institute as early as receiving the offer letter and blocking your seat with fee deposits. An early start not only gives you the benefit of choosing from a variety of available accommodations in the preferred vicinity but is also easy on the pocket by 20-30%.

Stay informed

Keeping track of current events and safety advisories in the host country is crucial. Students must regularly check travel advisory websites, apps or any other media, to stay informed about potential risks and plan their routines accordingly.

Register with home country's embassy

Upon arrival in the host country, students should register with their home country's embassy or consulate. This way they will receive regular alerts and advisories that may be important for students from a particular country or ethnicity. This may particularly be important in case of emergencies, ensuring they have the necessary support needed during challenging situations.

Stay connected

A regular connect and communication with friends, family, and fellow students can be beneficial. Having a close-knit circle or a set of trusted individuals to share plans, contact information, etc regularly fosters a support circle, and adds a layer of safety net for students.

Respect local laws and customs

Every country has its own laws and cultural norms. Students must familiarise themselves with these laws as soon as possible to avoid landing in distress situations unknowingly. A thorough understanding of certain laws pertaining to, but not limited to driving, drugs, dress codes, acceptable public behaviour, possession of illegal material, etc will help students avoid legal or cultural misunderstandings.

Plan for emergencies

Establishing a plan for emergencies is vital. Save and have access to local emergency contacts, such as the nearest hospital and police station, university support services and home embassy's support contact details. Students must keep in regular touch with their emergency contact and keep them updated about their plans from time to time.

(The author is founder & CEO, University Living)

US consulates increase its interview capacity to meet amplified student visa demand

Priyanka.Srivastava
@timesgroup.com

More Indian students received a US student visa in 2023 than students from any other country, which makes up over a quarter of all international students in the US. Looking at the trend, the Embassy this year starts student visa appointments two weeks earlier to meet anticipated student demand. **US Embassy spokesperson Chris Elms** speaks about the rising interest to study in the US, the security threats and the impact of the Presidential elections in November.

What are the measures taken by the US consulates to address the rising applications for student visas? Are there more officials deputed to speed up the visa process?
Our goal is to allow every first-time student visa applicant to interview ahead of their scheduled programme start date, along with as many second-time applicants as time permits. To meet that goal, we are continually evaluating and adjusting our schedule, staffing, and processes to maximise appointment availability. For example, this year we are starting student visa appointments two weeks earlier to give us more time to meet anticipated student demand.

The first tranche of the interview process starts in late May and will continue till August. Is there a set number of applications that the consulates are expecting?
We are opening tens of thousands of appointments, and we have increased our student interview capacity this year to meet that demand.

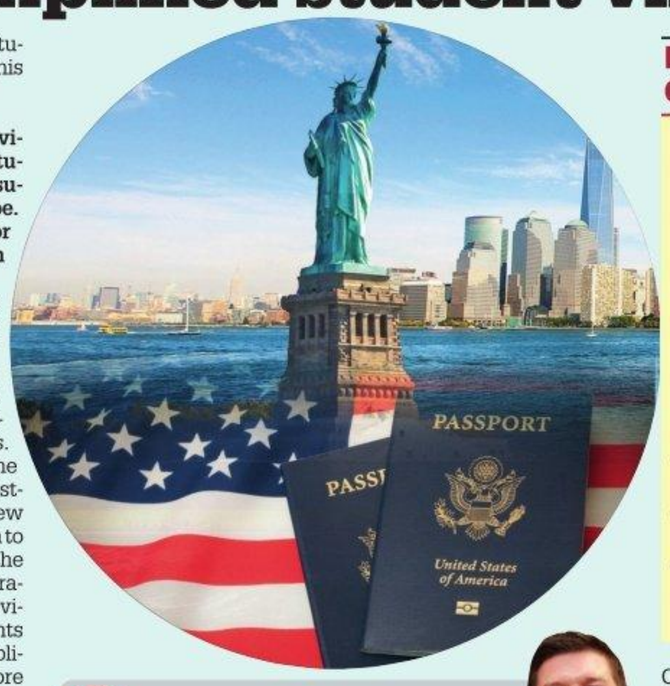
In 2023, a record 253,355 visas for international students were denied by consular officials across the globe. What are the top reasons for visa rejections? How can students prepare better?
We encourage students not to focus on denials, as most student visa applicants in India will receive the visa on their first try. When a visa is denied, it could be for several reasons. The most common is that the applicant couldn't demonstrate during their interview that they have the intention to return to India and depart the US at the end of their temporary visit. We may also deny a visa if we need more documents or information from the applicant or if we need to do more work on the case. In these cases, the denial may be overcome once we receive the information we need. Students can prepare for their interview by ensuring they have their documents in order. Mandatory documents include I-20, SEVIS receipt, DS-160 barcode page, valid passport, application fee receipt, and two recent photographs. We also recommend that students bring financial records and previous academic records though these may not be required at the interview. Students should also be prepared to speak to the interviewing officer in their own words about their academic plans and to talk about how they will fund their studies.

Students from India were issued a total of 130,839 F-1 student visas in 2023, which was a 14% jump from 2022. Is it likely to increase this year?
Issuance numbers ultimately come down to the number of students who apply and are admitted to US schools and the qualifications of those individual students. We cannot predict exact numbers, but we are anticipating another big year for student visa applicants, and we continue to see large numbers of students seeking advising from EducationUSA, the free advising service that is the official source of information about US higher education. In fact, more Indian students received a US student visa last year than students from any other country and Indian students now make up over a quarter of all international students in the United States. This year we expect those trends to continue.

With the US presidential election scheduled in November, is there any noticeable apprehension among international students applying to US universities?
The US presidential elections are a regular feature of the American democratic process and society. In fact, every student completing a two-year graduate programme will witness an election of the US Congress and those completing a four-year undergraduate programme will get to see one US presidential election in person. Over the last decade, the number of Indian students in the US has nearly tripled and, if trends continue Indians will soon be the largest group of international students at American universities and colleges. While some students do consider how government policies will impact them as international students, past and current statistics indicate continued interest in the US as the top international study destination. The US and its higher educational institutions continue to welcome Indian students and provide unmatched opportunities for academic and professional growth.

Despite the looming recession, increasing threats of unemployment and cost of living pressure, why are Indian students driven to study in the US?
US institutions offer gold standards in education, a range of highly specialised and industry-focused majors, the opportunity to conduct cutting-edge research, access to international networks, a robust infrastructure, as well as flexibility in programme offerings to create a customised educational journey suited to their specific needs. A degree from an accredited US university is an invaluable asset for any student preparing for the future, as the rich, immersive campuses and diverse classrooms along with practical training in several courses give the relevant experience-key to today's job market.

What is your opinion on the security threats faced by Indian students in the US, with a spate of unfortunate incidents in the recent past?
Students' safety is of paramount importance to the US and all US schools and universities are strongly committed to safeguarding campus communities. The tragic deaths of some Indian students in the US over these past months stemmed from different causes and took place in different locations across the US. As External Affairs Minister Jaishankar recently shared, the Government of India has looked into these deaths and there is no indication of any connection between these tragedies. Looking out for the welfare of students and building safe and inclusive communities is part of what US universities do every day, as they welcome and support American and international students to campus.



Q&A

> We encourage students not to focus on denials, as most student visa applicants in India will receive the visa on their first try.
> – **Chris Elms,** US Embassy spokesperson

Pre-departure Orientations

In Person

- **Friday, June 14:** Mumbai by USIEF Mumbai
- **Friday, June 21:** New Delhi by USIEF New Delhi
- **Friday, June 21:** Chennai by USIEF Chennai
- **Friday, June 28:** Kolkata by USIEF Kolkata
- **Friday, June 28:** Bengaluru by USIEF Chennai
- **Saturday, July 13:** Chandigarh by USIEF New Delhi
- **Friday, July 12:** Hyderabad by USIEF &VAF Hyderabad

Online

- **Thursday, July 18:** All India

Why Philippines is the next big destination for aspiring doctors

The surge in popularity is driven by factors that include affordable tuition fees, a US-aligned curriculum ensuring smooth transitions to international careers, and a strong network of residency programmes recognised globally, writes **Kadwin Pillai**

The global healthcare landscape is facing an unprecedented challenge – a growing demand for qualified medical professionals. According to the WHO, by 2030, the world may witness a shortfall of over 15 million health workers by 2030 with competition for medical school seats in traditional destinations like the US and Canada reaching unprecedented highs. The report also explains the need for India to add nearly 2 million more doctors, nurses, and healthcare professionals to achieve a minimum density of 44.5 health professionals over 10,000 people. Adding numbers is a simple expectation, but to achieve it, there needs to be formal avenues to education. Philippines has emerged as a rising star in this regard. This Southeast Asian nation is attracting aspiring doctors worldwide with its unique combination of high-quality education at a competitive cost.

Thriving education system

With a rich history dating back to the American colonial period, Philippines has cultivated a formidable reputation in medical education. A cornerstone of this system is the accreditation of Philippine medical schools by esteemed international bodies such as the Foundation for Advancement of International Medical Education and Research (FAIMER) and the World Health Organization (WHO). These accreditations not only attest to the quality of education but also open doors for graduates to pursue medical careers worldwide. Moreover, Philippines boasts an English-medium curriculum, which attracts a diverse pool of students from around the globe. This linguistic advantage facilitates seamless communication and collaboration among students and faculty, enriching the learning experience. Furthermore, the emphasis on clinical training sets Philippine medical education apart.

Affordable option

Post the Ukraine-Russia conflict, the Philippines has emerged as an affordable option for aspiring doctors. In fact, Philippines has been a major destination to pursue MBBS abroad for 15 years. Compared to traditional destinations, living expenses and cost of completing medical course cost a fraction in Philippines. Access to a scholarship and other financial aid programmes also help alleviate the financial burden on students. For Indian students who are keen, policies adopted by the Philippines have been encouraging. The policy included a 54-month medical curriculum and a year of internship. Previously, the Philippines offered a 4-year MD course alongside a Pre-Med programme, but now, students must adhere to the 54-month curriculum. The Philippines' CHED (Higher Education Dept equivalent of Philippines) and PRC (Professional Regulatory Commission) allow foreign students to follow this curriculum with a year of internship under their existing medical Act.

Indian medicos to benefit from policy change

The Philippines has announced a policy change that will significantly benefit Indian medical students pursuing their MBBS degrees. A recent amendment to the Philippine Medical Act of 1959 has been approved by the House of Representatives, paving the way for Indian students, including those from foreign countries, to register and practise medicine in the Philippines. This development comes after several years of persistent requests from India, recognising the Philippines as a global destination for medical education.
Under this new provision, Indian students who complete their Doctor of Medicine degree from a Philippine College of Medicine recognised by the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), along with a 12-month internship, will be eligible to register and practise medicine in the Philippines. The CHED will issue the necessary certification to facilitate this process, ensuring a smooth transition for Indian graduates.

Global opportunities

For aspiring doctors eyeing practice in North America, the United States Medical Licensing Examination (USMLE) serves as a critical milestone. International Medical Graduates (IMGs) must excel in these exams to secure residency positions and ultimately practise in the US. Compared to destinations such as Ukraine, Australia, and Singapore, Philippines emerges as a strategic choice for IMGs due to its remarkable track record in USMLE success.

Philippine medical schools have consistently achieved USMLE pass rates, often surpassing the global average. For instance, in recent years, pass rates for Step 1, Step 2 CK (Clinical Knowledge), and Step 2 CS (Clinical Skills) exams have exceeded 90% in several institutions. Such stellar performance underscores the effectiveness of Philippine medical education in preparing students for rigorous licensing examinations. Moreover, Philippine graduates benefit from a strong network of residency programmes in the US that actively seek out their expertise. Many prestigious hospitals and healthcare institutions across the US have a history of accepting graduates from Philippine medical schools into their residency programmes.

Need for more physicians

As India positions itself to become the world's third-largest economy, the importance of healthcare cannot be overstated, particularly in the light of its burgeoning population. With over 24 lakh students registering for the NEET exam, the demand for medical education is palpable. However, India's medical infrastructure faces a daunting gap, with just over 1 lakh seats available for over 12 lakh eligible students. High costs and limited availability of seats in India's medical colleges drive many aspiring doctors abroad, where education is more affordable. However, the quality of education abroad has been a concern, especially with regard to passing the FMGE upon return. In addressing India's need for more doctors, particularly in the rural areas, the Philippines emerges as a promising ally, bridging the gap between aspiration and opportunity in the field of healthcare.

(The author is director, Transworld Educare and chairman, Kings International Medical Academy)

UK govt's decision to reinstate Graduate Route visa will help British varsities

Rishi Sunak government took back sweeping crackdown on Graduate Route visas, which will allow international students to help in UK's economic recovery and offer subsidies to domestic students

Priyanka.Srivastava
@timesgroup.com

Karan Bilimoria, chancellor, University of Birmingham, has been a strong supporter of offering opportunities to international students and has been strongly recommending that the UK government have an open approach to the student visa and post-work visa policies.

During his recent India visit, Bilimoria led a delegation to meet the prospective students from India who got an offer from the University and also to formally launch the new Joint Master's program in Sustainable Energy Systems. On the sidelines, Bilimoria spoke to *Education Times* about the independent Migration Advisory Committee (MAC) review report on the Graduate Route visa scheme in the UK. The British universities along with the international students were concerned over the UK government's decision to restrict the Graduate Route visa scheme. UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak, who had earlier taken a strong stand on abolishing the graduate route and was considering restrictions on the visa which allows graduates to stay on and work for up to two years after their degree course, is no longer planning to go ahead with it. The government backtracked the plan following strong opposition from key cabinet members, including the education minister and prominent British university stakeholders.

> Undergraduate home fees are currently capped by the Government at £9,250. With inflation going up and the cost of running the universities increasing, international students are the only way to survive this.
> – **Karan Bilimoria**

Bilimoria, who was instrumental in instituting the Graduate Route in 2007 and presented it in the House of Lords to support the international students, has been actively campaigning against Rishi Sunak's decision to end it. "As a former international student myself who came to the UK at the age of 19 to study for seven years, I know how hard it is to raise money to study and get a job in the UK. Although I am a Tata Scholar and Mahindra Scholar, I had won several other scholarships which I had to pay back," he says. "Students take education loans, and parents make great sacrifices to raise the funds for education. I understand how valuable a two-year work visa is to find a job after completing the course," he says.

"It was taken away by the Conservative government in 2012, and as the former president of the United Kingdom Council of International Student Affairs (UKCISA), we have been fighting to bring back the two-year post-study work visa now known as the Graduate Route visa," he adds. "We released a report in 2018, making various recommendations on the visa option. The top two recommendations included bringing in target international students which was 600,000 students and the second was to bring back two years post-study work visas," adds Bilimoria. Former PM Boris Johnson listened to that and in 2021, it was brought back.

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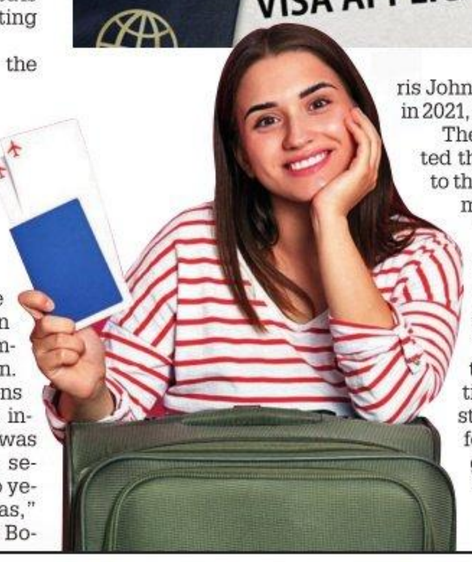


The visa option has rocketed the Indian students back to the UK and it has also prompted the competitor countries such as the US, Australia, Canada and Europe to introduce several attractive post-study visa options. "This is the global race to get the best international students, including students from India. Unfortunately, the current government, which is anti-immigration, anti-universities, and anti-international students is trying to please the far right-wing members of their party. They continue to include international students in the net migration figures," he says.

The UK which has a net population of 67 million, having a migration population of 700,000 is a high figure. But the net migration figure includes illegal immigrants coming to the country on boats. Genuine refugees from Ukraine, Afghanistan and Hong Kong immigrants have a valid reason. "Workers coming with point-based immigration system through a legitimate route are valid, just as seasonal immigrants who come to work. But to include students in the similar category is wrong," adds Bilimoria. "Our competitor countries place students in the temporary migrants category and do not include them in the net migration figures. In May 2023, the government changed the option for master's students' partners and children to apply to live in the country although they paid NHS and visa fees. Only the PhD students are allowed to get their partners on a valid visa," he adds.

The government was hoping to find misuse and abuse of the Graduate Route in the MAC report. This, unfortunately, was not the case, says Bilimoria. International students bring in £42 billion to the UK economy every year. The diversity that international students bring to the campus is immense. Besides the strong soft power of international students, they also boost the university finances. "Undergraduate home fees are currently capped by the Government at £9,250. With the inflation going up and the cost of running the universities going up, international students are the only way to survive this, as they pay a higher tuition fee," adds Bilimoria. Only 15% of international students are enrolled in the UK while the rest is occupied by domestic students, thus without international students, the UK students will not get the fee subsidies, adds Bilimoria.

With the UK economy improving, the threat of recession is slowly receding. International students need not be threatened by the economy as there are plenty of jobs available. There is a shortage of labour in every sector, which can be explored by international students, he adds.

Indian students in Bishkek claim they were never the target

The local students who were attacking the residential complexes belonged to a boxer gang, headed by a social media influencer

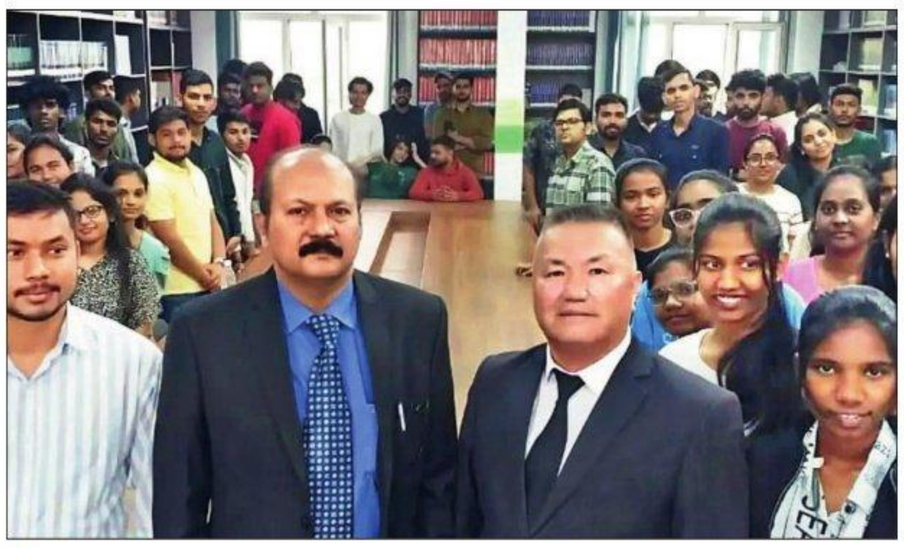
Ayushi.Gupta1
@timesgroup.com

After a week of chaos and violence among the Kyrgyz and other foreign students in the capital Bishkek, the situation has slowly returned to normal. However, on the insistence of some students, the Indian government made arrangements for their return flights. The Indian embassy in Bishkek issued a letter confirming that no Indian student was harmed in the violence and has assured their safety.

Mohammad Khalid of Nuh, Haryana, third semester studying at International Medical University (IMU), Bishkek, says, "The local students who were attacking the housing complexes belonged to a mischievous boxer gang, which is headed by a local social media influencer. According to the information circulating among the students, he has formed a boxer gang that includes local medical students and other local youth. They were allegedly beating up those students who were living in Kyrgyzstan without visas and passports. They mostly attacked students from Pakistan and Bangladesh. However, none of the Indian students were hurt in the violence."

After authorities' intervention, around 4,000 police personnel came to the college to help the students. "On the first day of the violence, local police did not intervene, rather, they were among the onlookers as the locals thrashed the Egyptians, Pakistanis, and Bangladeshi students. At first, they were only hitting Egyptians, and later they attacked Pakistani students, who were mistaken as Egyptian students," adds Khalid.

Many Indian students had no choice but to shift to Kyrgyzstan after the Ukraine-Russia war disrupted their medical education. Pradyuman Rana from Panipat, Haryana, is one such MBBS student who is currently completing his final year at the IMU in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan. He is also preparing to appear for the Foreign Medical Graduates Exam (FMGE).



■(Left) Sushmith V Anand, official from the Indian Embassy in Kyrgyzstan and Maykanaev Bolot Bektashevich, IMU rector, along with Indian students in Bishkek

Currently, the situation is normal, and peace seems to have been restored in Bishkek

Safety measures

"I live in a private apartment outside the college campus, which is 2 km away from the place of the incident. On May 13, when the violence broke out, the dispute started between the locals and the Egyptian students who were smoking at the Ala Too Square. The dispute was verbal at first, after which students got into physical fights. The situation worsened on May 18, when local students attacked the residential complexes of the Egyptians and other foreign students and thrashed them."

The current situation in Bishkek has been brought under control by the local administration and the Kyrgyzstan police force. "Some arrests were made and the police are patrolling the affected areas. However, advisories have been issued to address safety concerns. Meanwhile, all colleges are conducting classes online. I did not leave my room during the first four days of the week and switched off the lights after dark since the situation was terrifying at that time," Pradyuman adds.

The viral videos of foreign students being thrashed in Bishkek have alarmed the parents and Indian authorities. Dr Anil Dhayal, founder of an educational consultancy based in Bishkek, says, "Many viral videos of the attacks have surfaced on social media, scaring the parents of students in Bishkek. However, no Indian student was harmed in the incident. As a safety measure, college authorities allowed all Indian students to stay at the campus hostels. They have also been providing free food."

Sushmith V Anand, second secretary, Consular Section, Embassy of the Republic of India in Kyrgyz Republic, visited the medical colleges to ensure the safety of the students. As per the embassy data, there are around 17,000 Indian students across Kyrgyzstan.

Ensuring stability

Locals feel that the violence could be the result of political instigation. Dr Dhayal says, "There are rumours of the opposition party being involved in the student violence. This might be an attempt to malign the Kyrgyz government internationally, but it is hard to confirm anything yet. However, the police have arrested 25-30 Kyrgyz students and have been patrolling the areas to ensure the safety of international students. Meanwhile, as Pakistani students were attacked, the Embassy of Pakistan arranged for flights to fly their students back home. Around 250-300 Pakistani students have left the country."

Ashok Sajjanhar, former ambassador of India to Kazakhstan, Sweden, and Latvia, says, "Currently, the situation is normal, and peace has been restored in Bishkek. Indian students, however, have been advised to stay indoors and exercise caution. It is incumbent upon Kyrgyzstan to provide security to foreign students to restore their confidence and morale. This is beneficial for Kyrgyzstan, as international students contribute to their local economy," Sajjanhar adds.

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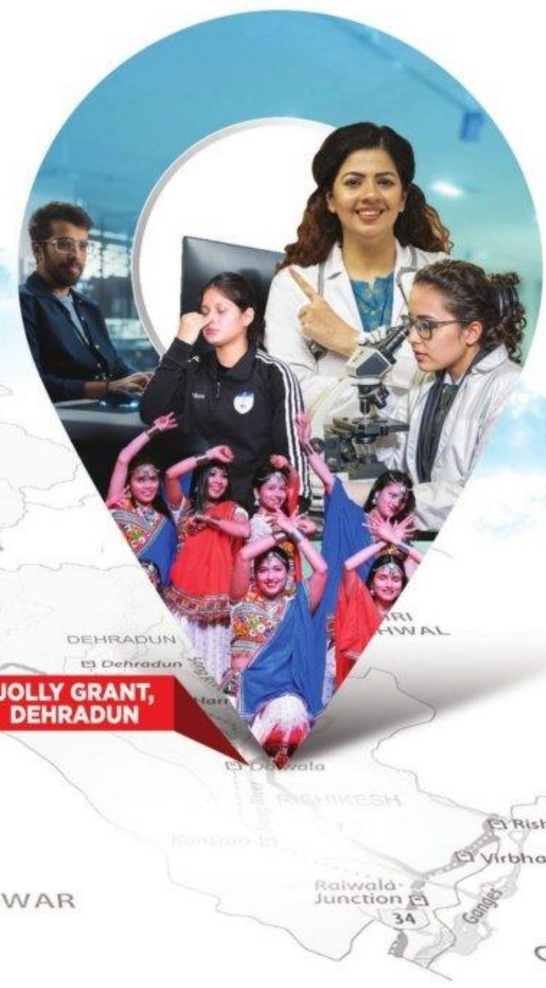

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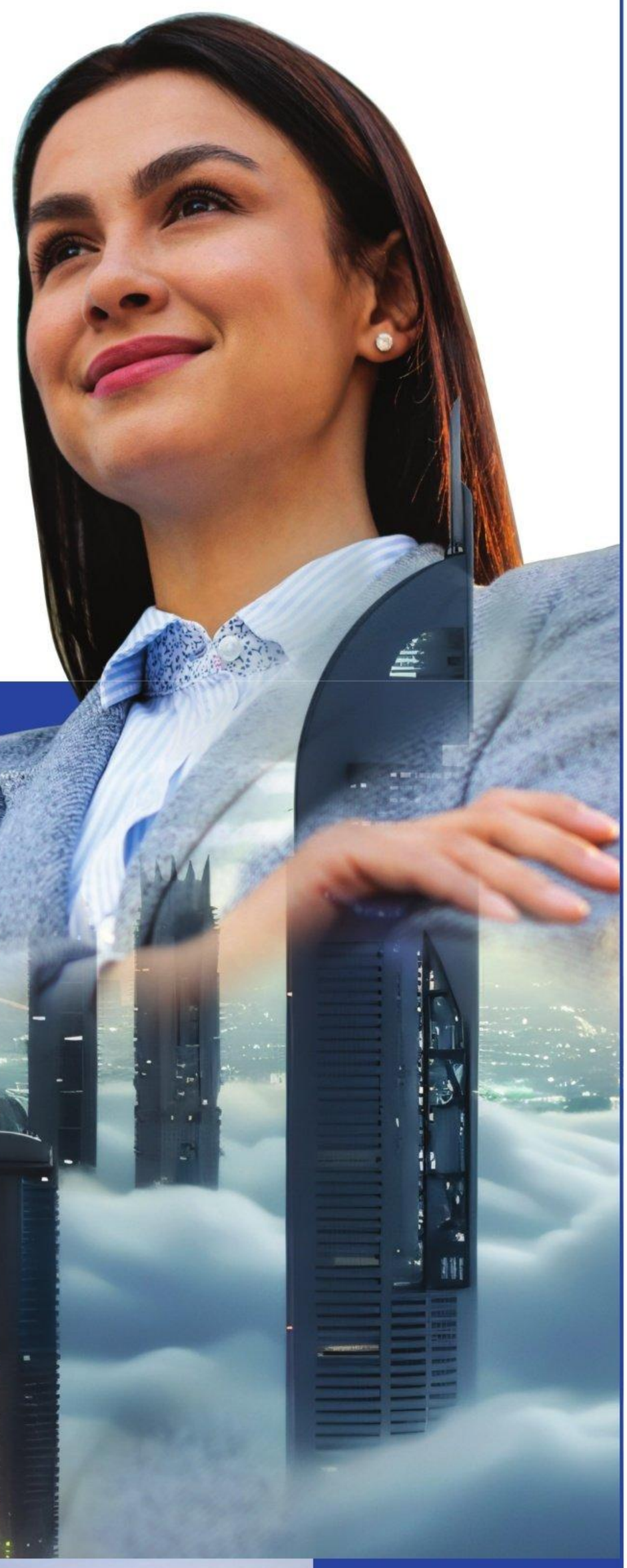

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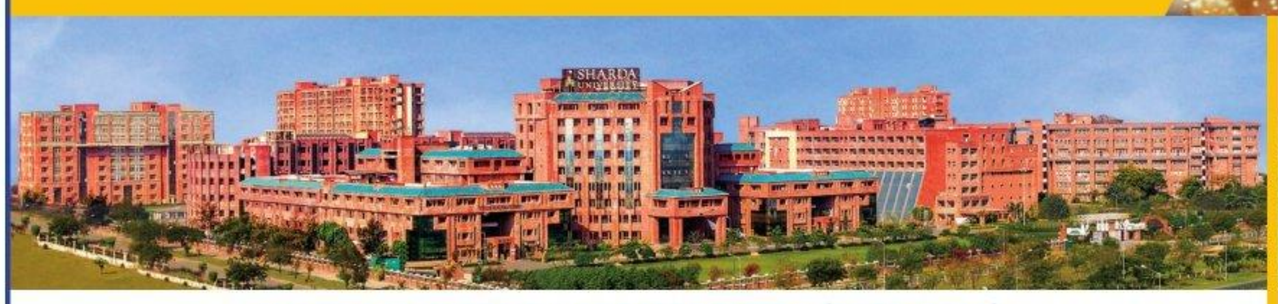

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