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INDIA TODAY

THE NEW GEN BUDGET

WILL THE MODI GOVERNMENT'S INITIATIVES FOR MASSIVE JOB CREATION WORK?

FROM THE

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

The hot-button issue of the recent election, in which the NDA did not do as well as expected, was unemployment. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has taken heed of it and focused Budget 2024 on "job creation". According to a Word Cloud analysis, she mentioned the word 'employment' only three times in last year's budget as opposed to 23 times this year. Taking the bull by its horns, she announced an innovative Five-Fold Path targeting 41 million youth with a Rs 2 lakh crore outlay over five years. The scale of the problem is gigantic—the Economic Survey 2023-24 estimates the current Indian workforce at 565 million. Of these, over 45 per cent are employed in agriculture. They contribute barely 18.2 per cent to the GDP; the bulk comes from services, manufacturing and construction, with nearly 55 per cent of the labour. So, only a decisive shift of labour away from farming to the more productive sectors will tackle disguised/underemployment. The Survey reckons India has to generate close to 8 million jobs annually in the non-farm sectors up to 2030 to absorb all those ready to join the workforce. Here's where the problem goes beyond one of mere scale: against a skyrocketing demand for skilled labour, only one in two graduates of Indian colleges is employable, according to the Survey. The others are "deemed unemployable" as they lack "the skills needed by a modern economy". So, it's not just jobs that have to be created, a youthful workforce has to be prepared simultaneously for a job market defined by rapid technological changes and newer skill sets.

Budget 2024, while rolling out significant measures to stimulate growth, goes beyond the failed paradigm of chasing job creation as a byproduct of lower corporate taxes. Instead, the Modi government has ventured into relatively uncharted territory by providing incentives directly for hiring. In doing so, it seeks to achieve a trinity of objectives. The five-fold employment package focuses on upgrading the skill pool at one level and Employment-Linked Incentives (ELIs) for the private sector at another while nudging the economy towards formalisation by bringing all recruits into the EPFO (Employees' Provident Fund Organisation) orbit.

Three of the five schemes are built around ELIs. In the first, the government will give fresh recruits one month of their wage, up to a maximum of Rs 15,000, in three instalments. This is meant to meet their transport and living costs. With a salary eligibility limit of Rs 1 lakh a month, this is expected to benefit 21 million youth over two years, at a total cost of Rs 23,000 crore to the exchequer. The second scheme seeks to stimulate job creation in the manufacturing sector, with benefits being provided at specified scales both to the first-time recruit and the employer concerning their EPFO contribution in the first four years of employment. The expected pool of beneficiaries—3 million youth and their employers—again gives us a sense of the target for job creation, with a cost to the exchequer of Rs 52,000 crore. The third scheme incentivises employers across sectors to hire "additional" employees within a salary of Rs 1 lakh per month, and not necessarily first-timers. The government will reimburse employers up to Rs 3,000 per month for two years towards their EPFO contribution for each additional employee. The scheme hopes to benefit 5 million recruits and costs Rs 32,000 crore.

Perhaps the most ambitious of the employment package is the fourth scheme, which envisages year-long internships in 500 top companies for 10 million youth across five years—with a Rs 5,000 monthly allowance and a one-time assistance of Rs 6,000. The companies that volunteer are expected to foot much of the bill for training from their CSR (corporate social responsibility) funds. This is a way of shifting the burden to the private sector, since many government skilling schemes have had little impact. The scheme will cost the government Rs 63,000 crore. Along a fifth flank, the Centre has finally moved to course-correct its skilling programme by upgrading 1,000 Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) in hub-and-spoke arrangements over the next five years. The Centre will meet 50 per cent of the costs, entailing an outgo of Rs 30,000 crore, the states will contribute 33.3 per cent, and corporates will come in with CSR funding. The idea is to impart cutting-edge skill training that will benefit over 2 million youth over five years while creating precious human resources for industry. Hopefully, the private sector will cooperate in these schemes and the bureaucracy won't make a bundle of red tape around them, nor the government rely on pressure to create participation.

February 13, 2023

These schemes naturally have a gestation period before they fully yield fruit. So, the Modi government has also spread its bets. It infuses lifeblood into the vast universe of medium, small and micro enterprises (MSMEs), where robust absolute numbers can be generated regarding jobs, with a new credit guarantee scheme and another formal mechanism to ensure uninterrupted credit lines. The Rs 2.2 lakh crore boost to housing under PM Awas Yojana Urban 2.0 is expected to create plenty of new jobs in construction. As a stimulus for start-ups, the angel tax has been abolished, and the ceiling of Mudra loans for small-time entrepreneurs has been doubled to Rs 20 lakh.

On other fronts, Budget 2024 is a document of continuity and fiscal prudence. Commendably, it has stayed the course with Modi's twin focus on infrastructure and welfare while keeping the fiscal deficit within tolerable limits. Income tax rebates, though slender, give hope that they can revive consumer demand and, eventually, employment. Because of the emphasis on jobs for the youth, our cover package is titled 'The New Gen Budget'. However, there are some missing pieces. The plan for disinvestment and asset monetisation has a jarring lack of continuity. It seems to have fallen off the radar, perhaps due to coalition constraints or fear of vigorous attack from the Opposition. In any case, as expected, the government got flak from the Opposition for the special sops given to the BJP's alliance partners from Bihar and Andhra Pradesh. Tourism, an obvious sector to cultivate for both unskilled and skilled jobs, gets only a passing nod, with pilgrimage-based ideas for Bihar.

On the whole, it is a welcome budget as it has no shocks that can upset India's impressive GDP growth path. Furthermore, it has not succumbed to undue populism. Most importantly, it has taken a long-term view of developing our enormous human capital, without which there can be no Viksit Bharat.

(Aroon Purie)

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INSIDE

UNION BUDGET 2024-25

COVER STORY

THE NEW GEN BUDGET

WILL THE MODI GOVERNMENT'S INITIATIVES FOR MASSIVE JOB CREATION WORK?

By **RAJ CHENGAPPA** *with* **M.G. ARUN & KAUSHIK DEKA**

UNION FINANCE MINISTER NIRMALA SITHARAMAN HAS ACQUIRED THE ART OF COINING SMART ACRONYMS for initiatives and schemes from her boss, Prime Minister Narendra Modi. When she presented the first Union budget of Modi 3.0 (her seventh as finance minister), she preferred to be politically correct by mentioning productivity in agriculture as the first on the list of the nation's nine priorities. But on her official X handle, to highlight the main theme of the budget, she rearranged the order of the nine focus areas so that the first letters of the words could spell EMPLOYMENT as in Employment, MSMEs, Productivity in agriculture, Land, Opportunities, Youth, Middle class, Energy, Next-gen reforms and Technology. Appropriately, a photograph of Modi was pasted next to the listing with the tag #BudgetViksit Bharat. Many interpreted the post as a tacit acknowledgement by the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) that the jobs crisis was one of the major reasons why they had failed to secure a full majority on their own in the Lok Sabha election held over April and May. And that there was an urgent need to deal with the problem to stem the loss of political capital.

PTI

"One of the main focuses of the budget is to promote employment and skilling. A testament to that is the prime minister's package of five schemes to facilitate employment, skilling and other opportunities for 4.1 crore youth over a 5–year period with a central outlay of Rs 2 lakh crore"

NIRMALA SITHARAMAN
Union Finance Minister

BIG 5 PACKAGE FOR JOBS

Amid the increasing unemployment rate and job and wage losses, the Union government has come out with a five-pronged strategy to facilitate employment and skilling for India's teeming youth population

Budget 2024 sees the Modi government take the problem head on with Sitharaman announcing the 'Prime Minister's Package' of five major employment-related schemes that had an ambitious Rs 2 lakh crore outlay spread over five years to facilitate jobs and skilling to 41 million youth. It is probably the boldest job creation mission that Modi has launched since his government came to power 10 years ago. The big shift is that instead of just providing production-linked incentives and reducing the cost of capital to generate growth, the Modi government has decided to bet big on subsidising both employment and employability. In an interview to INDIA TODAY, Union finance secretary T.V. Somanathan said, "It is a big, innovative push to ensure that India's growth becomes more employment-intensive. It is huge because it intends to cover more than 40 million youth and we are not talking small change here, we are putting Rs 2 trillion. It's innovative because these schemes have no exact parallels, especially the involvement of the private sector and the linkage of all these subsidies to employment rather than to just investment or production." (*See accompanying interview.*)

TACKLING THE DEMOGRAPHIC BULGE

While evolving these schemes, the biggest challenge, Somanathan says, was the demographic bulge among the youth. India currently has 650 million people in the prime working age group of 18 to 35 years, which is itself nearly twice the total population of the US. This means that if India can encash this demographic dividend, it would accelerate the country's growth and put it firmly on the path to a Viksit Bharat by 2047.

CHANDRADEEP KUMAR

"The internships are meant to give our underprivileged youth exposure to successful businesses for 12 months and open their minds so that they can aspire to do bigger things"

— AJAY SETH
Union Economic Affairs Secretary

DISTRIBUTION OF SPENDING AMONG THE FIVE SCHEMES

Central outlay in ₹ '000 cr. in bold
Expected beneficiaries in millions in ( )

EMPLOYMENT-LINKED INCENTIVES	
1. Scheme A	**23** (21)
2. Scheme B	**52** (3)
3. Scheme C	**32** (5)
4. SKILLING	**30** (2)
5. INTERNSHIP IN TOP COMPANIES	
Phase 1	**19** (3)
Phase 2	**44** (7)

DURATION (IN YEARS)

	ENROLMENT DURATION / EXPENDITURE DURATION
ELI Scheme A (First-timers)	2 / 3
ELI Scheme B (Job creation in manufacturing)	2 / 6
ELI Scheme C (Support to employers)	2 / 6
Skilling (Upgradation of ITIs)	NA / 5
Internship (Phase 1)	2 / 3
Internship (Phase 2)*	3 / 4

*Starting from third year

TARGET	ALLOCATION
41 MILLION YOUNGSTERS	₹2 LAKH CROORE OVER FIVE YEARS

EMPLOYMENT-LINKED INCENTIVES

1 SCHEME A
FIRST-TIMERS

- This scheme will provide one-month wage to all persons newly entering the workforce in all formal sectors
- The direct benefit transfer of one-month salary in 3 instalments to first-time employees, as registered in the EPFO, will be up to ₹15,000
- The eligibility limit will be a salary of ₹1 lakh per month
- The scheme is expected to benefit 21 million youth

2 SCHEME B
JOB CREATION IN MANUFACTURING

- This scheme will incentivise additional employment in the manufacturing sector, linked to the employment of first-time employees
- An incentive will be provided at specified scale directly, both to the employee and the employer with respect to their EPFO contribution in the first 4 years of employment
- The scheme is expected to benefit 3 million youth entering employment and their employers

3 SCHEME C
SUPPORT TO EMPLOYERS

- This employer-focused scheme will cover additional employment in all sectors
- All additional employment within a salary of ₹1 lakh per month will be counted. The government will reimburse to employers up to ₹3,000 per month for 2 years towards their EPFO contribution for each additional employee
- The scheme is expected to incentivise additional employment of 5 million persons

4 SKILLING PROGRAMME

- Skilling in collaboration with state governments and industry
- 2 million youth will be skilled over a 5-year period
- 1,000 Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) will be upgraded under a hub and spoke model with focus on outcome and quality
- Course content and design will be aligned to the skill needs of industry, and new courses will be introduced for emerging needs

5 INTERNSHIP

- Providing internship opportunities in 500 top companies to 10 million youth in the next 5 years
- Applicable to those who are aged between 21 and 24 years and are not employed or engaged in full-time education
- Applicants will also become ineligible if any of their family members has government job or pays income tax
- The interns will gain exposure to real-life business environment and varied professions for 12 months
- An internship allowance of ₹5,000 per month will be given. That is, ₹60,000 annually (of which the government will bear ₹54,000 and the company the remaining ₹6,000)
- The government will also give a one-time additional payout of ₹6,000 for incidentals
- Companies will bear the training cost and their share of the internship allowance cost from their CSR funds. Their participation is voluntary

Graphics by TANMOY CHAKRABORTY

HARDIK CHHABRA

However, if we fail to do so, then the masses of the country's striving poor would get too old before they become rich.

The budget-makers faced another imperative. The Economic Survey of 2023-24 estimates that of the current Indian work force of 565 million, as many as 254 million, or 45 per cent, are employed in agriculture, which contributes only 18.2 per cent to our Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The services, manufacturing and construction sectors, on the other hand, which absorb nearly 55 per cent of the labour, generate about 82 per cent of the GDP. So, there is a dire need to shift labour away from agriculture to more productive sectors. As Manish Sabharwal, vice chairman, Teamlease, a leading human capital firm, puts it, "India's challenge is not unemployment, which is said to be a low 4.9 per cent, but employed poverty—the poor cannot afford to be unemployed. Welfarism doesn't help in employed poverty. We have always viewed employment from the bird's eye view of economists rather than the worm's eye view of the daily life of employees. That has to change."

"The government schemes will speed up economic transformation by enhancing the virtuous cycle on investment, employment and consumption. It will also improve the quality of jobs and incomes"

— SANJIV PURI

CMD, ITC Ltd; CII president

Meanwhile, another time-bomb has been ticking silently. The Survey indicates that India has to generate nearly 8 million additional jobs annually up to 2030 in the non-farming sector to reap the benefits of the demographic dividend and avert strife and unrest among the populace. While the demand for skilled labour has been shooting up, the Survey indicates that over 50 per cent of the graduates passing out of Indian colleges were unemployable because they lacked the skills to meet the current requirements of industry. Sitharaman, in her media interviews, talks of how infrastructure giant L&T has been unable to fill 45,000 vacancies because of the lack of people with suitable skill sets. Noted skill development expert Subroto Bagchi, co-founder of Mindtree, also points to the entrenched 'caste system' that puts Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) graduates at the top of the heap and those that pass out of vocational courses at Industrial Training Institutes (ITI) at the bottom. Coincidentally, he says, "the IITs and the ITIs were started in the 1950s. But while the IITs marched ahead, the ITIs went backwards. The ITIs had a bar code of failure stamped on their foreheads. Employers have developed a mindset that they should pay slum wages to those who come out of ITIs. In Singapore, on the other hand, ITI equivalents earn a starting salary of over Rs 20 lakh per annum. This is untenable."

To work out solutions, Somanathan and his colleagues in the finance ministry talked to all stakeholders, including industry associations. Everyone agreed that the best way India could generate jobs was through higher than average economic growth, and so one of the tenets of Budget 2024 was to ensure macro-economic stability and fiscal prudence to build investor confidence. So, the fiscal deficit target was fixed at 4.9 per cent of the GDP, much lower than the current 5.6 per cent. With private capital expenditure still lagging, the Modi government continued with its massive dose of public funds for infrastructure and public housing. Both these sectors are certain to boost employment.

THE SURROUND SOUND

As part of the effort to boost growth and employment, concessions were made in the budget to the MSME sector where the bulk of the jobs are generated. The finance minister introduced a credit guarantee scheme for MSMEs in the manufacturing sector for facilitating term loans for purchase of machinery and equipment without collateral or third-party guarantee. She also introduced a new mechanism for facilitating continuation of bank credit to MSMEs during their stress period. Under this provision,

"We need to focus on creating high-quality jobs in employment-intensive sectors such as garments, footwear, food processing and tourism"

— NAUSHAD FORBES

Co-chairman, Forbes Marshall

HARDIK CHHABRA

"India's challenge is not unemployment, which is said to be a low 4.9 per cent, but employed poverty—the poor cannot afford to be unemployed"

— MANISH SABHARWAL

Vice-chairman, Teamlease

the details of which are awaited, banks will either offer government-guaranteed loans to MSMEs or the government will directly create a fund from which banks can draw to fund MSMEs. Meanwhile, the limit of Mudra loans (for small-time entrepreneurs) has been enhanced from the current Rs 10 lakh to Rs 20 lakh for entrepreneurs who have a clean repayment record. Budding entrepreneurs will thus find more funds to give wings to their dreams, aiding job creation. The Centre has also abolished the angel tax for all classes of investors, a long-standing demand of the start-up sector. There are other schemes and incentives in the budget to keep economic growth moving at a high pace.

However, even while making these provisions, policymakers remained aware that economic growth in the age of Artificial Intelligence may not result in proportionate and adequate job creation. Hence, the need to enhance the employment intensity of economic growth. The thrust then became to incentivise employers to hire labour rather than opt for costlier automated solutions. Officials reveal that the prime minister was categorical that industry had to be deeply involved in skill training and not over-rely on "*sarkari*" institutions. At the same time, however, he was emphatic that the private sector should be "brought in willingly and voluntarily". "One thing was clear," says economic affairs secretary Ajay Seth. "If skill training must work, it has to be with the active involvement of the states and industry. The issue was how we can make our growth story more inclusive and bring the economy to a place where jobs were not just being created but were also better-paying."

Another constraint was the labour laws and state industrial regulations that need to be streamlined and for

INTERVIEW

"It's a big push for employment intensive growth"

Union finance secretary T.V. Somanathan is one of the key figures responsible for Budget 2024's massive new packages for employment generation and skilling. He speaks candidly to Group Editorial Director Raj Chengappa on how it was conceived and the challenges ahead. Excerpts:

Q. How would you sum up the budget's major thrust on employment and skilling?

Fiscal incentives for employment, historically, have worked in many countries and they must be given a chance. It's the big innovative push to ensure that India's growth becomes more employment-intensive. It's also huge because it hopes to help 40 million of our youth. And we're not talking small change here, we're putting Rs 2 trillion (2 lakh crore) behind it. It's innovative because these schemes have no exact parallels, especially the involvement of the private sector and the linking of all these subsidies to employment rather than to investment or production.

Q. What is the philosophy behind it, how did it emerge?

Given our demographics, especially the bulge in young population, employment will be critical in the next few years. We'll have a huge number of them entering the job market. Now there are two things a government can do about this. Promote growth because a growing economy means more jobs. We have done this through a prudent fiscal policy, enhanced capital investment and various programmes to promote investment. But it's a fact that in modern times growth can happen with less employment due to increasing mechanisation, automation and other technological developments. So the second is to push for employment-linked incentives to create jobs. But economic entities will not employ anyone just because the government is giving a subsidy. But at the margin, their decisions are influenced by fiscal incentives. So if somebody is planning to employ people, the provision of a subsidy over a period of time may encourage them to accelerate that hiring. There are always incremental choices to be made about greater automation and mechanisation versus greater use of labour. That being the case, we have come up with a package of fiscal incentives which will influence company choices in the direction of greater employment.

Q. What about new recruits being enrolled in the EPFO, is it a move to formalise jobs?

No. We needed a mechanism to know that the job creation is genuine. The reason for the EPFO linkage is merely to prevent fraud. The money will go directly to the employee in this first part, which is scheme A. Then there is a scheme B, which is for the manufacturing sector. If the industry employs at least 50 newcomers, then we give them a handsome subsidy which will run for four years. Here, the logic is that a company is taking the trouble to pick up these many unemployed/inexperienced people. They may need to give them training to bring them up to standard. And that is something the government is happy to subsidise.

"The PM was keen that we involve the private sector in promoting employment, but without any compulsions"

Q. What is behind the internship scheme at top corporates?

The internship scheme is based on the apprenticeship model schemes that we run through the Apprenticeship Act but is totally voluntary. The intention here is to be a bridge for a disadvantaged class of people who are qualified but don't have access or cannot even think of a career in our big private sector companies. We are looking at the Top 500 companies, those mandated under the Companies Act to spend 2 per cent of their profits on CSR (corporate social responsibility) programmes. We'll send them a set of people who are among the less employable, that the industry would not select on its own. And that is intentional. These interns

RAJWANT RAWAT

are people who need exposure. We will pay 90 per cent of their stipend for 12 months. The company, of course, has to bear the cost of skilling this person in some activity which it is involved in. We are targeting about 3 million internships in the first phase and about 7 million in the second phase.

Q. Has the new CSR scheme been tried anywhere before?

This is an Indian experiment. But it draws from apprenticeship, which is there in India and in many developed countries. But CSR, through statute, is almost uniquely Indian. The CSR scheme is also to give people on-the-job exposure with good employers. One other benefit is that we will be dealing with India's top companies where the chances of fraud or, you know, pretence in training, will be less for they have reputations to protect. If they agree to do something, they will probably do it well.

Q. Where did this policy direction come from?

The PM has been talking about this for quite some time. One of our tasks was to do something meaningful about skilling so that we could promote employment by involving the private sector both willingly and voluntarily—there was to be no compulsion.

Q. Is this the great leap forward then for job creation?

As an economist, I'd say this is the best way forward for India in what the government can do to help the private sector. We don't want to create non-jobs that exist only because of the state. We are seeking real jobs, where the private sector will choose and employ a person because they want to. And what are we doing? We are helping. ■

which, Somanathan acknowledges, there are "no quick or easy fixes". Thus there was a need to have schemes that could cut through the regulatory cholesterol. While the team knew that businesses would not employ people just because they were getting subsidies, there were enough examples to show that fiscal incentives do influence companies' choices to employ more people. So, instead of a single employment-generation scheme, the Modi government decided to go in for a slew of them. Many saw that as a big signal by itself. "While we have certainly not been creating enough good-quality jobs, the most useful thing that the budget does is to say that jobs are an area that needs priority attention. That is a good message to convey," says Naushad Forbes, co-chairman, Forbes Marshall, a process industry consultancy.

THE INNOVATIVE SCHEMES

Three of the new schemes are based on the principle of Employment-linked Incentives or ELIs. The first will provide a one-month salary of up to Rs 15,000 in three instalments for all new entrants to the workforce—a scheme that would benefit over 21 million youth, cost Rs 23,000 crore and run for three years. The idea, say officials, is to pay for the first-timers' initial costs, including transport to their places of work. But to prevent fraudulent employees from picking up the subsidy, the scheme mandates that the person be registered with the Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO). This also ensures a greater formalisation of the economy. The second is to encourage bulk hirings in the manufacturing sector, which is performing below par in its overall contribution to the GDP. The scheme offers a handsome subsidy of 24 per cent of a new worker's salary, shared equally between employer and employee. It will be given to only those who employ 50 newcomers or 25 per cent more than their current base. What it does is to take care of the EPFO contribution of 12 per cent of the employer and the employee, enabling the latter to get more cash in hand. The scheme will benefit 3 million youth, cost Rs 52,000 crore and will be available for two years. The third scheme is subsidy support for any employer who hires at least two employees more than the previous year, and the government will reimburse the employer's EPFO contribution of up to Rs 3,000 a month. This is expected to benefit 5 million people and cost Rs 32,000 crore. The idea behind this scheme is that if somebody is relocating to India—typically what Sabharwal calls the "Factory Refugees of China"—they are likely to employ over 1,000 employees, making it a substantial incentive. Alongside, changes in the personal taxation structure should also come as an incentive to first-timers, since the threshold for the lowest tax slab of 5 per cent has been raised from Rs 5 lakh per annum to Rs 7 lakh in the current budget.

The other two big schemes focus on skilling, the most audacious being the Rs 63,000 crore scheme that offers internship opportunities to 10 million youth in the top 500 companies

MORE MEASURES TO BOOST JOBS

The Union budget has announced several incentives for MSMEs and start-ups, which are expected to push job creation

The Rs 2.2 lakh crore central boost to the housing sector over the next five years under the PM Awas Yojana Urban 2.0 will benefit MSMEs in a big way as 60 per cent of the product categories in housing come from the small scale segment

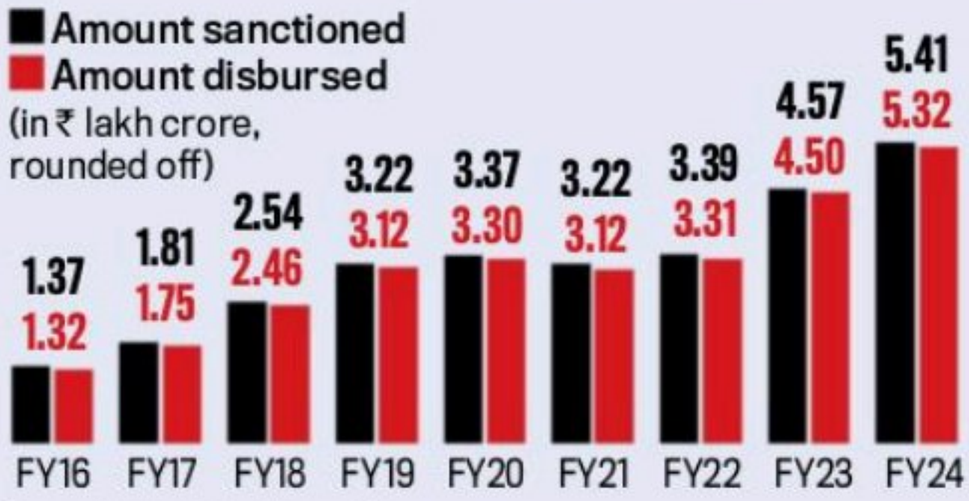
A credit guarantee scheme has been proposed for MSMEs in the manufacturing sector for facilitating term loans to purchase machinery and equipment without collateral or third-party guarantee. So, MSMEs can now go in for fresh and faster loans

There's also a new mechanism for facilitating continuation of bank credit to MSMEs during their stress period. Under this, the details of which are awaited, banks will either offer government-guaranteed loans to MSMEs or the government will directly create a fund from where banks can draw to fund MSMEs

The Centre has also abolished angel tax for all classes of investors. This should enhance funding in a sector that has gone through a tumultuous phase after the Covid-19 pandemic

Limit of Mudra loans (to help small-time entrepreneurs under the Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana) enhanced from the current Rs 10 lakh to Rs 20 lakh for those with a clean repayment record. Budding entrepreneurs will thus find more funds to give wings to their dreams, aiding in job creation

MUDRA LOANS: A REPORT CARD



Source: www.mudra.org.in

CHANDRADEEP KUMAR

over a period of five years. Youth aged 21 to 24, who are neither employed nor engaged in full-time education, will be eligible to apply. The scheme includes a monthly internship allowance of Rs 5,000 and a one-time assistance of Rs 6,000. While company participation in the scheme is voluntary, they are expected to cover the training costs and 10 per cent of the internship expenses from their CSR (corporate social responsibility) funds. This initiative is part of a broader effort to foster a culture of skilling and apprenticeships in the country. Says Seth, "It is to give our underprivileged youth exposure to successful businesses for 12 months and open their minds so that they can aspire to do bigger things." Somanathan clarifies, "We felt it was not proper to burden industry with a compulsory apprenticeship system that might affect its competitiveness. The difference in the scheme is that there is no statutory compulsions or provisions governing the scheme or legal requirements or compliances. It's totally voluntary." Meanwhile, the Opposition criticised the ELI schemes, with Congress leader Jairam Ramesh claiming on X that they were "Cut, Copy and Paste in Haste" from the party's Nyay Patra poll manifesto and "botches up the policy". The government brushed the charges aside.

FIX THE PLUMBING

There are mixed assessments of how the corporate internship programme will pan out. Bagchi is sceptical of its success and says, "Among corporates, there are leaders and laggards when it comes to skilling. Barring a few, most are laggards who have no interest in human development at the

POINT, COUNTERPOINT
Far left, PM Modi outside Parliament, July 22; INDIA bloc leaders protesting against the budget, July 24

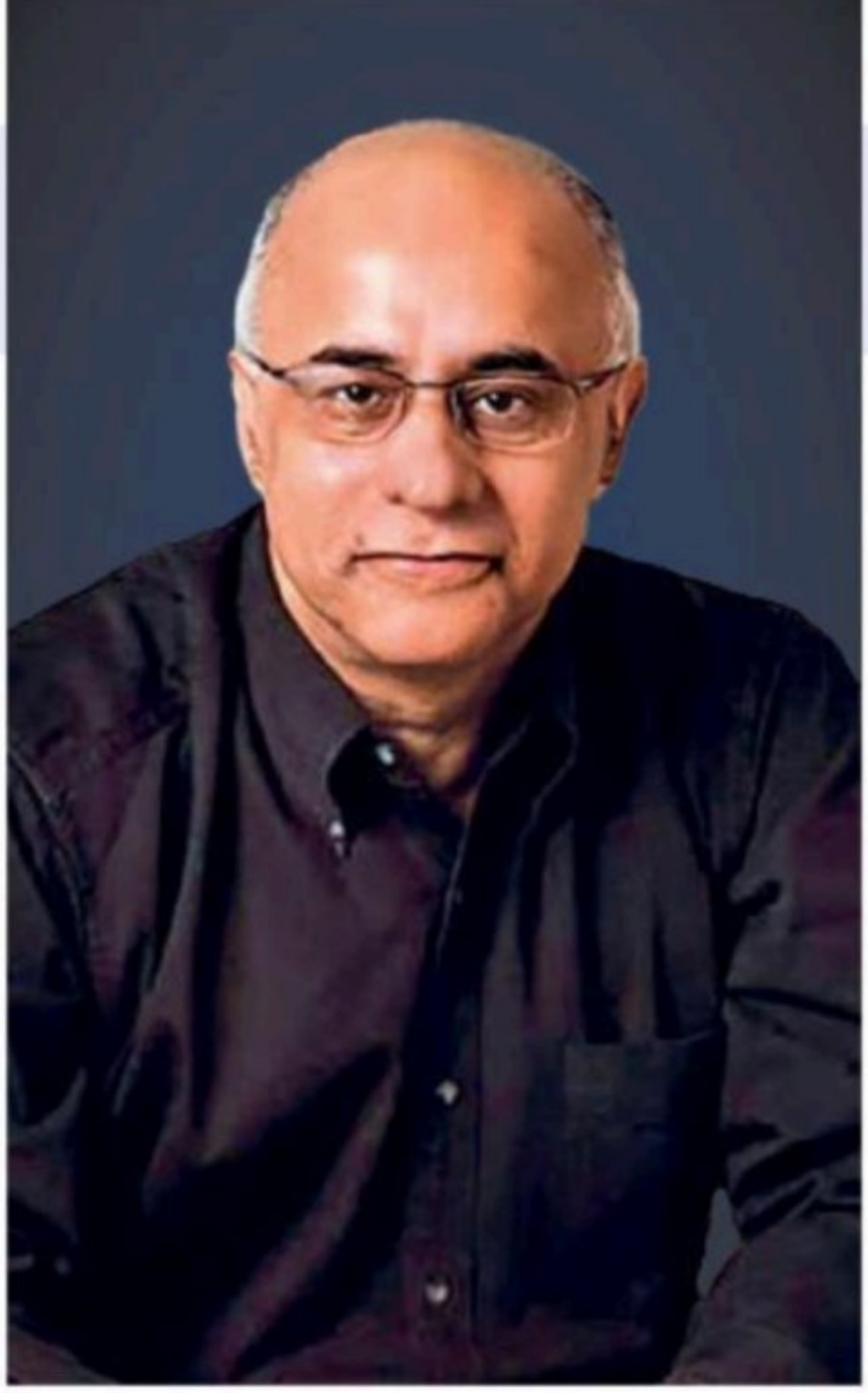
PTI

Congress leader Jairam Ramesh alleged that the budget's new ELI schemes were a "Cut, Copy, Paste" job from the party's poll manifesto which "botches up the policy". The Centre brushed it aside

bottom of the pyramid. They ensure that such employees are not in their direct payroll but give such jobs to a sub-contractor's subcontractor's subcontractor—three layers down. That attitude must change if it has to be a success." Sabharwal is more optimistic and believes in the long run the programme will be embraced. His reason: "This policy has good odds of creating a virtuous cycle in financing and qualification linkages that create scale. Employers who try interns will soon realise that these programmes pay for themselves with faster hiring times, lower attrition and higher productivity." But he too cautions: "The plumbing of the scheme obviously needs to work. Making sure that the employers are not harassed by it, making sure the kids are chosen fairly. You can monitor all this by getting their digital footprint and digital exhaust through the Digital Public Infrastructure. It does have a lot of moving parts, but it is worth a try."

The other major initiative that has captured public interest is the scheme to upgrade the 1,000 ITIs using a hub and spoke model, aligning their course content with industry needs to address the skill gap. The plan involves developing 200 hubs and 800 spoke ITIs, with a total investment of Rs 60,000 crore over five years. The central government will contribute Rs 30,000 crore, state governments Rs 20,000 crore and the industry (including CSR funds) Rs 10,000 crore. Both these schemes are a tacit admission by the Centre that its earlier efforts on skill development have not yielded much success and the baton is now being passed to the private sector to boost the upskilling drive. Seth admits, "Attempts by the government of India and state governments have not been that successful, so the collaboration is necessary."

Also on the government's agenda is to improve the accessibility to higher education, particularly for socially and economically marginalised sections. To fulfil this, the government has undertaken to provide financial assistance with loans of up to Rs 10 lakh for higher education at domestic institutions. This support will be given directly to 100,000 students annually through e-vouchers, along with an interest subsidy of 3 per cent on the loan amount. In addition, the subsidy plan for scholarships has been revised, doubling the subsidies for education loans granted to students from minority and Scheduled Caste communities. Meanwhile, the Model Skill Loan Scheme to enable students to overcome financial barriers to advanced skill courses has been revised to provide guaranteed loans of up to Rs 7.5 lakh, benefiting approximately 25,000 people annually.



WILL THE SCHEMES WORK?

How do stakeholders view all these schemes? Sanjiv Puri, ITC chairman and president of the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), emphasises what he calls the 4 Es—Employment, Employability, Empowerment and Entrepreneurship—as the outcomes of the package of proposals. "In the larger picture," he says, "it will speed up economic transformation by enhancing the virtuous cycle of investment, employment and consumption. It will also improve the quality of jobs and incomes." Puri also advocates building a universal digital library of skills along with forecasts of demands in the economy that will help all participants in the system align better. "Ultimately," he reasons, "it's an ecosystem that has to work together to deliver. If you look at it in isolation, it could raise more questions. But if it is done in an integrated and holistic fashion, there are pathways to good value. It would lead to better retention of employees, which means better trained workers and a better and more productive workforce."

Bagchi believes that the government has by and large got the narrative right, but he adds, "What we require is a strong ground-level push, because skill programmes are a hard thing. It is not a push button, but a long game. Industrial training rejuvenation takes three years—start now and the government will be in time to reap the benefits for the next general election!" He argues that what India needs is "nano unicorns", or skilled individuals who create five jobs in small towns, which is how millions of jobs can be created across India. "Neither Fortune 500 companies nor the government can create those kinds of numbers in terms of jobs," he says. For him, public sector units and defence forces are the best trainers in skill development. He even wants the defence ministry to set up a national skill development corporation and run it. Most importantly, he believes the number of women in the workforce must be boosted on priority. "It is a disgrace that the percentage of women in the organised sector in India has gone down from 25 per cent to 20 per cent in the past decade. We need more safe cities, safe jobs and workers' housing for women. In subsequent budgets, I would like to see more emphasis on women workers."

Naushad Forbes would like the government to focus more on the demand side of things. "We need to focus on high-quality jobs in employment-intensive sectors such as garments, footwear, food processing and tourism," he says. He cites the example of the electronics assembly arena—vendors of iPhones, for instance, which can be emulated in other sectors. Apple has reportedly assembled $14 billion (Rs 11,718 crore) worth of iPhones in India during FY24. This comprises 14 per cent of its global iPhone production, which means that one in seven of its products are now made in India. In the process, it has generated 150,000 direct jobs through supplier networks and 300,000 indirect jobs.

"What India needs are nano unicorns or skilled individuals who can create five jobs in small towns, which is how millions of jobs can be created across India"

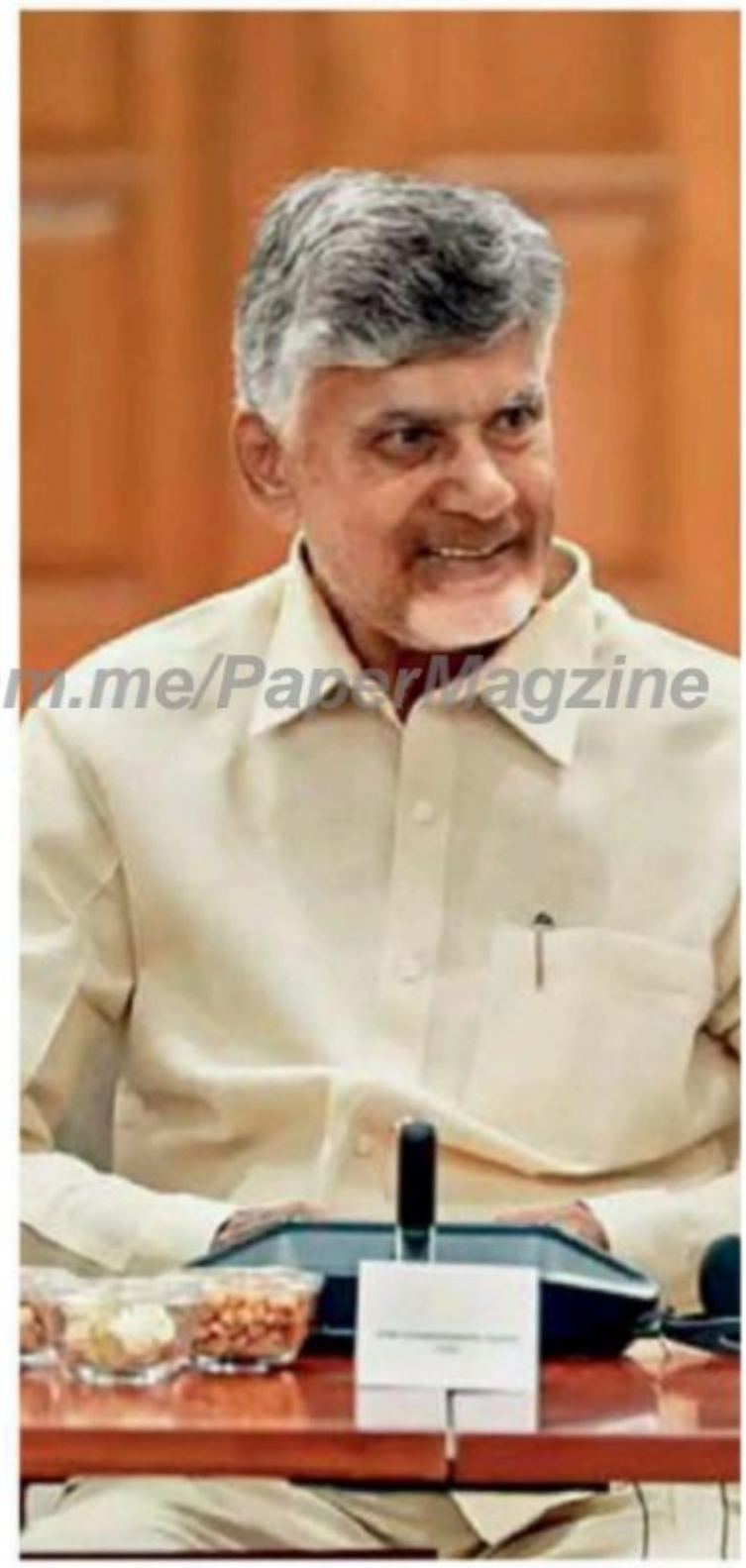
SUBROTO BAGCHI
Co-founder, Mindtree

Sabharwal believes a lot more can be done. He cites the example of Germany, which has 2.7 per cent of its labour force in apprenticeships. By that standard, India should have close to 15 million interns and apprentices instead of the less than half a million that we have currently. That's the size of the challenge. "The boldness of the budget lies in risk-taking to blunt two challenges," says Sabharwal. "The first challenge of hiring freshers is addressed by reducing their cost to employers. The risk of ghost employees is covered by making these subsidies reimbursable, linking provident fund accounts and requiring a year of employment. The second challenge in skilling freshers is addressed by an internship programme that tackles the market failure in financing skill development—employers cannot manufacture their own employees." But more importantly, he adds, "this budget recognises that the only renewable energy for mass prosperity is jobs and skills for the young. That is a great start." ■

SPECIAL PLATTER FOR PARTNERS

They may not have got special category status, but BJP allies get enough of a budget bonanza for the Opposition to scream preferential treatment

BY **AMARNATH K. MENON AND AMITABH SRIVASTAVA**



THE 'N' FACTORS

Andhra Pradesh CM N. Chandrababu Naidu with his Bihar counterpart Nitish Kumar at an NDA meet in New Delhi, Jun. 5

CALL IT A RETURN GIFT OR APPEASEMENT POLITICS, Union finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman's budget has been kind—in cash—on Andhra Pradesh and Bihar, showering substantial allocations on the two states led by key allies of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). While chief ministers N. Chandrababu Naidu and Nitish Kumar have welcomed the windfall, Opposition-ruled states have decried it as unfair, calling it a clear quid pro quo for their support to the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA).

Neither Naidu and Nitish, both of whom returned to the NDA fold ahead of the recent Lok Sabha election, have been coy about demanding preferential treatment for their states—for instance, repeatedly pressing for Special Category Status to get central grants on priority. Their strong showing in the election—the Naidu-led Telugu Desam Party (TDP) won 16 seats while Nitish's Janata Dal (United) pocketed 12—has, in fact, handed them even more bargaining chips.

Naidu, who also stormed to power in Andhra Pradesh, had been demanding central funds to revive his ambitious Amaravati capital city project. It was in his previous term as CM (2014-19)—soon after the state was bifurcated and common capital Hyderabad geographically subsumed into Telangana—that Naidu had envisioned Amaravati as a greenfield capital city of Andhra Pradesh. But the project fell into neglect after Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy came to power in 2019.

While presenting the Union Budget, Sitharaman "recognised" the state's need for a capital and said, "We will facilitate special financial support through multilateral development agencies," and promised Rs 15,000 crore in the current financial year, "with additional amounts" in future. Naidu is confident the flow of funds will spur economic activity, which, in turn, would also help Andhra earn much-needed tax revenue. That's quite critical for a state with public debt at 33.32 per cent of its Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP). "Whatever form the funds come in, they will be very useful for the state...and will help revive the construction of the capital city," Naidu told mediapersons in a post-budget interaction.

₹1.24 LAKH CRORE | **The estimated budgetary allocation to Andha Pradesh and Bihar**

For his second biggest priority, which is the timely completion of the Polavaram power-cum-irrigation project, the Union government has earmarked Rs 10,000 crore. Ground assessments suggest that the project will need at least another Rs 12,175 crore over the next four years if it is to be completed in Naidu's current tenure. Other promises to meet provisions under the Andhra Pradesh Reorganisation Act, 2014—grants to develop the backward regions of Rayalaseema, north coastal Andhra and south coastal Prakasam, for instance—also found space in Sitharaman's budget speech, though budgetary allocations were not explicitly mentioned. Naidu had during his meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi on July 4 sought a recovery package of Rs 1 lakh crore to tide over the "acute scarcity of resources". He had also urged the PM to consider an additional allocation under the Scheme for Special Assistance to States for Capital Investment, targeting essential sectors such as roads, bridges and irrigation.

According to financial analysts, the computation under various heads suggests that the state is poised to get about Rs 65,000 crore in all, including Rs 12,000 crore under PM Awas Yojana and Rs 4,000 crore as grants to uplift backward regions. Other estimated allocations include Rs 3,500 crore for promoting renewable energy projects, Rs 2,500 crore for establishing new medical colleges and other educational institutions and Rs 2,000 crore under the Jal Jeevan Mission.

In contrast, with the state election drawing near in Bihar, there is greater clarity on the central funds being offered to it—Rs 58,900 crore. These include Rs 26,000 crore for road infrastructure projects,

ANI

THE OFFERINGS

How the budgetary allocations stack up for the two NDA partners

ANDHRA PRADESH

TOTAL
Rs 65,000 crore*

KEY COMPONENTS

Amaravati capital development
Rs 15,000 crore

Polavaram irrigation project
Rs 10,000 crore

PM Awas Yojana
Rs 12,000 crore*

*estimated

BIHAR

TOTAL
Rs 58,900 crore

KEY COMPONENTS

Road infrastructure
Rs 26,000 crore

Pirpainti thermal power plant
Rs 21,400 crore

Flood control measures
Rs 11,500 crore

including the Patna-Purnia Expressway and the Buxar-Bhagalpur Expressway. Another Rs 21,400 crore have been assigned to the upcoming 2,400 MW thermal power plant at Pirpainti in Bhagalpur district and Rs 11,500 crore for flood control measures. Sitharaman also announced corridor projects for the Vishnupad temple at Gaya and the Mahabodhi temple at Bodh Gaya, "modelled on the successful Kashi Vishwanath Temple Corridor", besides "efforts to revamp the historic Nalanda University". The idea is to transform them into "world-class pilgrim and tourist destinations".

Writing on the social media platform X, Nitish lauded the announcements: "The budget presented by the Central government is positive. Special attention has been paid to the needs of Bihar. Emphasis has been placed on the human resource development and infrastructural development...." He also expressed hope that the Union government will continue to support the state's development in the same manner to meet its other requirements.

But Nitish will still have to endure the Opposition's jibe that he has failed to secure Special Category Status for Bihar—his pet demand since 2010—or at least a matching allocation. With a per capita GDP of around Rs 54,000, the state he helms is one of India's poorest. The caste-based survey of 2023 had delivered, inter alia, the unsurprising revelation that 34.13 per cent of the state's population survives on less than Rs 6,000 per month. So even if the Centre itself doesn't have the fiscal latitude for it at present, Nitish's tie-up with the BJP had always thrown up speculation around special status being part of the bargain.

Rashtriya Janata Dal leader Tejaswi Yadav, who was Nitish's deputy in Bihar's previous political arrangement, was therefore quick to pounce on its absence in the budget—and called it a "let-down". "To stop migration, remove the backwardness of the state, and ensure a better future for our youth through industrial growth," he wrote on X, "we will not step back even an inch from our demand for Special Category Status." "Bihar needs Rs 2.5 lakh crore to aid its 9.4 million poor families," adds another senior leader of his party. "The [Nitish] government, with Tejaswi as deputy CM, had pledged Rs 1.2 lakh for the homeless and increased financial assistance under the Sustainable Livelihood Scheme. What the Centre has promised are merely budgetary allocations, but what about the poor?"

If it's any consolation for Nitish, despite his long-standing advocacy for it, the narrative of special status as a panacea for all economic ills has failed to resonate as an emotive electoral issue in a state deeply divided by caste identities. So, emphasising the significant financial commitments made to Bihar, coupled with the prospect of similar future central allocations, could very well be sufficient to boost his political capital.

The largesse to Bihar and Andhra Pradesh in the Union budget has underscored the often transactional nature of coalition politics in the world's largest democracy, intensifying the ongoing debate on equitable resource distribution within India's federal structure. A peeved Telangana chief minister, A. Revanth Reddy, pointed out that there was no mention of his state in Sitharaman's speech even though the 2014 reorganisation act relates to them as much as to Andhra Pradesh. "Narendra Modi has bartered projects to Andhra Pradesh and Bihar for the continuation of Naidu's and Nitish's support to his government," said Revanth, who is now planning to convene a meeting of chief ministers of all Opposition-ruled southern states. He and his counterparts—Karnataka's Siddaramaiah, Tamil Nadu's M.K. Stalin and Kerala's Pinarayi Vijayan—also decided to boycott the NITI Aayog meeting to be chaired by Modi on July 27. However, this could prove to be self-defeating, as at a time when the Opposition has finally found a united voice, it could have used the occasion to present a strong case for a rational review of the flow of funds from New Delhi. The boycott leaves them open to the charge of being churlish. ■

"The budget has once again let down the people of Bihar. A comprehensive revival plan was essential...for which a special package along with Special Category Status is urgently needed"

— TEJASWI YADAV
Leader of Opposition, Bihar

"Narendra Modi has bartered projects to Andhra Pradesh and Bihar for the continuation of Naidu's and Nitish's support.... If this continues, we are ready to launch another movement"

— A. REVANTH REDDY
Chief Minister, Telangana

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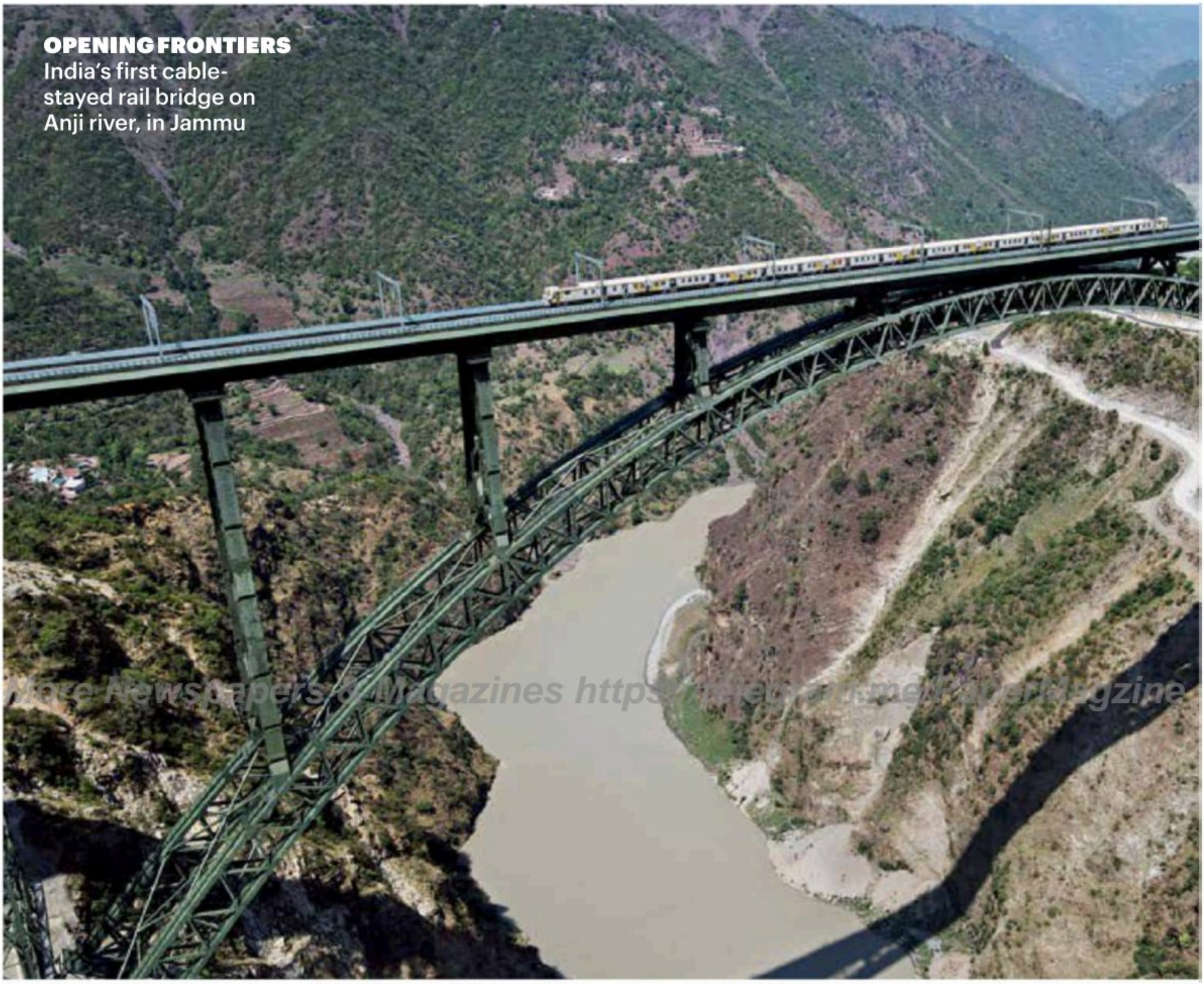


OPENING FRONTIERS
India's first cable-stayed rail bridge on Anji river, in Jammu

A SUSTAINED THRUST

Though the Union Budget does not explode a big-ticket bomb in infrastructure this year, each of its big sectors—railways, highways, housing, industry, urban planning—gets an adequate push

BY AVISHEK G. DASTIDAR

₹11.11 LAKH CRORE | **Allocation of capital expenditure in infrastructure—an 11% increase from the 2023-24 provision of Rs 10 lakh crore**

INDIAN RAILWAYS

HIGHLIGHTS

- Railways gets Rs 2.65 lakh crore for new infrastructure—a 10.4 per cent hike from Rs 2.40 lakh crore in 2023-24
- Safety measures to get boost; three economic rail corridors identified to increase revenue
- Highways gets Rs 2.78 lakh crore; ministry aims to build 10,422 km of national highways
- Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana to connect 25,000 villages; 30 million houses to be built under PM Awas Yojana
- Industrial clusters at strategic nodes to spur growth in eastern India. Port infrastructure, Sagarmala and inland waterways to get funds too

IN

PREVIOUS TERMS, THE NARENDRA MODI GOVERNMENT FOCUSED on building infrastructure to improve connectivity, reduce logistics costs and enhance India's business environment. This thrust continues, though without major new announcements, in this year's budget. Make no mistake. At Rs 11.11 lakh crore, the estimated capital expenditure is still some 3.4 per cent of the GDP. But it's a modest 11 per cent increase from last budget's Rs 10 lakh crore. Then, finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman had steeply increased the capital investment outlay by 33 per cent to Rs 10 lakh crore—3.3 per cent of the GDP. That was almost three times the 2019-20 figures. Indeed, after 10 years of keeping infrastructure at the centre of its spending plans—with provisions for new highways, rail projects and airports—the Centre has almost downplayed it. "Why fix something that's not broken?" explains Bibek Debroy, chairman of the Prime Minister's Economic Advisory Council. "Sectors like highways and railways are success stories. And they have hugely expanded their capacity to absorb capital spend over the years."

In her budget speech, Sitharaman, too, resolved "to maintain strong fiscal support for infrastructure". To give a fillip to states in building infrastructure, the Centre has kept a provision of Rs 1.5 lakh crore for long-term interest-free loans. Additionally, private investment in infrastructure will be promoted through viability gap funding and supportive policies.

As expected, railways and highways will continue to claim a bulk of the capital spent on infrastructure—around 50 per cent. Rail infrastructure will get a capital expenditure of Rs 2.65 lakh crore, which is 10.4 per cent higher than the previous year's Rs 2.40 lakh crore. The ministry expects to add Rs 10,000 crore from external sources and around Rs 3,000 crore from its revenues. Hit by a spate of accidents over the past one year, Indian Railways is under pressure to increase safety measures. The budget underlines this as a priority and has earmarked Rs 1.08 lakh crore for it. "A significant fund is earmarked for safety in Railways. In the third term of this government, Railways has continued to get a boost," says Ashwini Vaishnaw, the minister in charge. The focus on electrification and the rollout of advanced signalling systems too will be kept up.

The budget figures also reveal the financial challenge the national transporter faces, with its pension expen-

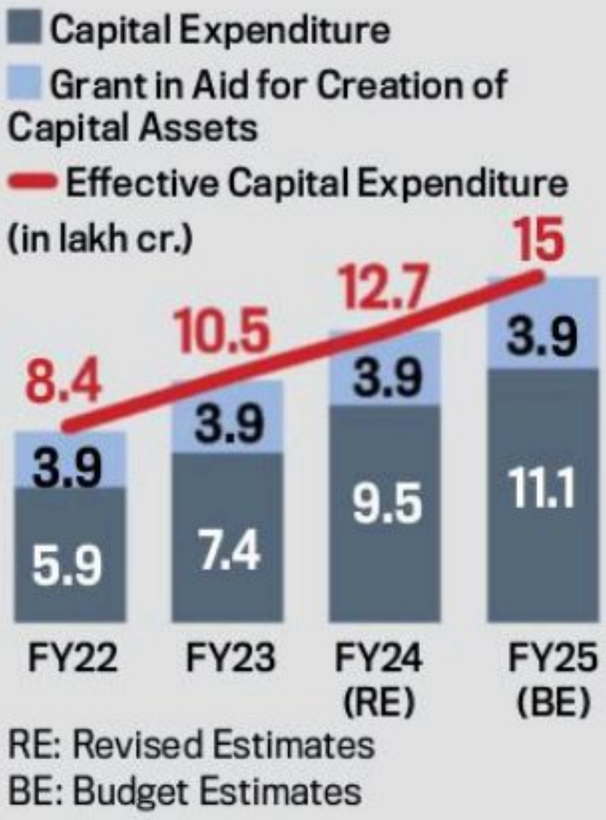
"Sectors like highways and railways are success stories in the infrastructure space. They have hugely expanded their capacity to absorb capital spend over the years"

— **BIBEK DEBROY,** *Chairman, Prime Minister's Economic Advisory Council*

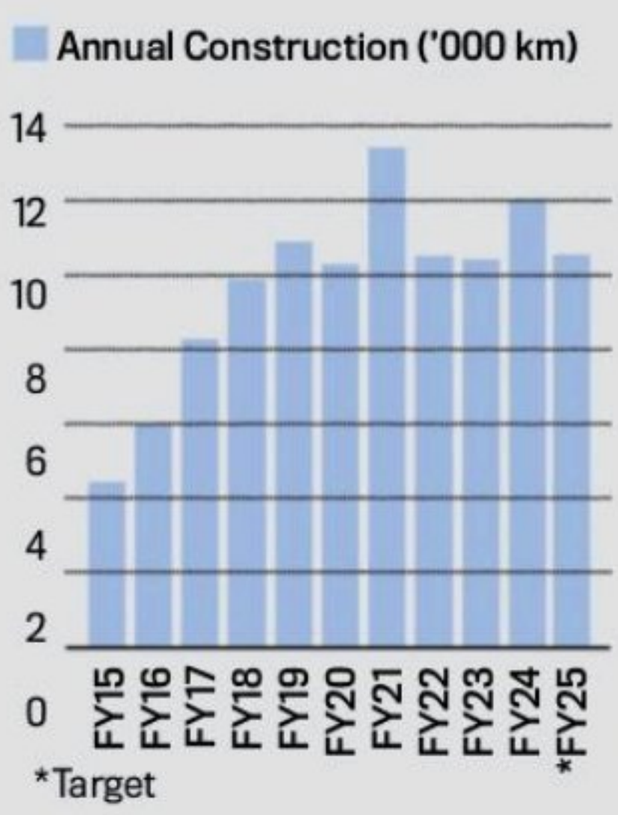
A SOLID TRACK RECORD

Overall capex in infrastructure has seen a consistent rise. Highway construction has shown fluctuations in recent years. Railways has been well served by successive budgets

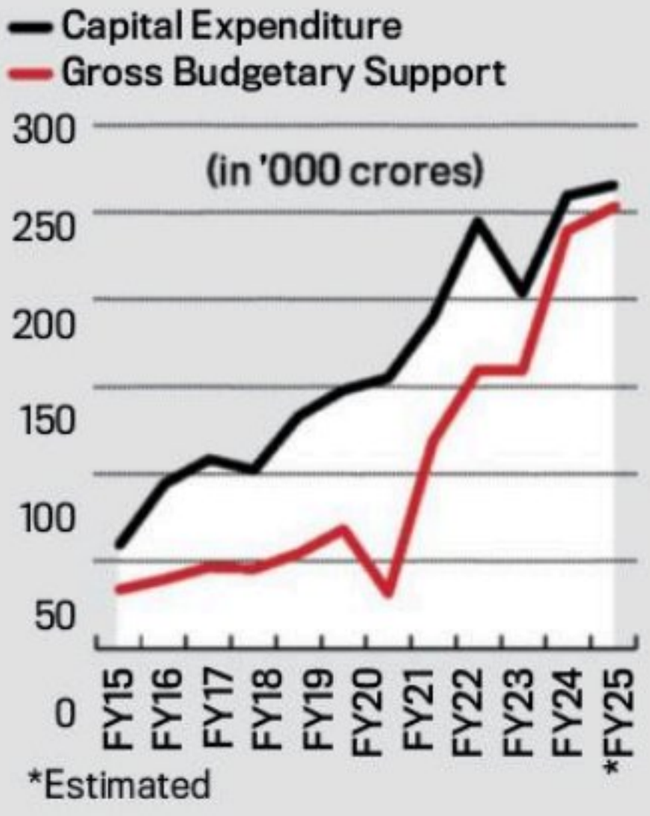
TRENDS IN CAPEX



NATIONAL HIGHWAYS



INDIAN RAILWAYS



diture ballooning to Rs 65,000 crore. "It's inevitable, given the size of Indian Railways," says Dakshita Das, a retired additional member (finance), Railway Board. In '23-24, Indian Railways earned Rs 2.57 lakh crore from its operations but around 24 per cent goes towards pension. Its operating ratio (money spent to earn every 100 rupees; the lower the better) was an abysmal 98.65 per cent, a rise from 98.1 per cent in 2022-23. For this fiscal, it has projected an optimistic figure of 98.22 per cent. "Therefore, the need of the hour is to boost revenues by maybe an annual Re. 1 fare increase to meet this obligation," says Das.

To increase its revenue, the Railways will be creating new assets and renewing old ones. It has identified three economic railway corridors—energy, mineral and cement corridors (192 projects); port connectivity corridors (42 projects) and high traffic density corridors (200 projects) under the PM Gati Shakti Mission for enabling multi-modal connectivity. Capacity enhancement, decongestion of high density networks, reduction in logistics cost are important goals too.

The highways sector has got an allocation of Rs 2.78 lakh crore, which is Rs 2,000 crore lower than last year's revised estimates. Also, Rs 6,000 crore will come from the Central Road and Infrastructure Fund—the cess users pay on petrol and diesel. In 2024-25, the Union road transport and highways ministry plans to construct 10,422 km of national highways, including key projects like the Delhi-Mumbai Expressway. Some 12,349 km of national highways were constructed in the last fiscal. With the NHAI's Rs 3.4 lakh crore debt stopping further borrowing, direct budgetary allocation is now India's main funding method for highways. Additionally, Rs 2,377.49 crore has been allocated to enhance port infrastructure and support Sagarmala and inland waterways initiatives.

For investments in rural connectivity and flood management, the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY) will see all-weather connectivity to 25,000 villages. Funds are also allocated for three crore additional houses under the PM Awas Yojana. "There is a limit to how much the Centre can spend on infrastructure. The government has indicated that around 3.4 per cent of the GDP is a good figure going forward. Infrastructure creation is now needed in cities, and not just in Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru," says Neelkanth Mishra, chief economist, Axis Bank.

Additional funds aim to develop industrial clusters: the Kopparthy (Visakhapatnam-Chennai), Orvakal (Hyderabad-Bengaluru) and Gaya (Amritsar-Kolkata) corridors. This initiative aims to spur industrial growth in eastern India. Fourteen large cities with a population of above 30 lakh will have transit-oriented development plans, the budget says, aiming for an urban planning strategy that promotes high-density, mixed-use development within walking distance of public transit facilities. "It's a welcome gesture...the ministry of urban affairs issued a detailed advisory last year. Real action has, however, been slow," says Jagan Shah, urban policy expert and CEO of Infravision Foundation.

Sitharaman has opened the purse strings enough to keep the show going. The Union Budget gives no indication that India's lavish spend on creating new infrastructure is on the slow lane. ■

MGM | Cancer Institute

The Department of Paediatric Haematology, Oncology, Blood and Marrow Transplantation is a speciality clinic at MGM Cancer Institute – Chennai. It is spearheaded by Dr M. Deenadayalan who, along with his team, treats a variety of children's illnesses ranging from benign and malignant haematology, solid tumours, as well as performing Blood & Marrow Transplantation (BMT).

According to WHO data nearly four lakh children are diagnosed with cancer every year throughout the world, with 50,000 of these cases from India alone. Over the last two to three decades, the incidence of cancer detection has gradually gone up, but this is likely due to increased awareness and early diagnosis. Hearteningly, the cure rate has improved due to advances in chemotherapy, better supportive care, surgical techniques, radiotherapy and newer forms of treatments like stem cell transplants (also called Blood and Marrow transplants), immunotherapy and cellular therapy.

The Department of Paediatric Haematology, Oncology, Blood and Marrow Transplantation at MGM Cancer Institute – Chennai is well equipped to offer these cutting-edge therapies and handle the unique challenges of treating children. The Department is managed by a team of three doctors—Dr M. Deenadayalan, HOD and Clinical Lead; Dr Vimal Kumar, Senior Consultant; and Dr Rishab Bharadwaj, Consultant. Dr M. Deenadayalan is an esteemed Paediatric Haematologist and Oncologist known for his extensive experience in treating a range of paediatric conditions. With over 18 years in the field, he specialises in benign blood disorders, malignant haematology, immunodeficiencies and solid tumours such as neuroblastoma, germ cell tumours, sarcoma, hepatoblastoma, and brain tumours.

DR M. DEENADAYALAN
MBBS, Diploma (Child Health), DNB (Paediatrics), IAP Fellowship (Paediatric Haematology & Oncology), FNB (Paediatric Haematology & Oncology)
HOD and Clinical Lead - Department of Paediatric Haematology, Oncology, Blood and Marrow Transplantation, MGM Cancer Institute - Chennai

AN ADVANCED CENTRE FOR TREATING CHILDREN

The Department is equipped to handle three verticals: paediatric haematology, oncology and BMT. They cover a wide spectrum of ailments, from benign blood disorders like nutritional anaemia, thalassemia, sickle-cell anaemia to blood cancers like leukaemias and lymphomas, as well as solid tumours. A number of these conditions may require Blood & Marrow Transplantation (BMT), otherwise known as Haematopoietic Stem Cell Transplantation (HSCT), where the patient's diseased bone marrow is replaced with healthy stem cells.

As a dedicated cancer treatment facility, MGM Cancer Institute (a unit of MGM Healthcare), is fully equipped to address paediatric concerns, ably supported by the other specialities in the hospital. For instance, for paediatric oncology treatment, the hospital has trained paediatric trained staff to administer chemotherapy, a dedicated chemotherapy daycare centre, 24x7 Paediatric Intensive Care (PICU) support, and a highly advanced laboratory for all the unique and diverse investigations needed. They are also supported by a well-equipped blood bank, as these patients require a lot of specialised blood products. The blood bank also boasts of the latest technology with apheresis machines which aid in collecting peripheral blood stem cells from donors. As a quaternary health care centre, it is also one of the few hospitals with all departments under one roof such as Radiotherapy, Nuclear Medicine (PET-CT) and various Surgical specialities.

"A bone marrow transplant is one of the most specialised and highly skilled procedures in Medicine. MGM Cancer Institute has a state-of-the-art, six-bedded Blood & Marrow Transplantation (BMT) unit with HEPA-filtered and positive-pressure rooms. It is an excellent setup to ensure complete sterility," says Dr M. Deenadayalan.

ADVANCES IN BLOOD & MARROW TRANSPLANTATION (BMT)

At MGM Cancer Institute, the Department performs two types of Blood & Marrow Transplantation (BMT): autologous, where the patient's own stem cells are collected prior to chemotherapy and infused later; as well as the more complex allogeneic stem cell transplants, where the abnormal stem cells of the patient are replaced with those from a healthy donor. "BMT is the only permanently curative option for conditions like thalassemia, sickle-cell anaemia, relapsed leukaemias, immunodeficiencies, bone marrow failure syndromes as well as some inherited metabolic disorders", informs Dr. Deenadayalan.

For allogeneic transplants, donors are identified using high-resolution HLA (human leukocyte antigen) typing. Finding a full match can be challenging, which is where half-matched or haploidentical transplant comes to the rescue. "Using the advanced alpha/beta depletion technique, we are able to perform highly complex half-matched transplants. MGM Cancer Institute is one of the few centres offering this sophisticated procedure", says Dr M. Deenadayalan.

The Department's most recent transplant was for a genetic condition called Bloom Syndrome, which was complicated by the presence of Myelodysplastic Syndrome (MDS), as both lie at the opposite ends of the spectrum. The donor was the younger sibling and only a half-matched donor, so special care had to be taken to harvest the stem cells. Using all their experience, the procedure was pulled off successfully and the patient is recovering well.

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UNION BUDGET 2024-25

AGRICULTURE |

WAITING FOR THE HARVEST

The Budget focus has been on raising farmer incomes and widening the scope of the rural job market

BY ANILESH S. MAHAJAN

THE FARMER UNIONS IN NORTH INDIA may be on to the next phase of protests over a legal framework on MSP (minimum support price) for their produce, but Union finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman seems unperturbed. Her FY25 Budget allocations for agriculture showed no indications of a change in trajectory from the path the BJP-led government has charted since 2021-22—strengthening the post-farmgate ecosystem and not fiddling much with market prices.

Agriculture and allied sectors have seen an annual average growth rate of about 4.2 per cent over the last five years—one of the lowest for any period in the last four decades. Despite the country's farmers contributing 18.2 per cent to the GDP and 45 per cent of the country's population being directly employed in it, agriculture and the rural economy have always cribbed about getting step-motherly treatment from the Centre. And that lament is only going to get louder with provisional estimates for 2023-24 suggesting the agri sector grew by an abysmal 1.4 per cent, a huge drop from the 4.7 per cent in 2022-23. This is at the core of the unrest among the farm unions and the big conundrum facing budget architects who seek to craft solutions via government expenditures.

On July 24, a day after the budget, farm union leaders from Punjab and elsewhere met leader of the Opposition Rahul Gandhi at his office in Parliament to build pressure on the treasury benches. In the recent Lok Sabha election, the BJP had faced the farmers' ire in many of the north Indian states and in Maharashtra's Marathwada and Vidarbha regions. The BJP's electoral hegemony of the past decade was essentially driven by its transformation into the new party of the village in north India to complement its urban dominance. Reverses in rural India have now

HIGHLIGHTS

- ₹10,000 cr. for Price Stabilisation Fund to sustain buffer stock, check prices of essential commodities
- Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) to cover all farmland in country. Kharif crop survey in 400 districts in 2024
- Big cut in fertiliser (down to ₹1.64 lakh cr.) and food (now ₹2.13 lakh cr.) subsidies
- Rs 6,437 cr. allocated under PM-AASHA in 2023-24 for MSP compensation
- Rs 9,941 cr. set aside for agricultural R&D. India currently spends less than 0.4% of agri GDP on research, much less than China, Brazil or Israel
- 10 million farmers to be initiated into natural farming in the next two years

8% Increase in allocation for agriculture and allied activities, up from ₹1.41 lakh cr. in FY24 (RE) to ₹1.52 lakh cr. in FY25

PRABHJOT GILL

led to a rethink. Assembly polls are due in Jharkhand, Maharashtra, Haryana and J&K later this year, and the party think-tanks were expecting Sitharaman to ease their load a bit. Sources say they believe she missed an opportunity in not increasing the payout in the income support scheme for poorer farmers (PM-Kisan Samman Nidhi scheme). It continues to be Rs 6,000 annually, which was set in 2018. A big sticking point with farmers could also be the cut in fertiliser subsidy, down to Rs 1.64 lakh crore; actual expenditure in 2022-23 was Rs 2.5 lakh crore. (The Centre claims it was rationalised to factor in the softening commodity prices.)

The agri sector inherits three big challenges in Modi 3.0—the failed crop diversification attempts to high-yielding and climate-friendly produce,

SEED MONEY

₹3.8 LAKH CRORE
($46.44 billion) The value of agri food exports (including processed) in 2023-24, making up 11.7% of India's total exports

75 MN
No. of Kisan Credit Cards (KCC) issued till Jan 31, 2024, with a credit limit of Rs 9.4 lakh cr. Collateral-free loan limit enhanced

61 MN HA.
Insured farmland area in 2023-24 under Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana, up 11 mn ha. from previous year

555 MN
No. of farmers insured since 2016-17. Claims worth over Rs 1.5 lakh crore settled

12.02%
Share of food processing in total employment in the organised manufacturing sector

Source: Economic Survey 2023-24

the stagnant income trajectories of farmers and the inadequate supply chains. This is in addition to the lack of non-agriculture jobs in the rural economy. There is no magic wand solution to these problems. Meanwhile, the economic survey this year has predicted that India needs at least 7.8 million jobs in the non-farm sector over the next seven years to absorb the shifting demographic weight.

Union agriculture minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has a task on his hands. In her budget provisions, Sitharaman has kept aside Rs 1.52 lakh crore—up by Rs 11,318 crore from last year—for agriculture and allied sectors. This is in addition to the spike in rural spending, up by 10 per cent to Rs 2.66 lakh crore. Out of this, the rural development ministry (also led by Chouhan) will get Rs 1.77 lakh crore, marginally up from 1.71 lakh crore the ministry spent last year.

In this year's allocations, the agriculture ministry gets a Rs 10,000 crore Price Stabilisation Fund to maintain buffer stock of pulses, oilseeds, onions and potatoes. This plan allows the ministry, along with central agencies like NAFED (National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India Ltd), to work with states to extend the interest-free loans and finance the working capital of state agencies in the procurement and distribution of these commodities. In addition to this, Sitharaman has increased the allocation for the Pradhan Mantri Annadata Aay Sanrakshan Abhiyan (PM-AASHA) for MSP remunerative prices to farmers by three times to Rs 6,437 crore this year. The funds also free up central agencies to procure up to 25 per cent of the marketable surplus of farmers in eligible crops. This is in addition to the continuous procurement of grains for the country's buffer stocks.

Chouhan also gets funds to work with the states to set up large-scale vegetable production clusters closer to major consumption centres. But for it to work, he will have to use the "cleaned up" network of farmer-producer organisations (FPOs), cooperatives and start-ups to strengthen the supply chains, including for collection, storage, and marketing. In the past, inefficient supply chains had resulted in significant post-harvest losses for vegetable growers and escalation of prices for consumers. Farmers typically receive a small fraction of the final market price of their produce due to the limited market access and long chain of intermediaries. The aim is to break this, get more money into the hands of farmers along with better market access. Seeking to achieve this was part of the vision in Modi 2.0's three farm laws from 2020, but the government had to retreat in the face of the anger of the farm unions. The attempt then was to attract corporate/private sector money into the farm sector. The focus has shifted now towards the cooperative models, strengthening them to achieve the same results and help the farmers.

The budget also details the allocations for some ambitious schemes, such as Rs 500 crore for Prime Minister Narendra Modi's pet project of creating 10 million 'Drone Didis'—rural women with UAVs and the skill sets to use drones for agricultural purposes—in the next three years. There are also the 10 million agri-entrepreneurs who'll be initiated into natural farming in the next two years. This is complemented by two big announcements for the Amit Shah-led cooperation ministry—a comprehensive National Cooperation Policy for bringing about orderly, all-round development of the cooperative sector which, ministry officials say, will fast-track growth in the rural economy and thus help generate jobs; and return of the grant-in-aid of Rs 500 crore to the National Cooperative Development Corporation (NCDC) to strengthen the cooperative sugar mills (CSMs).

The last also has a political angle to it as sugar mills are a big factor in farmer unrest in poll-bound Maharashtra and Haryana (mainly the areas adjoining western UP). The cooperation and agriculture ministries, along with the states, have been pushing hard to strengthen the agri cooperatives and FPOs in the past five years, including in digitalisation. All the PACS (primary agricultural credit societies) as well as agri and rural development banks are being digitalised and linked to NABARD (National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development) so as to have real-time data, a big step to push formal credit institutions to help farmers. The FM has also promised a comprehensive review of the agriculture research setup to find ways to raise productivity. Some 109 high-yielding and climate-resilient varieties of 32 field and horticulture crops were released for cultivation as part of this. The budget holds much new promise for the farmer community. But whether it'll all pan out—and whether our sons of the soil will warm up to it—are crucial parts of the challenge. ■

"Efforts are on to develop digital infrastructure in agriculture to assist farmers. The e-samridhi portal was launched for this"

— SHIVRAJ SINGH CHOUHAN

Union minister for agriculture & rural development

DIRECTORATE
MAHARASHTRA
TOURISM

MAHARASHTRA

THE LAND WHERE ROLLING HILLS MEET PRISTINE BLUE SEAS

Maharashtra is blessed with a coastline of 720 kilometers, hugging the Arabian Sea. With the hills of the Sahyadri range abutting the coast, the Konkan region stands out as one of the most picturesque locales one can imagine, boasting of pristine beaches, lush greenery, and serene ambiance. Rich in cultural and historical heritage, this coast is dotted with ancient forts and significant temples.

Some destinations that ought to be in every intrepid travellers list include:

DIVEAGAR

Raigad

Diveagar is a paradise waiting to be explored. It offers unique experiences along the coastline adorned with a glittering beach and panoramic sunset views. Thrill-seekers can enjoy water sports like parasailing and banana boat rides. Working fishermen, migratory seagulls and more, congregate to offer a picturesque escape.

How to go: Road: Mumbai - 190 km | Rail: Mangoan - 30 km

Nearby Sights: Janjira Fort, Padmadurg Fort, Diveagar Beach, Roopnarayan Temple, Harihareshwar Beach, Phansad Wildlife Sanctuary, Suvarnaganesha Temple, Shankar Temple, Bankot Fort.


DIWE AGAR

TARKARLI

Sindhudurg

Tarkarli is a tranquil haven where you can immerse yourself in calming waves and tropical coral reefs, spotting barracuda, giant squids, and turtles. India's most popular scuba diving destination also featur Oes beach shacks, beautiful sunset views, and an exquisite underwater experience.

How to go: Road: Mumbai - 480 km | Rail: Kudal - 32 km | Air: Dabolim – 133 km

Nearby Sights: Indian Institute of Scuba Diving & Aquatic Sports (IISDA), Karli Backwaters, Dhamapur Lake, Shree Shiv Chhatrapati Temple, Mahapurush Temple, Vitthal Temple, Padmagad Fort, Sindhudurg Fort, Rock Garden, Deobagh, Golden Rock and Sunset Point, Devbagh Sangam, Malvan Market, Achra Beach, Kolamb Beach, Bhogwe Beach, Wairy Ubhatwadi Beach.

"It's not just about the sandy shores; it's about the people, the culture, and the vibrant communities that make Maharashtra a unique destination. We are committed to ensuring that beach tourism fosters local economies, supports livelihoods, and preserves our environment. "Together, we will work on sustainable tourism initiatives that protect our beautiful beaches and promote responsible travel. I invite everyone to explore the wonders of Maharashtra's coastline–create memories, savor the flavors of our local cuisine, and experience our warm hospitality." Maharashtra's beaches are ready to welcome you with open arms. Let's discover, celebrate, and protect the beauty of our coastline together.

GIRISH MAHAJAN, Minister of Tourism, Government of Maharashtra

ANJARLE
Ratnagiri
It boasts of clean, unspoiled beach with white sand, surrounded by palms and trees. This Palm Beach is an ideal place to visit on a long weekend. It is an unspoilt little, green village where the time seems to stand still. You can sit on the clean, sandy beach and stare at the rolling waves forever. You will discover what peace actually is.
How to go: Road: Mumbai - 224 km | Rail: Khed - 53 km
Nearby Sights: Kadyavarcha Ganapati Temple, Kanakdurg Fort, Kelshi Beach, Anjarle Beach, Anjarle Ganesh temple, Karde Beach, Ladghar Beach.

SHRIVARDHAN
Raigad
Shrivardhan is one of the oldest, most secluded beach towns, known for its pristine white sand and long coastline. The beach offers a peaceful retreat with the relaxing sound of waves and wind, making it an excellent destination for a calm holiday.
How to go: Road: Mumbai - 180 km | Rail: Mangoan - 45 km
Nearby places of Interest: Kalbhairav Temple, Harihareshwar Beach, Harihareshwar Temple, Ganesh Gully, Bankot Fort, Velas Beach, Diveagar Beach.

VELNESHWAR
Ratnagiri
With its scenic crescent-shaped shoreline dotted with towering coconut trees, Velneshwar is a hidden gem perfect for swimming or lounging in peace. The vibrant Velneshwar Temple, part of which is submerged in the sea, is a significant attraction.
How to go: Road: Mumbai - 294 km | Rail: Chilpun - 50 km
Nearby Sights: Velneshwar Beach, Velneshwar Temple, Durga Devi Temple, Jay Vinayak Temple, Jaigad, Jaigad Lighthouse, Vyadeshwar Temple.

BORDI DAHANU
Palghar
Unwind leisurely along the 17-kilometer coastline, surrounded by mangroves and calm waters. Free of urbanization, this green zone is perfect for a relaxing getaway. The area abounds in chikoo and fruit orchards, and houses Bahrot Caves, the only Zoroastrian cave temple in the country.
How to go: Road: Mumbai - 152 km | Rail: Gholvad - 2 km
Nearby Sights: Zai Village, Aswali Dam, Kalpataru Botanical Gardens, Vrindavan Studios, Gholvad, Dahanu Fort, Narpad Beach, Mallinath Jain Tirth Kosbad Temple, Bahrot Caves.

GANPATIPULE
Ratnagiri
Ganpatipule is home to one of the few white sand beaches in Maharashtra and the 400-year-old Swayambhu Ganpati Temple, where a self-created idol illuminates when the sun's rays fall upon it. Visitors can enjoy jet skiing, speed boating and activities like horse and camel riding.
How to go : Road: Mumbai - 333 km | Rail: Ratnagiri - 25 km | Air: Kolhapur - 121 km
Nearby Sights: Swayambhu Ganpati Temple, Patti Pawan Mandir, Swami Swaroopanand Samadnimath, Magic Garden, Thiba Palace, Prachin Konkan Museum, Jaigad Lighthouse, Aare Beach, Malgund Beach.


TARKARLI

HARNAI MURUD
Ratnagiri
The twin towns offer fine beaches and historical forts. Harnai, the livelier of the two, is known for its fishermen and fish auctions, while Murud offers a quiet, long stretch of black sand, perfect for swimmers.
How to go: Road: Mumbai - 235 km | Rail: Khed - 42 km
Nearby Sights: Suvarnadurg Fort, Kanakdurg Fort, Goa Fort, Anjarle Beach, Anjarle Ganesh temple, Kelshi.

GUHAGAR
Ratnagiri
With its long pristine beach, heritage temples, and locally grown coconuts, betel, and Alphonso mangoes, is an excellent destination for pilgrims and those seeking calm. The town is home to the 12th-century Vyadeshwar Shiva Temple and the ancient Durga Devi Temple.
How to go: Road: Mumbai - 292 km | Rail: Chiplun - 40 km
Nearby Sights: Vyadeshwar Temple, Durga Devi Temple, Velneshwar, Hedavi, Jaigad, Dabhol.

SHIRODA
Sindhudurg
Shiroda is known for its panoramic views, privacy, and crystal-clear water. The beach is lined with palm and coconut trees, enhancing its beauty. The town offers various water sports activities like surfing, parasailing, and kite surfing.
How to go : Road: Mumbai - 515 km | Rail: Sawantwadi – 20 km | Air: Dabolim – 78 km
Nearby Sights: Terekhol Fort, Arambol Mountain, Paliem Sweet Water Lake

KIHIM BEACH
Raigad
Located north of Alibaug, it is a bird watcher's paradise with stunning views, greenery, and wildflowers. The beach offers various water adventure sports and picturesque views of the sunrise and sunset.
How to go: Road: Mumbai - 100 km | Ferry: RO-RO Mumbai
Nearby Sights: Kalbhairav Temple, Kanakeshwar Devasthan Temple, Shri Ballaleshwar Ashtavinayak Temple, Kolaba Fort, Alibaug Beach, Awas Beach, Varsoli Beach.

VENGURLA
Sindhudurg
Vengurla, with its lush greenery and clean beaches, hosts old temples and remnants of historical attacks. The town is beautiful during the pre-winter and winter months, offering a range of water sports and local delicacies like roasted cashews and cashew-based sweets.
How to go: Road: Mumbai - 495 km | Rail: Kudal - 20 kms | Air: Dabolim - 90 km
Nearby Sights: Khajana Devi Temple, Sargeshwar Shiva Temple, Terekhol Fort, Vengurla Lighthouse, Dutch Factory, Fruit Research Center, Shiroda Beach, Vayangani Beach, Nivati Beach.

HARIHARESHWAR
Raigad
Known as the "House of God," Harihareshwar is a peaceful beach surrounded by hills and temples, offering a spiritual tour. The beach features crystal-clear waters and a host of water adventure sports, providing a serene backdrop for relaxation.
How to go: Road: Mumbai - 202 km | Rail: Mangoan - 60 km.
Nearby Sights: Bankot Fort, Velas Beach, Shrivardhan Beach, Kalbhairav Temple.

VELAS
Ratnagiri
Velas Beach is known for its clean environment and annual hatching of Olive Ridley turtles from February to mid-April. This beautiful beach, surrounded by coconut trees, offers a tranquil retreat with picturesque views and a cool breeze.
How to go : Road: Mumbai - 207 km | Rail: Mangoan - 65 km.
Nearby Sights: Bankot Fort, Harihareshwar Beach, Diveagar Beach, Mango plantations.

The rolling hills and expansive sea create stunning, picturesque landscapes that are naturally captivating and evoke a sense of peace and awe. The soothing sounds of waves crashing against the shore, combined with the gentle rustling of leaves and birdsong in the hills, create a peaceful and romantic ambience. That's Konkan for you.
Come over. Maharashtra is beckoning you. Live a dream!

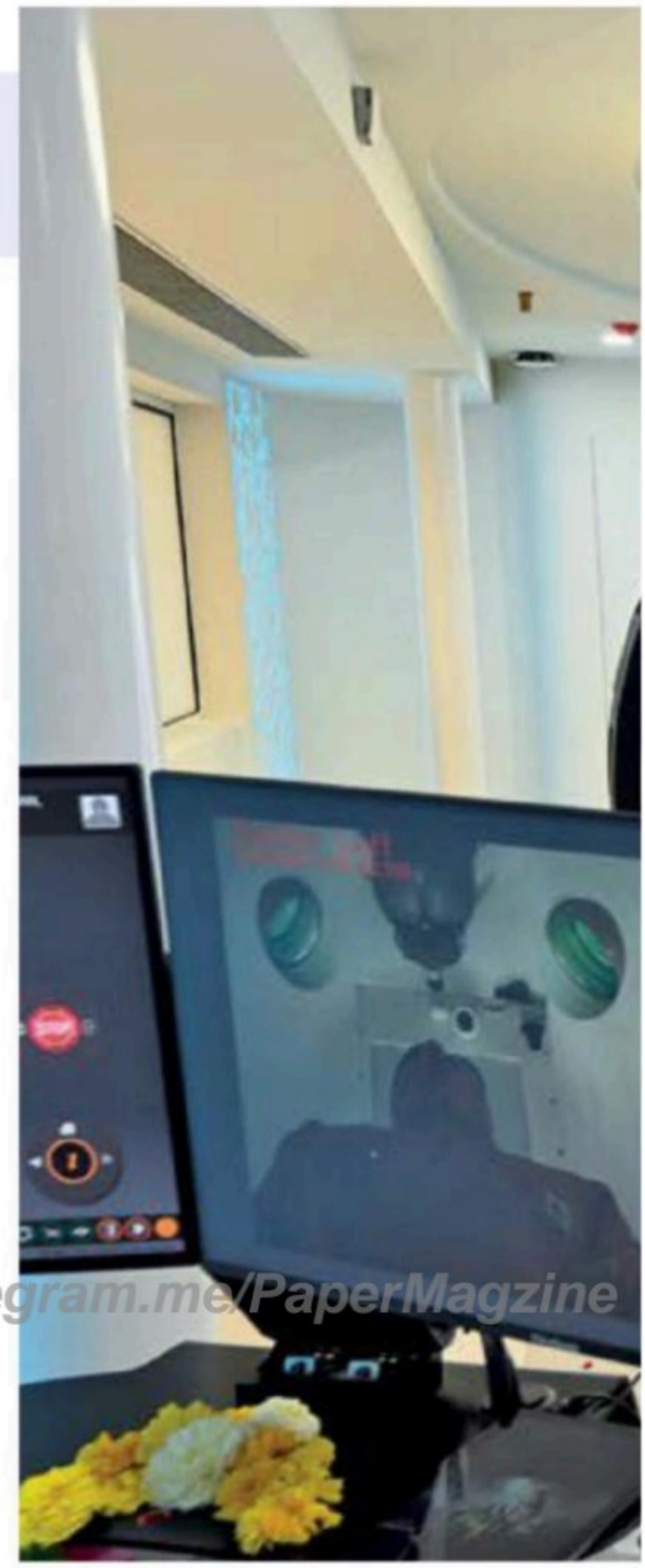

SHRIVARDHAN

JUST A BIT SHORT OF BREATH

The allocation for healthcare not only falls short of expectations, but misses out on key areas of requirement

BY SONALI ACHARJEE

Photograph by BANDEEP SINGH



AN EXTRA RS 1,803 CRORE. SO EVEN AT A MODEST INCREASE OF 2.022 PER CENT, THE RS 90,958.6 CRORE allocated to the health and family welfare ministry in the Union budget would seem to represent a steady, continuing focus on India's well-being—on the face of it. But that conceals the fact that it falls woefully short of requirements when one considers the enormity of the country's health challenges. Experts say it fails to address even some vexed policy knots: rationalisation of taxes for life-saving drugs and emergency treatments, well-tailored incentives to industry that can bring private healthcare closer to the common Indian, and other critical areas like GST reforms. Mental health services, for one, exact an unconscionable 18 per cent GST from patients. The picture of benign oversight solidifies when you consider the revised estimates for the Centre's health expenditure last year. Here, it's revealed that, of the Rs 89,155 crore budgeted for in 2023-24, only Rs 80,517.62 crore was spent. That is, Rs 8,638 crore—as much as 9.7 per cent—went unspent. If the purse allotted to the health ministry for 2024-25 is deployed fully, therefore, it would mean a whopping increase of 12.97 per cent in actuals over last year. The budget for the Ayush ministry reveals a similar pattern. It has received an outlay of Rs 3,712.49 crore, a 1.78 per cent increase over last year's Rs 3,647.50 crore. But again, the jump over the revised estimates is a rather revealing 23.75 per cent. That's an ironic preface to all topics of contention.

The modest increase in fund allocation for a sector where the gap between supply and demand is already substantial has left healthcare experts both disappointed and concerned. India has the highest burdens for non-communicable and communicable disease and had an out-of-pocket expenditure of nearly 50 per cent in FY 2019-20, according to government estimates, a situation which is viewed as "catastrophic" by World Health Organization (WHO) metrics. In such a scenario, Srinath Reddy, honorary distinguished professor and goodwill ambassador for Public Health Foundation of India (PHFI), a public-private initiative, calls this year's allocation to the sector "a token budget for healthcare". Domain experts are also sceptical of the achievement of the targeted expenditure of 2.5 per cent of GDP on healthcare, as

2%

Approximate increase in allocation for the health and family welfare ministry, from ₹89,155 crore in 2023-24 to ₹90,958.6 crore for 2024-25

SURGICAL STRIDE

A surgeon inspects the installing of a laser brain surgery machine at Apollo Hospital Delhi in March

HIGHLIGHTS

- **Marginal to zero increase in budget of National Health Mission and Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission**
- **14% increase in allocation for health research department — Rs 3,301.73 crore, up from Rs 2,892.83 crore in 2023-24**
- **Proposed changes in the basic customs duty for X-ray tubes and flat panel detectors will benefit domestic original equipment manufacturers, but appears misdirected as many healthcare and wellness centres still lack basic diagnostic tools**
- **No incentives for skilling and increasing number of frontline health workers, which was expected by many experts**

has been repeatedly promised by the government over the past two years. In FY 2023, healthcare accounted for 2.1 per cent of GDP expenditure. According to national health accounts, between 2013–14 and 2019–20, the increase in government health expenditure's share in GDP was a mere 0.22 per cent.

Not only are many expected healthcare reforms missing in the 2024-25 budget, but the measly increase in funds allocation has raised doubts about the future of schemes which were announced in the interim budget earlier this year. For example, the National Health Mission (NHM) is set to roll out a nationwide cervical cancer vaccination programme. Universal immunisation for children, an NHM programme, still stands at 85 per cent. The July 23 budget announced a tribal health scheme, which too will have to be implemented by NHM. But despite the rising burden of public health schemes on the agency, the NHM received just a 1.16 per cent increase in funds allocation over last year's revised estimates. And despite promises of promoting digital health in India, the Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission, implemented by the National Health Authority (NHA, attached to the health ministry), has had no increase in budget allocation from the revised estimates for 2023-24. In comparison, the government's flagship medical insurance scheme, Ay-

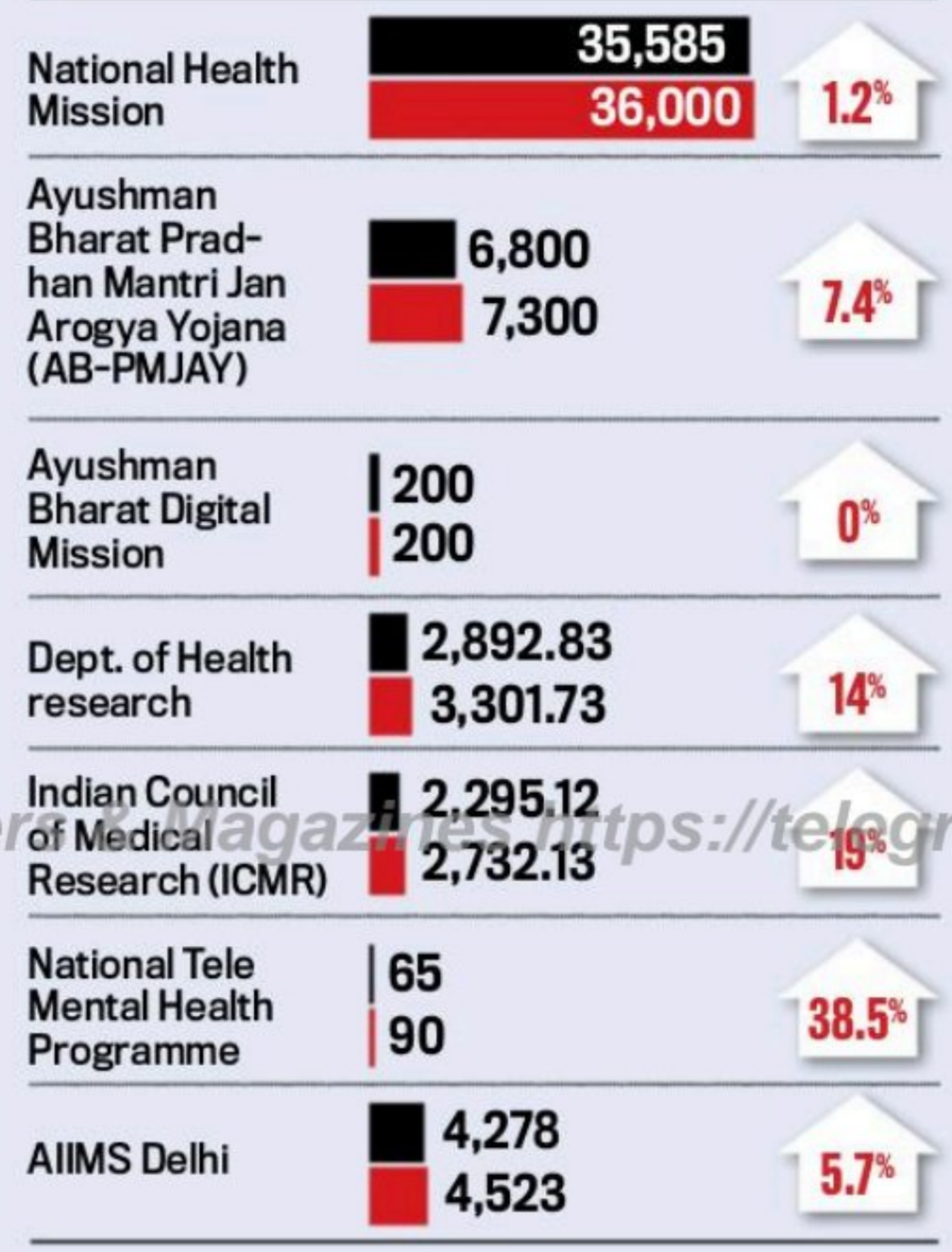
ushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY), also implemented by the NHA, saw a 7.4 per cent increase in its budget over last year's revised estimates, but experts rue even this is not enough for proper implementation of the scheme. Ditto for the country's premier public health institute and hospital, AIIMS Delhi: it has received a 5.7 per cent increase in allocations as compared to the revised estimates for 2023-24, but experts say it's not nearly enough to support the growing demand in services at the central hospital.

Despite these concerns, not all is gloomy when it comes to budget for the health sector as a whole. There has also been a 14.13 per cent increase in the allocation for health research, with an allocation of Rs 3,301.73 crore for the Department of Health Research. The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) received an allocation of Rs 2,732.13 crore, up from the estimated expenditure of Rs 2,295.12 crore in 2023-24. The National Tele Mental Health Programme also saw a rise in allocation, Rs 90 crore compared to last year's revised estimate of Rs 65 crore. "The Union budget also increased allocation for R&D, particularly through the Anusandhan National Research Foundation, a welcome step for the clinical research industry. This aligns with the sector's growing emphasis on innovation. The government's push for digital infrastructure under the Jan Vishwas Act will significantly enhance the operational efficiency of clinical trials," says Sanjay Vyas, executive vice president and managing director, Parexel, one of the world's largest clinical research organisations. The allocation of Rs 2,143 crore for the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme for the pharma sector has also been welcomed by the industry. "These steps are vital for achieving our $5 trillion GDP goal in three years and $7 trillion by 2030," says Dr Saloni Wagh, director, Supriya Lifescience, a generic pharmaceutical company.

The doing away with custom duty for three cancer drugs—Trastuzumab Deruxtecan, Osimertinib, and Durvalumab, all manufactured by pharma giant AstraZeneca, and usually used for the treatment of lung or breast cancer—has garnered mixed reactions. On one hand, it is an attempt to bring cancer treatment in focus. "The high cost of cancer medications has been a major barrier for many patients, and this exemption will undoubtedly provide much-needed financial relief to those battling the disease," says D.S. Negi, CEO, Rajiv Gandhi Cancer Institute & Research Centre. However, public health experts say much more could have been done to make medicines affordable. "Some longstanding healthcare sector demands remain unaddressed in the current budget. These include prioritising healthcare as a national issue, promoting medical value travel in India, and rationalising GST with a uniform rate and full input tax credit eligibility," adds Dr Raghuvanshi. Overall the allocation for healthcare "pales into insignificance before the substantial allocations to defence and other priority sectors", rues Dr. B. S. Ajaikumar, executive chairman, HealthCare Global Enterprises. Whether the health ministry is able to allay the concerns by a judicious use of the funds remains to be seen. ■

UPS AND DOWNS

A look at allocations for some key healthcare schemes and institutions



₹1.72 LAKH CRORE | **Total capital outlay on defence; focus on hi-tech procurement**

ANI

ON TARGET

The change in allocation may not be substantive but is directed towards the right areas—border infra, hi-tech acquisitions

BY **PRADIP R. SAGAR**

HIGHLIGHTS

- **Budgetary allocation to defence: Rs 6.21 lakh crore, up from Rs 5.94 lakh crore in 2023-24**
- **BRO gets a 30 per cent boost: Rs 6,500 crore; DRDO, Coast Guard get higher amounts too**
- **Total revenue allocation: Rs 2.8 lakh crore, including Rs 6,000 crore for the government's Agnipath scheme of recruitment**

AT RS 6.21 LAKH CRORE, DEFENCE HAS GOT THE LARGEST—AROUND 13 PER CENT—SHARE OF THE BUDGET. The allocation also amounts to 1.9 per cent of the projected GDP, which has been more or less the same as last year. But as former army chief Gen. Ved Malik rued on X, "There is lack of appreciation of 2.5 front threats & modernisation requirements." He was talking about preparing for a two-front war scenario with Pakistan and China, which experts say will need at least 2.5 per cent of the projected GDP.

However, the government does seem cognisant of the threat from China, which despite ongoing diplomatic negotiations to reduce border tensions, has been steadily strengthening border infrastructure, forcing India to ramp up its own preparations. Accordingly, the Border Roads Organisation (BRO) has seen a 30 per cent rise from FY24 to Rs 6,500 crore. Key projects expected to receive funding boosts include the Nyoma airfield in Ladakh, the strategically important Shinku La tunnel in Himachal Pradesh and the Nechiphu tunnel in Arunachal Pradesh.

Almost a third of the budget—or Rs 1.72 lakh crore—is capital outlay for modernisation, but it pales in comparison with the Rs 2.8 lakh crore set aside for day-to-day operations and salaries of the world's second largest military. The revenue spend also includes nearly Rs 6,000 crore for the contentious Agnipath recruitment scheme.

The outlay for modernisation is expected to fill critical capability gaps through big-ticket acquisitions, whether it is the latest technology, fighter aircraft, ships, submarines, platforms or drones. Thus, Rs 40,777 crore has been earmarked for aircraft and aero engines, Rs 23,800 crore for additions to the naval fleet and Rs 6,830 crore for naval dockyard projects. With *atmanirbharta* still a key mantra, Rs 1.05 lakh crore is meant for domestic capital procurement to boost the indigenous defence sector. Research remains a preoccupation—the Defence Research and Development Organisation gets an outlay of Rs 23,855 crore. The thrust—Rs 13,208 crore—is towards developing new technology and focusing on fundamental research.

India's budget allocation for defence has seen a steady increase over the past four years—from Rs 4.71 lakh crore in 2020 to Rs 6.21 lakh crore now. But for a country that aspires to be the third-largest economy soon, India still lags behind global powers like the US, China and Russia when it comes to military spending in absolute terms. ■

UNION BUDGET 2024-25

SPACE & ATOMIC ENERGY

PRIVATE MISSION

Backing research and private participation, the Budget underlines the key role of space and atomic energy

BY AMARNATH K. MENON

FLY TO THE MOON

The Chandrayaan-3 launch in July , 2023

IN A FEW FIGURES AND WORDS, THE UNION BUDGET CAPTURED TWO REALITIES. One, how vital India's state-steered space and atomic energy sectors are to the vision of Viksit Bharat. And two, how the idea of opening them up to the private sector is seen as critical to their evolution. Finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman has allocated Rs 13,042.75 crore to the space sector, up from the Rs 12,543.91 crore allocated in 2023-24. She also announced the setting up of a venture capital fund worth Rs 1,000 crore to push development in space technology. The capital, which Sitharaman said will expand the space economy by five times in the next 10 years, is likely to aid more than 180 government-recognised start-ups working in the field of space technology. Talking about the atomic energy sector, the finance minister announced that the Centre will work with private players to develop small modular reactors (SMRs), which will help India expand its nuclear energy generation. "Nuclear energy is expected to form a significant part of the energy mix for Viksit Bharat," said Sitharaman.

SMRs are reactors with a capacity of 300 MW or less per unit, which can be built in factories, unlike conventional nuclear reactors that are built on-site. The smaller size and factory production not only helps save cost but also construction time, with SMRs being easily transported by trucks or railways to the nuclear power site. Output, which is about one-third of traditional nuclear power reactors, may be scaled by combining several units to achieve larger capacities. So far, private sector involvement in the sensitive area of atomic energy had been limited to the construction of reactor vessels and the execution of other specific tasks as turnkey projects for government companies. The present collaboration with private players comes as India progresses on the path of achieving net-zero carbon emissions by 2070, requiring a transition to the use of cleaner fuels.

Meanwhile, the research boost for the space sector, as outlined in the current budget, comes in the footsteps of India's recent success in space exploration, including the successful Chandrayaan-3 and Aditya L1 missions, both accomplished last year. Industry analysts are optimistic about exponential growth in India's space market in a decade, with investments being made in launch vehicles, satellite manufacturing, Earth observation, communications and in-orbit economy. "These measures are crucial for the growth and development of our space ecosystem," says Lt. Gen. A.K. Bhatt (retd.), director general, Indian Space Association. Decoding the budget allocation, Srinath Ravichandran, CEO, Agnikul Cosmos, an aerospace manufacturer, says it "shows that the government is continuing to back its vision of making India have a larger chunk of the global space economy". According to government estimates, India's present installed nuclear capacity of 8,180 MW (megawatts) is slated to increase to 22,480 MW by 2031-32. In about the same period (by 2033), the country's space economy is likely to grow to $44 billion from the current 8.4 billion. The move to increase the involvement of private players in this journey, it is hoped, will accelerate the transition. ■

HIGHLIGHTS

- Centre to partner with private entities to develop small modular reactors (SMRs) to boost nuclear energy production
- Exclusive venture capital fund for space startups

UNION BUDGET 2024-25

BITE

ASHIMA GOYAL
Emeritus Professor, Indira Gandhi Institute of Development Research

AJIT RANADE
Vice Chancellor, Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics, Pune

BALANCING HIGH GROWTH AND SUSTAINABILITY

Addressing the concerns over jobs, giving a rural push and continuing with the high allocation on capex, even while maintaining a tight leash over finances—the challenges before finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman were many. How did she fare? As part of our BITE (Board of India Today Experts) survey, we ask six top economists what their reading of the Union Budget 2024–25 is, its major thrust areas, and some key measures the FM missed out on

Q. What, according to you, is the main thrust of the Union Budget 2024–25?

▶ **ASHIMA GOYAL:** It has correctly identified and worked on critical bottlenecks that need to be released for India to have sustained high growth. These include raising agricultural productivity and making it climate-proof, creating more infrastructure as well as good jobs, raising the level and amount of job-relevant skills and working with states to improve efficiencies. For real change to happen, it is necessary to get the private sector and states on board. The budget has used some well-designed incentives to do so.

▶ **AJIT RANADE:** The budget's main thrust is on providing incentives for job creation, skilling,

D.K. JOSHI
Chief Economist, Crisil

NEELKANTH MISHRA
Chief Economist, Axis Bank

MADAN SABNAVIS
Chief Economist, Bank of Baroda

ADITI NAYAR
Chief Economist, ICRA

enhancing human capital and also providing support for small businesses. Skills formation and training is the need for sustainable high growth. Enabling the viability and prosperity of small businesses is also a strategy for inclusive growth. It is actually small businesses that provide more than 40 per cent of jobs, value addition and exports in the industrial sector.

Also, the part of the budget dealing with energy security—both by acknowledging hard-to-abate sectors and the continued emphasis on renewable energy, and now private participation in nuclear power—is a welcome initiative. The other prominent feature of this budget was scrupulous attention to fiscal restraint.

▶ D.K. JOSHI: Budget 2025 maintains prudent fiscal management by improving upon the fiscal deficit target set in the interim budget. It continues the capital expenditure thrust focused on the infrastructure build-out. Revenue spending has been raised to address some pain points. It also announces structural measures for food inflation control.

▶ NEELKANTH MISHRA: The government continues to prioritise macroeconomic stability, which is needed to reduce uncertainty and bring down the cost of capital, both of which are important for accelerating investment over the medium term. As economic momentum is picking up, the government is prudently withdrawing its support in a calibrated manner. Given the worryingly high government debt-to-GDP ratio (also a result of the pandemic), it will require several years of low and falling deficits, and a higher share of capital expenditure (which boosts growth for several years, unlike revenue expenditure which tends to have a lower growth multiplier), to bring debt ratios down to a comfortable level. The creation of the price stabilisation fund is also important to bring down food inflation, which is preventing the monetary policy committee from cutting interest rates.

> **"The budget has correctly identified and worked on critical bottlenecks that need to be released for India to have sustained high growth"**
> **–ASHIMA GOYAL**

▶ MADAN SABNAVIS: The main thrust has been on attaining the FRBM (Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management) target of lowering the fiscal deficit by FY26 to 4.5 per cent. All proposals on taxation and expenditures are centred around this objective.

▶ ADITI NAYAR: The main thrust of the budget is a pragmatic balance between spending to boost India's consumption and investment potential, and fiscal consolidation.

Compared to the interim budget presented before the Lok Sabha election, there was a revenue upside available to the government at the time of preparing the full budget. We had anticipated that only around half of this revenue upside would be spent, while the other half would be used to compress the fiscal deficit. In line with our expectations, the July budget has enhanced the revenue expenditure by Rs 55,000 crore to support a number of sectors, while also providing modest tax relief. Simultaneously, it has pared the fiscal deficit to 4.9 per cent of GDP, as opposed to the Interim Budget Estimate of 5.1 per cent of the GDP, while keeping the capex target unchanged at Rs 11.1 lakh crore.

"There is a mild push to job creation via higher allocations to employment-generating spending in rural and urban areas"

–D.K. JOSHI

Q. Will the budget address the major concerns regarding job creation and how?

▶ **GOYAL:** The budget has taken steps to do so, with incentives for firms and more focus on labour-intensive sectors. The scheme to involve the private sector in skilling and allow the use of CSR funds for this will improve employability and ensure skills are relevant. One firm alone tends to under-train since other firms capture part of the benefit from these activities. This is an example of the classic spillover. So, a public subsidy helps firms raise training towards the socially required amount. The government must ensure benefits go only to the expansion of existing training programmes or to new ones.

▶ **RANADE:** Most of the jobs will be created by the private sector, and that too by small enterprises. The Economic Survey estimates that India needs to generate nearly 8 million jobs every year for the next couple of decades. These are jobs of the future, not of the past or even the present. This means that these jobs call for new skills and training. In India, we have a coexistence of both skills and jobs shortage. The way to acquire skills is not only through college or academies, but on-the-job learning. This requires a national strategy for apprenticeships and internships. The budget has provided the right signals in giving incentives for job creation as well as skilling through apprenticeships.

▶ **JOSHI:** There is a mild push to job creation via higher allocations to employment-generating spending in rural and urban areas. Higher allocation to rural and urban housing schemes will promote construction, which is labour-intensive. Besides these, the announcement of the Purvodaya scheme to enhance infrastructure and road connectivity in Bihar, Jharkhand, West Bengal, Odisha and Andhra Pradesh can also create employment opportunities in construction in the region.

Incentives for skilling and employment of 41 million youth by offering to work in conjunction with the private sector over the next five years will support employment creation. The budget projects spending Rs 2 lakh crore on these new 'employment-linked incentive' schemes over a five-year period.

Q. How do you assess the focus that the budget has accorded to social sectors like education and healthcare?

▶ **GOYAL:** A major reason for under-performance in these areas is overlapping state and central responsibility. If budget initiatives to improve central/state coordination cover these areas also, real improvement is possible. Governance issues are more of a block than finances for the improvement of these services. With rapid urbanisation, many rural areas are actually urban and need well-functioning municipalities with adequate funds and functionaries to provide adequate services.

▶ **RANADE:** India needs to spend up to 6 per cent of GDP on education and skilling. We are not even halfway there. Of course, the bulk of this spending will come from private sources, not just the government. Just as for the past few years, the government has been pushing spending on physical capital (infrastructure), now the time is to push spending on human capital. This includes both health and education. Given that the median age of the country is around 28, it means education is more important than health (although both need much higher spending). We also need to address the fact that malnutrition (if not hunger) is still very significant among children. This calls for a focus on the biofortification of mid-day meals in schools

The Economic Survey noted the dominant role the private sector could play in terms of driving employment and incomes. In line with this view, the government has incentivised the private sector.

▶ **MISHRA:** With India's GDP more than a year behind where it would have been if the pandemic had not occurred, there is significant slack in the labour market. This means that more than one year of workers joining the workforce are surplus, and this in turn is also reducing the pricing power for workers, keeping real wage growth very low. The announcement of employment-linked incentive schemes was an acknowledgement of this challenge. However, the government wisely refrained from shortcuts like trying to create jobs itself by expanding the size of the government. The extra ten thousand crores allocated for these schemes should help formalise a few million jobs. But to make substantial changes over the medium term, the government needs to create the right environment for private sector investment, and reduce the compliance burden for entrepreneurs to flourish. The boost in construction, with the revival of the real estate market, can also help create jobs at scale.

▶ **SABNAVIS:** There is a direct push given to job creation in the private sector. The incentive being given for first-time employees benefitting both the worker and employer is an example of this effort. Also, the support being given to MSMEs to invest more will lead to more jobs in the course of time. Specific incentives given to some industries in the energy sector, housing and inclusive development involving four states will also generate employment. Hence, there is both direct and indirect push.

▶ **NAYAR:** One of the highlights of the budget is the focus on employment and skilling. The finance minister has announced a multi-year package amounting to Rs 2 lakh crore for employment-linked incentives. This has multiple schemes which include benefits such as wage subsidies to first-time workers in the formal sector, incentives covering EPFO payments by employers and employees in the manufacturing sector, reimbursement of EPFO contributions of employers that increase their employee count, and allowances to facilitate internships by corporates. The execution of these measures could provide significant job opportunities over the medium term.

Additionally, the continued focus on infra creation, amid the sizeable capex allocation, also augurs well for job creation, with the construction sector being the second largest employer in India (after agriculture). Moreover, a sharp hike in the PM Awas Yojana allocation to Rs 85,000 crore in FY25 Budget Estimates (BE), from Rs 54,000 crore in FY24 Revised Estimates (RE), will support employment generation in rural and urban areas.

> "The budget has done well to signal a pivot toward human capital spending and not just infra spending"
>
> –AJIT RANADE

and addressing nutrition needs, not just calories. The budget has done well to signal a pivot toward human capital spending and not just infra spending.

▶ **JOSHI:** The budget highlights these in its list of priority sectors. For fiscal 2025, it earmarks Rs 1.48 lakh crore for education, skilling and employment. Health and education are largely in the domain of states.

▶ **MISHRA:** Education and healthcare are primarily state subjects, though the Centre too spends a reasonable sum on the sectors. The budget speech highlighted skilling and inclusive growth as priorities for the government over the next five years.

▶ **SABNAVIS:** These are concurrent subjects and require states to also do their bit. From the central level, adequate effort has been put within the realm of the budgetary goals of fiscal prudence. The interest subvention for education loans is a direct measure. Customs relaxation for some medicines and equipment can be positive props for the health sector. This is besides the allocation for various schemes which cumulate to around Rs 2.1 lakh crore for both the sectors/ministries.

▶ **NAYAR:** Given the under-penetrated healthcare

infrastructure in the country, the increased budgetary allocation towards this sector is a welcome move. The exemption on customs duty for three more cancer drugs will make the associated treatments more affordable, benefitting patients and the healthcare ecosystem.

The reduction/exemption in the customs duty on the raw materials used in medical devices and implants will reduce costs for manufacturers. The higher allocation towards the pharma production-linked incentive (PLI) scheme hints at an expected increase in the production of drugs under this scheme, helping reduce dependence on imports to an extent. The 7.4 per cent increase in allocation towards the Ayushman Bharat Scheme in FY25 BE reaffirms the government's focus on national health protection, leading to a rise in patient footfalls for healthcare companies.

The proposals to incentivise domestic higher education through interest subvention and the incentives for addition of jobs in the formal sector could also enhance the growth of the formal sectors of the economy.

Q. Will the budget help boost manufacturing and the MSME sectors?

▶ **GOYAL:** Central credit warranty worked well during the pandemic. Since many MSMEs recovered, the funds actually needed were less, making it an efficient scheme. It is good it is being revived. The other feature of the budget is continuity. The focus on ease of doing business, reducing tax/regulatory complexity and improving logistics have boosted manufacturing in the past and will continue to do so. Policy stability is important for the private sector.

▶ **RANADE:** India's share of manufacturing needs to go from current 17 per cent to at least 22 or 23 per cent of GDP. This will mainly be contributed by the small businesses. The budget provides many measures to enhance the working of MSMEs—collateral-free loans, credit guarantees and access to export markets via e-commerce. India is consciously moving toward participating actively in global value chains, even those which go through China. This policy is not driven merely by "value addition" as in the past, but by "job creation" and also access to global markets.

▶ **JOSHI:** Key measures announced include steps to reduce the corporate tax rate on foreign companies to 35 per cent from 40 per cent, abolition of angel tax and increase in some basic customs duties to promote value addition in domestic production.

Rationalising import costs for critical minerals and raw materials through duty adjustments will reduce costs and spur domestic value addition in emerging sectors. These include electric vehicle batteries, storage systems, photovoltaic module manufacturing and electronics, where critical minerals form a crucial part of the value chain. Allocation under PLI schemes is up 74 per cent in FY25 BE, reflecting their gradual success.

For MSMEs, the budget has addressed credit requirement needs taking cognisance of their lack of collateral. Moreover, there is a government-promoted credit guarantee fund for MSMEs.

> "By targeting to bring down the cost of capital, and promising to streamline and simplify taxation, the government is improving the operating environment for manufacturers"
>
> –NEELKANTH MISHRA

▶ **MISHRA:** By targeting to bring down the cost of capital over the medium term, and promising to streamline and simplify taxation, the government is improving the operating environment for manufacturers. Support to employment, as well as the boost to infrastructure that is helping bring down logistics costs, should also help manufacturers. Raising limits for Mudra loans, and trying to develop a new credit assessment model can help improve access to credit for MSMEs, among other direct measures announced, like for irradiation centres for MSMEs in food processing.

Q. Do you think the budget will help boost consumption and investment?

▶ **SABNAVIS:** Direct incentives have been given to MSMEs which will help the sector. For manufacturing, the push given to capex and housing will benefit steel, cement, chemicals, machinery etc.

▶ **NAYAR:** The budget contains several important proposals to boost credit flow to the MSME sector, including a new credit guarantee scheme to facilitate loans for the purchase of machinery and equipment, provision of guarantees to facilitate loans to MSMEs in SMA (special mention account) stage to prevent them getting into the NPA (non-performing asset) stage, doubling the limit of Mudra loans for a category of borrowers, and the expansion of SIDBI branches in all major MSME clusters.

These measures would play an important role in ensuring credit flow and reducing the cost of funds for MSMEs. This would particularly support manufacturing output and exports, as well as job creation.

The government has budgeted Rs 62,600 crore for 'new schemes' under the finance ministry. We believe that a part of this amount is likely to be on account of the measures to boost credit flow to the MSME sector.

▶ **GOYAL:** Before the budget, we saw a crescendo of demands for all kinds of demand stimulus, justified as boosting the economy through raising consumption and investment. The same demands were made during the pandemic. But countries that followed that path saw high inflation because of supply chain snarls etc. India's balance of supply-side measures with stimulus more from better composition than the level of public expenditure has served it well in sustaining a robust growth recovery. It is good the budget resisted these demands and continues with the more long-term strategy that is showing results.

▶ **RANADE:** It is true that despite a fairly rosy macro picture in terms of high growth, moderate headline inflation, adequate foreign exchange and booming stock markets, the underlying microeconomic picture has been worrying. Rural wages have not grown for quite some time. Consumption spending has been growing more slowly than GDP. Private investment spending is stagnating, even as public spending, especially on infrastructure, was very strong. Hence, it was important to provide measures to boost private consumption and investment. Consumption in rural markets needs to be addressed. There is nothing in terms of short-term measures (like consumption vouchers or investment rebates) and, in any case, short-term measures won't work. As the economy moves to a stable higher orbit, with more skilling, and ensuring the growth of MSMEs, eventually we should see consumption and private investment pick up.

▶ **JOSHI:** Sustainable growth remains at the core of this budget. The government has continued to maintain its focus on capex with an aim to create long-term economic growth. However, it also provides mild support to consumption. Consumption growth, which was lagging till fiscal 2024, is expected to pick up this fiscal, buoyed by better agriculture incomes, an expected decline in food inflation, enhanced government funding for schemes that generate employment (especially in construction) and a slight rise in disposable incomes in the hands of the salaried class since it eases the tax burden.

> "The job creation spoken of as well as the lower tax paid by most taxpayers will increase income and hence spending power"
>
> –MADAN SABNAVIS

Private investment is not yet broad-based and is largely driven by the government and households. Even as the government consolidates further fiscally (a fiscal deficit-to-GDP ratio of below 4.5 per cent in FY26, down from 4.9 per cent budgeted for this fiscal), its ability to support the investment cycle via infrastructure funding will reduce. The private sector is gradually picking up the baton from the government.

▶ **MISHRA:** A lower fiscal deficit creates financial space for the private sector to step in. By next year, when the government intends to bring down the fiscal deficit below 4.5 per cent of GDP, the demand for bonds will start outpacing their supply, further pushing down yields on government bonds, and thus

supporting credit availability for private firms, a necessary condition for growing investment.

The direct impact on consumption from the cut in implied taxes due to the hike in the standard deduction and raising of income tax slabs, while supportive, may not be large enough. If the employment-linked incentive schemes generate the targeted number of jobs, there can be some boost to consumption.

▶ **SABNAVIS:** Yes. The job creation spoken of as well as the lower tax paid by most taxpayers will increase income and hence spending power. As GST is outside the purview, nothing could be done to lower prices. The amount may not be very significant, but this is the maximum that budgets can do, i.e., increase disposable income. For investment, we can see it picking up for sectors that are related to infrastructure.

▶ **NAYAR:** The budget brought in some modest tweaks to the personal income tax, and the resultant relief is highly likely to be channelised towards consumption. Similarly, the modest hikes in rural-focused schemes would benefit rural sentiment, although a sustained pickup in demand is more likely only after the farm sector receives the kharif cash flows.

The reduction in the customs duty on silver and gold will support the relatively labour-intensive industry through enhanced demand and curb illegal imports and smuggling.

On the investment front, the measures to boost credit flow to MSMEs would encourage the purchase of machinery, thereby supporting capacity creation. Additionally, the 17.1 per cent expansion in the government's capex target vis-à-vis FY24, although lower than the 20 per cent-plus rise seen in the last three years, will continue to support the growth in investment demand.

Q. Is there any key area you would have still wanted the budget to address?

▶ **GOYAL:** Post-pandemic budgets have always spent more than they had promised. But last year, spending was marginally less than planned. Although the share of capital expenditure has gone up steadily from around 20 per cent towards 30 per cent, its share was also less than planned, along with large under-utilisation of government cash balances. Part of the spending shortfall may be due to the elections. I would have liked to see some attention on project readiness and expenditure timing and quality in the budget so that we have over-delivery again next year.

▶ **RANADE:** Of course, it is always easy to point out "missed opportunities" in any budget speech. I don't think that is fair, since a budget cannot possibly address all possible issues. The FM has done well to point toward a new comprehensive framework for economic strategy, sort of next-generation reforms. She has also said that the direct tax regime will undergo a thorough overhaul. I would like to see the share of direct taxes go up in the overall kitty. And the range of tax slabs should be widened. Because we go from zero tax to a full 30 per cent bracket within a short span of a few lakh rupees. Instead, the tax slabs should be modest at the lower end, and the high rates should kick in only at high incomes of, say, Rs 1 crore and above. And the tax net should be widened. India acknowledges that it is an outlier compared to other countries, having only 7 taxpayers for every 100 voters. This needs to change.

▶ **JOSHI:** The budget should have signalled reforms in land, labour and agriculture. It is important to frontload the reform efforts since the payoff comes with a lag.

▶ **MISHRA:** The budget has indicated that details on a simplified regime of personal income tax and customs duties will be made available in six months, which means by the next budget in February 2025. Similarly, the government's plans to accelerate urban development may perhaps become clearer once the 16th Finance Commission has finalised the direct share of revenues of cities.

▶ **SABNAVIS:** Savings could have been addressed. But the government has given the impression that it is happy with people switching to the new tax scheme with no deductibles. Increasing [the Section] 80C [limit] would have helped a lot to augment savings.

▶ **NAYAR:** Traditionally, a budget is basically meant to be an accounting statement that lays out the revenues and expenses the government anticipates for the fiscal. However, budgets in India are seen as a major policy statement of the government. This budget has elucidated the policy direction for a number of sectors. The implementation of the same will now be key. ■

> "This budget has elucidated the policy direction for a number of sectors. The implementation of the same will now be key"
>
> –ADITI NAYAR

CENTRE FOR INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER

The Centre for Innovation and Technology Transfer aims to be a leading private deep-tech startup hub. The Centre will support students, scientists, faculty, alumni members and external entrepreneurs in creating successful deep tech startups, and translating benefits to the society. The Centre nurtures technology ventures by providing technological and business support to help entrepreneurs establish business ventures. In addition to this, the centre supports the University's scientists and faculty in product development, industry connect and commercialization.

ADVANCED CHARACTERIZATION FACILITY

Advanced Characterization facility like X-ray Diffractometer (XRD), Field Emission Scanning Electron Microscope (FESEM) and High Resolution Scanning Transmission Electron Microscope (HRSTEM) are available at the centre which can be used for understanding the structure, composition, shape, size and morphology of different kinds of materials at Nano scale.

MEDIA CENTRE

A Media Centre with state of the art infrastructure has been set up to facilitate preparation of e-content. This Centre helps the faculty in creating high quality Video Lectures and e-content to support online teaching-learning process.

AI SUPERCOMPUTING FACILITY

The AI Supercomputing Lab is a groundbreaking AI research facility that aims to become a strong center for AI research. This lab aims to train and engage students and researchers in cutting-edge AI algorithms and its applications. The facility houses a 95-node supercomputer with 9.6 Peta FLOPS of AI performance. A tiered storage architecture is adopted to utilize flash storage and hence make data server provide industry-topping data speeds.

CENTRE FOR OCEAN RESEARCH

APPLIED PHYCOLOGY LAB

The Applied Phycology lab with advanced instruments like a Continuous Flow Analyzer (Auto Lab), ATR-FTIR, and Multimode reader explores the potential aspects of algae across different domains including biotechnology, environmental sustainability, and other industrial applications. This lab primarily works on algal adhesion and its consequences in the marine environment to highlight the efforts in developing eco-friendly techniques in combatting marine biofouling problems. Also it focuses on micro algal culture techniques to enhance biomass production and in macro algal population, for spore based seed production.

BIOMOLECULES SEPARATION LAB

The Biomolecules separation lab equipped with Thin-layer chromatography (TLC) and High-performance liquid chromatography (HPLC) used to isolate novel molecules from Natural Resources. This lab provides precise quantitative analysis by separating biomolecules based on their affinity for the stationary phase under high pressure. Through this multi-step process, scientists can effectively separate and analyze biomolecules present in diverse biological samples with accuracy and efficiency. These finds will helpful in designing new compounds or molecules for Environmental and Biomedical application.

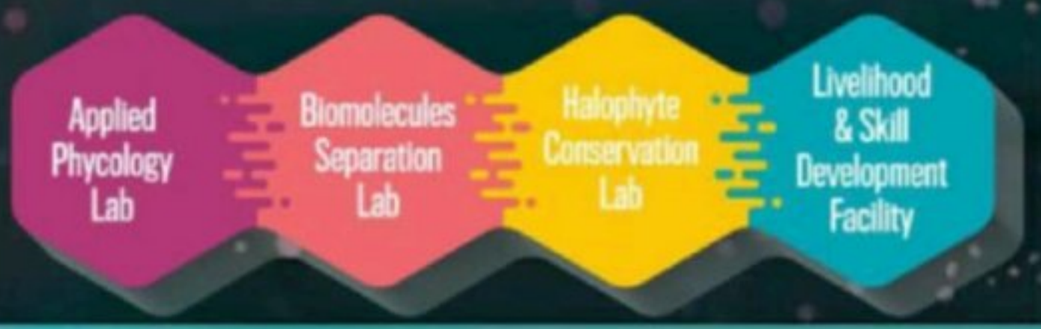
HALOPHYTE CONSERVATION LAB

Halophyte Conservation Lab conducts applied research to perform field and laboratory studies on seagrasses, seaweeds and mangroves. The experiments accomplished will integrate the management strategies for conservation and restoration initiatives of highly productive ecosystems. In-vitro micropropagation and mesocosm chamber in this lab, is used for warming and acidification experiments and to induce halophyte cells by novel methods for the purpose of natural product research, metabolic engineering and conservation aspects.

LIVELIHOOD AND SKILL DEVELOPMENT FACILITY

Livelihood and Skill Development facility is created to empower the youth with adequate skill sets that will enable their employment in relevant sectors and also improve productivity. The facility with associated labs and advanced instrumentation conducts capacity building through Skill development programmes. The trained youth will be encouraged with Institutional Seed fund to develop their own commercial products. In addition, the facility enables to scaleup their finished product to marketable viable product through Sathyabama Technology Business Incubator.

CENTRE FOR OCEAN RESEARCH



SATHYABAMA
INSTITUTE OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
(DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY)
CATEGORY - 1 UNIVERSITY BY UGC

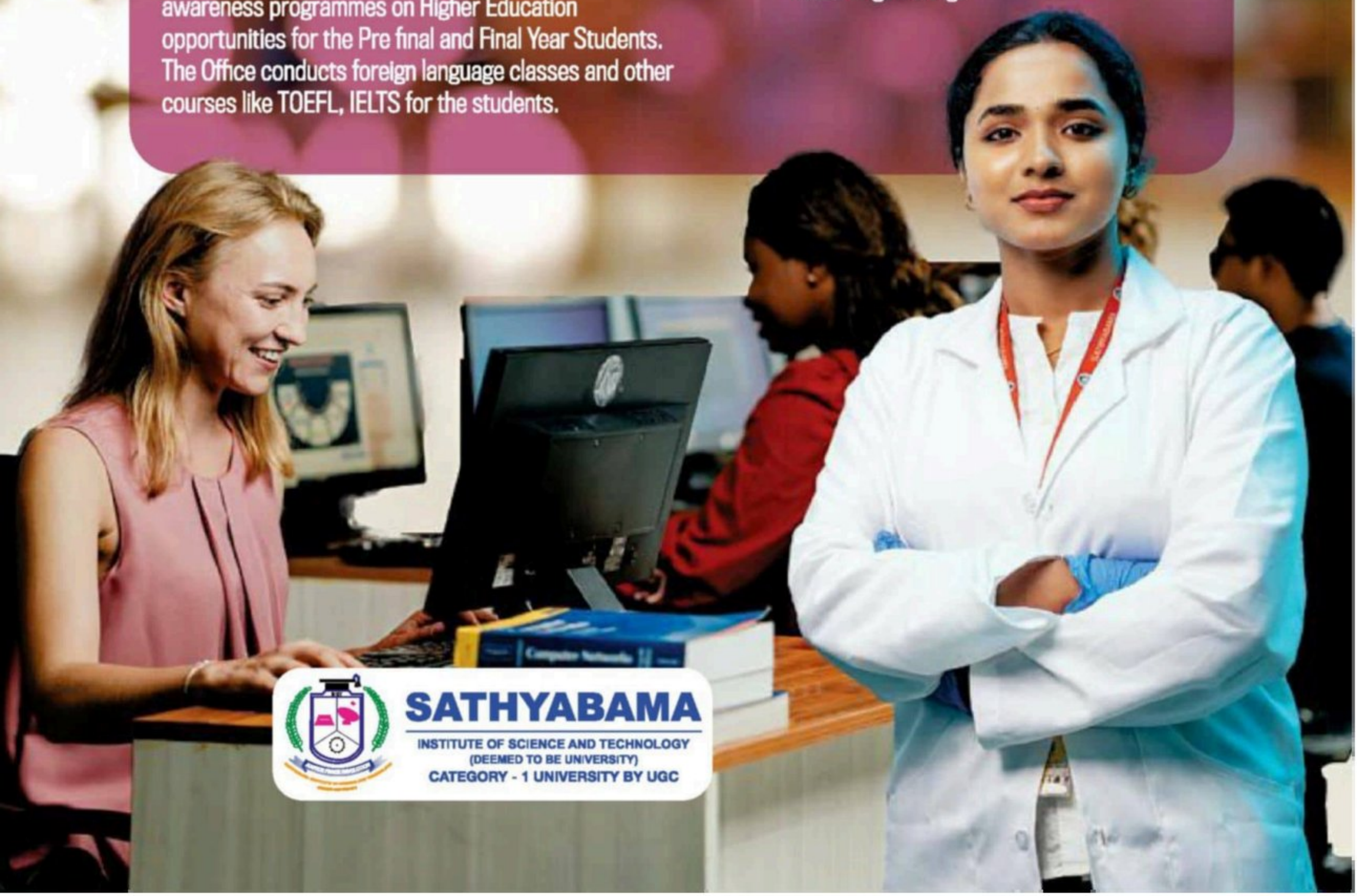
OFFICE OF THE INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS & HIGHER STUDIES

The office of the International relations facilitates collaboration with International Universities for activities including Student Exchange, Faculty Exchange, Joint Research and other Collaborative activities for the benefit of the students and faculty. The office also initiates Semester Abroad Programmes, Internship Abroad Programmes and Summer Schools with Partnering Universities for the students of the Institution. The office also facilitates Faculty and Student Mobility programmes Funded by International Funding Organisations.

The Office of the Higher Studies helps in identifying and selecting the Universities to pursue Master Degree Programmes, provides support in the process of application, Letters of Recommendation and organises awareness programmes on Higher Education opportunities for the Pre final and Final Year Students. The Office conducts foreign language classes and other courses like TOEFL, IELTS for the students.

MAKERSPACE

Makerspace is a state of art additive manufacturing facility established to foster innovations in young engineers, facilitate research and support additive manufacturing in industries. This unique facility is distinguished as a "Centre of Excellence for Additive Manufacturing" by Sratasys,India. Makerspace includes labs for material synthesis & testing, prototype designing and tissue engineering.



SATHYABAMA
INSTITUTE OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
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BEST INDIAN UNIVERSITIES

WINNERS OF THE INDIA TODAY-MDRA BEST UNIVERSITIES SURVEY, 2024

Illustration by **NILANJAN DAS**

A GLOBAL CLASS

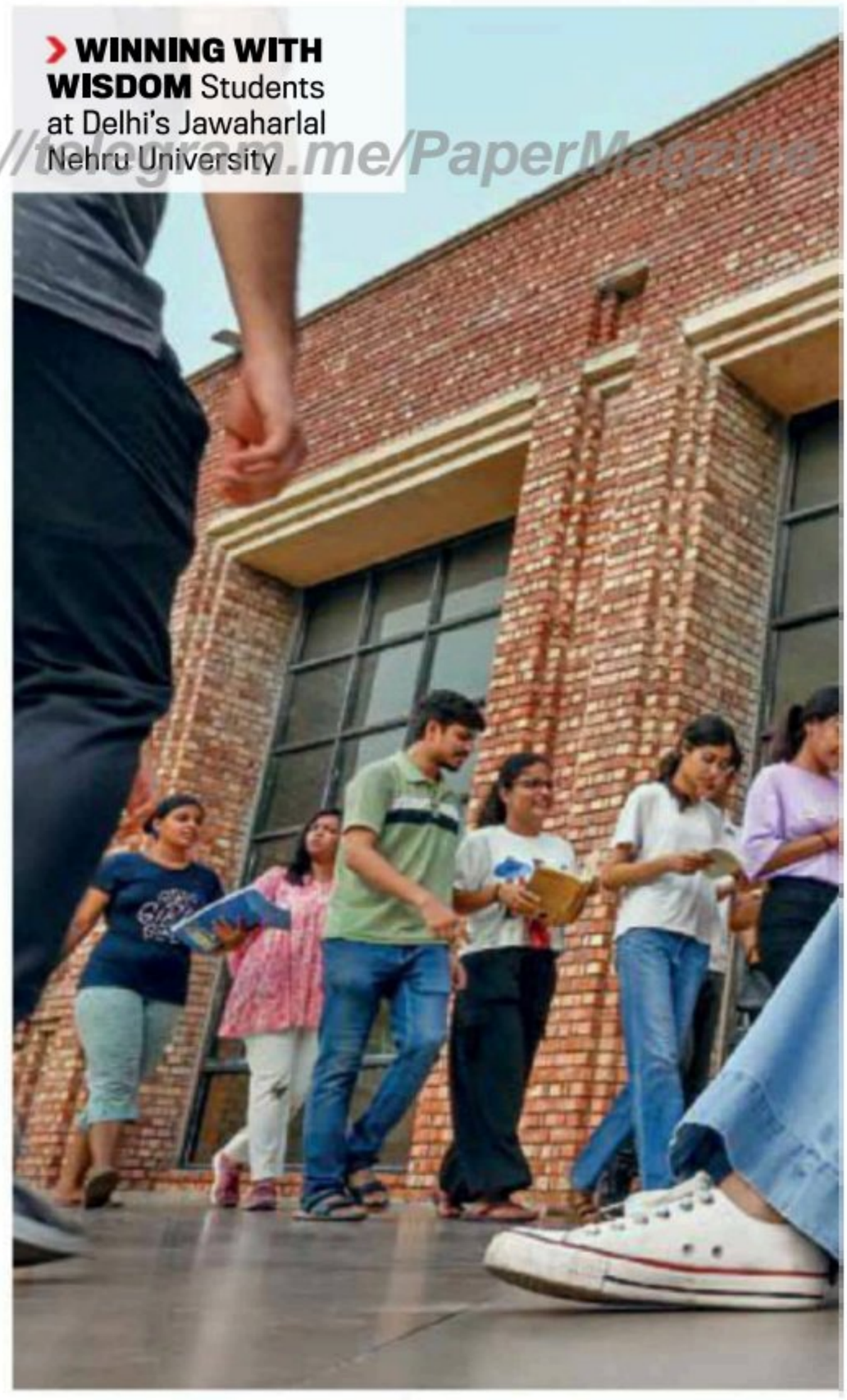
WHAT IT WILL TAKE FOR INDIA TO MAKE A GIANT LEAP IN EDUCATION INSTEAD OF INCREMENTAL CHANGE

By KAUSHIK DEKA

INDIA'S HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM STANDS AT A CROSSROADS. IT HAS THE POTENTIAL TO BE A GLOBAL leader, and significant progress has been made in that direction, but addressing the challenges of access, quality, research and employability is crucial for the system to realise its full potential. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 provides a robust framework for these reforms. It aims to transform the education system by promoting internationalisation, reducing the emphasis on rote learning and encouraging multi-disciplinary courses. The NEP also focuses on improving faculty-student ratios, enhancing research funding and fostering a culture of research and innovation. However, the successful implementation of this policy, as many have concluded, will require the coordinated effort of the government, the institutions and the private sector.

To transform its higher education landscape and secure its place as a global leader in education and development, India must foster a culture of critical thinking and innovation as well ensure equitable access to quality education. One of the critical pillars for facilitating this change is the university ecosystem, which, in the long run, will determine the economic strength of a country.

Japan, Singapore, Hong Kong, Taiwan and South Korea, for instance, are Asian nations that have significantly invested in enhancing both the quality and the accessibility of their university systems. This strategic investment has allowed them to overcome the middle-income trap and attain advanced levels of development. China, in particular, has been aligning its higher education with international standards since the 1980s, accounting for its leading position among Asian countries in university rankings. India, by



WINNING WITH WISDOM Students at Delhi's Jawaharlal Nehru University

CHANDRADEEP KUMAR

INDIA'S NO. 1 UNIVERSITIES

STREAM	UNIVERSITY
GENERAL (GOVERNMENT)	JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY, NEW DELHI
GENERAL (PRIVATE)	SYMBIOSIS INTERNATIONAL (DEEMED UNIVERSITY), PUNE
MEDICAL	ALL INDIA INSTITUTE OF MEDICAL SCIENCES, NEW DELHI
TECHNICAL	INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY-DELHI, NEW DELHI
LAW	NATIONAL LAW SCHOOL OF INDIA UNIVERSITY, BENGALURU

contrast, has struggled to place its universities among the global top 100. This is a function of systemic issues rather than the capabilities of its students, who have demonstrated success in international arenas.

However, there are encouraging signs. The London-based Times Higher Education 'Young University Rankings' 2024, for instance, which lists universities under 50 years old, had 55 new Indian institutions, with another 43 rapidly rising. Two of the 55 universities in the current list—Anna University and Mahatma Gandhi University—are even among the top 100. This is already 10 higher than 45 last year and 26 in 2020. This increase is attributed to higher participation in voluntary surveys, education reforms and greater investment in research. It also indicates that newer universities with flexible administrative cultures are adapting quickly to the new policy framework.

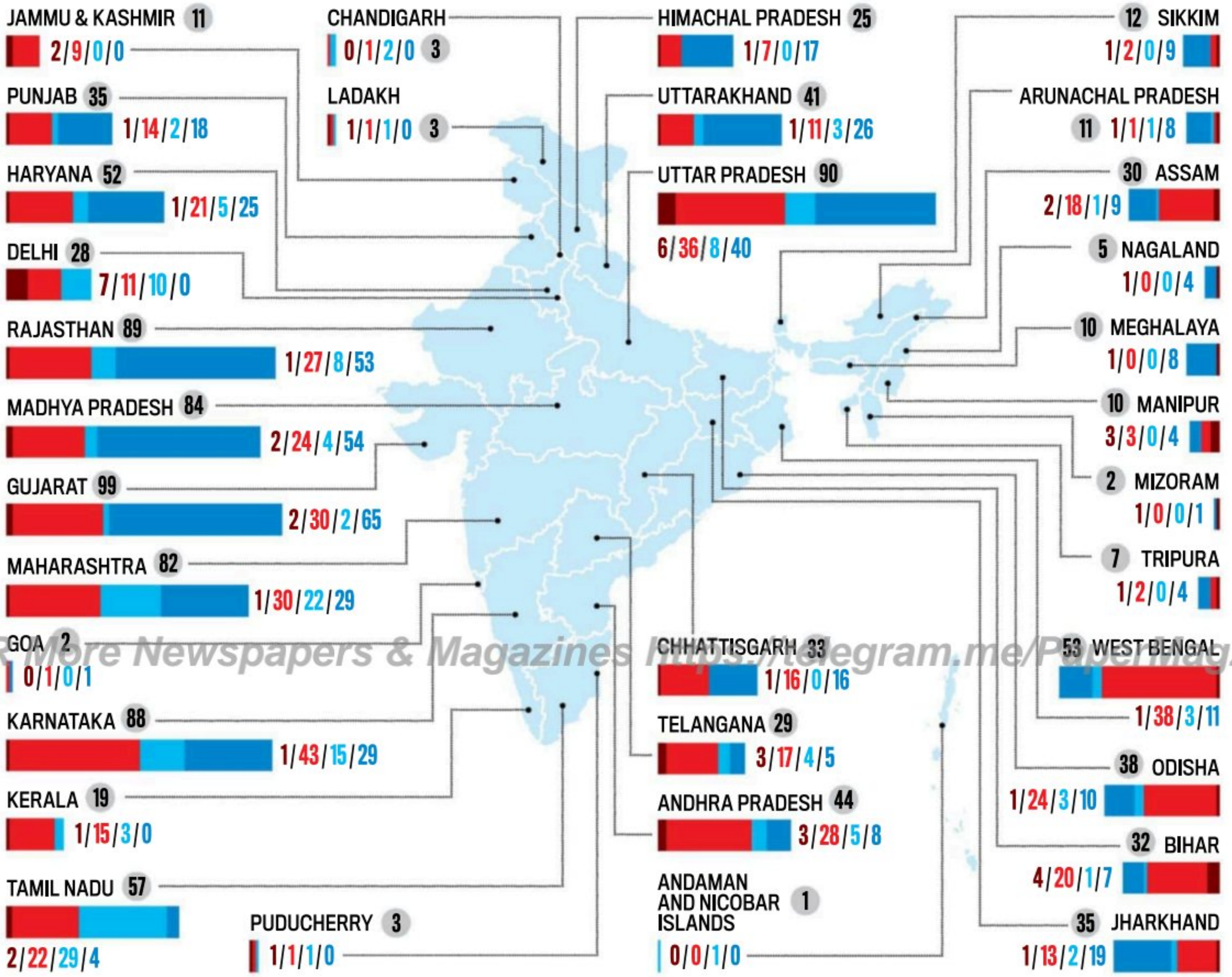
Likewise, Indian universities showed the highest performance improvement among G20 nations in the QS University rankings this year, with the country having the second-highest number of universities featured in the QS Subject Rankings in Asia, behind China. London-based analytics firm Quacquarelli Symonds has been publishing such rankings for 20 years now. From 2017 to 2022, India's re-

THE UNIVERSITY ECOSYSTEM

TYPE OF UNIVERSITY	TOTAL NUMBER
CENTRAL UNIVERSITIES	56
STATE UNIVERSITIES	487
DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITIES	136
PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES	484
TOTAL	1,163

INDIA'S BEST UNIVERSITIES

SPREAD OF THE UNIVERSITIES



Graphic by
TANMOY CHAKRABORTY

search output increased by 54 per cent, making it the fourth-largest globally. Indian institutions excelled in fields such as Computer Science, Chemistry, Biological Sciences, Business Studies and Physics.

Despite these positive developments, disparities in access and quality of education have remained a major challenge for Indian universities. Regulatory bodies like the University Grants Commission (UGC) and the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) oversee quality standards, but maintaining these standards across a vast number of institutions is a constant work in progress. This makes regular monitoring crucial to ensure equity in the distribution of quality education.

This is something the India Today Group's annual rankings of India's best universities have been doing for the past decade. Not only do they foster a competitive spirit among universities, they also provide students and parents with valuable information to help them make informed choices.

Conducted by India's leading research agency, the Marketing and Development Research Associates (MDRA), the survey has become an essential tool to measure the academic and infrastructural status of Indian universities. Its growing acceptance and credibility are evident from the increase in the number of participating universities, from 120 in 2019 to 173 this year.

Like every year, the 2024 rankings too help us map the educational

landscape of the country. And what it shows is the dominance of the universities from the north and south in the top ranks. Among the top 20 government general universities, eight are from the north and 10 from the south, increasing their combined total to 18 from 16 last year. In contrast, the dominance is less pronounced among the top 20 private general universities, with 11 from the north and five from the south, reducing their combined total from 18 last year to 16 now. Interestingly, Symbiosis International (Deemed University) topped the private general universities list, participating in the survey for the first time. In the medical universities rankings, four of the top 10 are from the north, two less than last year, while three are from the south, one more than last year. In 2022, southern universities made up 50 per cent of the top 10 rankings.

The distribution is more even among the top 20 technical universities, with eight from the north, four from the east, three each from the west and south, and two from central India. Similarly, the nine participating law universities are spread evenly across the country's geography, with three in the south, two in the east, two in central India, and one each in the west and north.

One encouraging outcome of this year's survey is the slightly reduced gap in the quality of education between government and private general universities. Out of a total score of 2,000, the top 10 government general universities scored between 1,805 and 1,532, while private universities scored between 1,651 and 1,367, an improvement from last year's range of 1,609 to 1,375. However, the disparity between government and private universities in the medical and technical streams continues to be a cause for concern.

With more than 40 per cent of the country's universities in the private sector, it is essential to bridge these gaps quickly. Our rankings aim to alert policymakers on disparities in the quality of education and to inspire competition among universities, catalysing improvement and a more even distribution of quality across institutions. At the same time, they help students choose the right courses at the right universities. Indian students have shown great success internationally, and they deserve better higher educational institutions at home. Not only will this prevent brain drain from our country, but it will also allow students from other countries seek an education in our universities, making them truly global institutions. It's well worth aspiring for and working towards this mission. ■

SCHOLARLY PURSUITS The vibrant campus of Amity University Uttar Pradesh, Noida

CHANDRADEEP KUMAR

THE EXPANDING UNIVERSE

More than 360 new universities have come up in the past decade; 70 set up in the past one year

YEAR	NO. OF UNIVERSITIES
2015-16	799
2016-17	864
2017-18	903
2018-19	993
2019-20	1,043
2021-22	1,047
2023	1,093
2024	1,163

METHODOLOGY

HOW THE UNIVERSITIES WERE RANKED

With 655 general, 79 medical, 192 technical and 27 law universities on its radar, the India Today Group's annual rankings of Best Universities are a crucial barometer of the country's higher education universe. The rich information and data therein not only make it easier for aspirants to take critical career decisions, it also benefits other stakeholders such as recruiters, parents, alumni, policymakers and people at large.

INDIA TODAY's knowledge partner Marketing and Development Research Associates (MDRA), a reputed research agency, followed a rigorous methodology while conducting this survey between January 2024 and July 2024. For the objective ranking, MDRA carefully attuned 120+ attributes to arrive at a comprehensive and balanced comparison of universities. These attributes were clubbed under five broad parameters—'Reputation & Governance', 'Academic & Research Excellence', 'Infrastructure & Living Experience', 'Personality and Leadership Development' and 'Career Progression and Placement'. The rankings were based on the data the universities provided for the current year.

A list of 750+ universities fulfilling the criteria was prepared. Postgraduate courses under four streams—general, medical, technical and law—were considered for evaluation. Only universities offering full-time, in-classroom courses and having a minimum of three pass-out batches by the end of 2023 qualified.

Experts with rich experience in their fields were consulted to frame the parameters and sub-parameters for the respective categories of universities. After meticulously determining the indicators, their relative weights were finalised.

A comprehensive objective questionnaire was sent to qualifying universities and also uploaded on the MDRA and INDIA TODAY websites. As many as 174 universities submitted their data and supporting documents within the stipulated deadline.

After receiving the objective data from universities, the supporting documents were scrutinised extensively and the data verified through every possible means. An objective score was given to each university under the five indicators. While computing objective scores, it was ensured that aggregate data alone was not used and hence data was normalised.

A perceptual survey was carried out among well-informed 320 respondents (35 chancellors/vice-chancellors, 79 directors/deans/registrars, 206 senior faculty (professors and heads of departments) across 20+ cities divided into four zones.

- **North: Delhi-NCR, Lucknow, Jaipur, Chandigarh**
- **West: Mumbai, Pune, Ahmedabad, Indore**
- **South: Chennai, Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Coimbatore**
- **East: Kolkata, Bhubaneswar, Guwahati, Patna**

National and zonal rankings were taken from them in their respective field of experience and given 75 per cent and 25 per cent weightage respectively. They also rated the universities on a 10-point scale on each of the five parameters. The total scores arrived from the objective and perception survey were added in the ratio of 50:50 to get the total combined score. The MDRA core team led by Executive Director Abhishek Agrawal included Project Director Abnish Jha, Deputy Research Manager Vaibhav Gupta, Assistant Research Executive Abhay Pratap Singh Rawat, Assistant Research Executive Mahak Gupta and Senior Executive-EDP Manveer Singh. ■

The overview of universities in the INDIA TODAY rankings not only helps aspirants make crucial career decisions but also stakeholders to frame policy

EMPOWERING THE FUTURE OF FASHION:

NIFT'S WAY FORWARD TO EXCELLENCE

The National Institute of Fashion Technology (NIFT) is India's foremost institution in fashion education that continues to redefine design excellence as it secures its 10th global ranking among design schools. This global ranking solidifies its position as a premier institute for fashion in the field of Design, Management and Technology for more than 3 decades of its existence. With a visionary curriculum, and a commitment to fostering individual talents, NIFT is setting new standards in design education.

With 19 Campuses across the country, NIFT has been instrumental in steering the fashion business of the country. The Institute's global expansion is underway with overseas campuses proposed in locations such as Dubai, reflecting NIFT's commitment to becoming a global leader in fashion education. NIFT is also initiating international campuses and supporting design institutes in Mauritius, Bangladesh, Nepal, and Tashkent.

With a vision to have a stronger global connect, NIFT has collaborations with renowned international institutions, fostering an environment of cross-cultural exchange and learning. Through its students exchange programme, NIFT is able to offer study abroad opportunities to the students through semester exchange collaborations and Dual Degree programmes with leading fashion and design schools of the world. Building upon its existing network of over twenty-two international linkages with reputed institutions such as the Fashion Institute of Technology, Nottingham Trent University, and the Royal Academy of Arts, NIFT further expanded its reach this year. Noteworthy additions include partnerships with institutions like the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology, Australia; Arts University of Bournemouth, UK; Namuna College of Fashion Technology, Nepal, and Nordic Centre at Tampere University, Finland; BGMEA University of Fashion & Technology, Bangladesh, and University of Boras, Sweden.

In parallel, NIFT has forged collaborations with thirteen new domestic partners, including esteemed institutions like the Indian Institutes of Technology in Jodhpur and Mandi, the Indian Institute of Management in Jammu, and the Entrepreneurship Development Institute of India, Ahmedabad Textile Industry Research Association (ATIRA), and National Institute of Design (NID) in Ahmedabad. These partnerships are strategically planned to enrich NIFT's educational landscape through joint academic programmes, faculty exchanges, and research projects, thereby aligning curricula with global standards and emerging industry trends.

NIFT takes immense pride in its widespread and accomplished alumni network. Our graduates have played an important role in influencing the fashion industry, excelling as entrepreneurs, top-notch designers, CEOs, managers and other important positions in leading national and international organizations. Recently NIFT has set up Alumni and Industry Advisory Board at every campus to strengthen linkages among students, faculty, alumni and the industry. The Institute has also established a Global WECONNECT portal for the NIFT community to professionally connect and collaborate remotely. "The active alumni engagement through alumni meets and inviting alumni to share their expertise and knowledge will facilitate enduring relationships with their alma mater and contribute to the continuous growth and development of the institute as well as the industry", adds Director General, NIFT, Ms. Tanu Kashyap.

NIFT's initiatives in research and innovation, such as establishing dedicated centres focusing on sustainable fashion, textile technology, and design innovation, underscore the Institute's commitment to driving interdisciplinary collaboration and fostering entrepreneurship. The collaborations with various stakeholders will support industry partnerships, internships, and industry-led workshops, thus bridging the gap between industry and academia.

In essence, NIFT's collaborations will not only enhance the educational experience for its students but also encourage synergy within the design and creative sectors, unlocking immense opportunities for employment and growth in the future.

FOLLOW NIFT ONLINE:

- www.nift.ac.in
- facebook.com/NationalInstituteofFashionTechnologyIndia/
- instagram.com/n.i.f.t
- x.com/NIFT_HO

INDIA'S BEST UNIVERSITIES

"STUDENTS NOW GET ADDED COURSE OPTIONS TO MAKE THEM MORE EMPLOYABLE"

In alignment with the National Education Policy 2020, the University Grants Commission (UGC) introduced a series of reforms for higher education institutions or HEIs. These student-centric reforms focus on a new curriculum framework, a multidisciplinary approach, modern pedagogy and transparent regulations. In an exclusive interview with Executive Editor KAUSHIK DEKA, UGC Chairman M. JAGADESH KUMAR elaborates on the reforms undertaken by the higher education regulator and outlines a future roadmap. Edited excerpts from the interview.

Q. What are the significant reforms the UGC has initiated since you took charge in 2022?

The ministry of education and the country's educational institutions are collaborating on higher education reforms, with the UGC acting as a facilitator. One of the primary objectives is to provide freedom and flexibility to students. Technology enables us to collect data on learning outcomes, helping identify areas that need improvement, leading to policy interventions. One such initiative encourages institutions to adopt multidisciplinary education without concerns about funding and infrastructure.

We have also introduced new curriculum frameworks for undergraduate and postgraduate courses, offering significant flexibility. For example, students interested in studying medieval history can earn academic credits in insurance or risk management, enhancing their employment opportunities. Today, a large majority of the 43 million students pursue BA, BSc or BCom degrees. The UGC aims to make these undergraduate students employable by offering courses in artificial intelligence, machine learning, banking, finance and management, in addition to their regular discipline.

Postgraduate courses also offer flexibility. For instance, a commerce graduate can opt for an MA in applied mathematics by clearing a national entrance test and earning credits through SWAYAM online modules. In fact, we are also focusing on enhancing access to higher education through online means. The SWAYAM platform offers over 3,000 courses. Up to 40 per cent of undergraduate degree programme credits

RAJWANT RAWAT

can be earned through SWAYAM, benefitting rural students with limited access to facilities.

The Common University Entrance Test (CUET), introduced in 2022, provides a level playing field for students. They don't need to score 99 per cent to secure admission. It has helped students from rural and remote areas by allowing exams in 12 Indian languages, increasing diversity in top universities and enhancing national integration.

We will soon announce guidelines for internship-embedded undergraduate programmes, significantly impacting employment opportunities. For instance, a student in a four-year undergraduate programme can study for two years at the university and work as an apprentice in a related industry for the remaining two years.

Another reform gaining traction is the 'professor of practice' initiative. Experienced professionals, even without formal educational qualifications, can teach in higher educational institutions. Currently, 250 professors of practice have been appointed nationwide.

We have also announced a national credit framework integrating school education, skill and vocational education and higher education. Once a child is admitted to school, they are onboarded into this framework. These credits offer students flexibility in shaping their careers. For example, previously, if a student completed an ITI diploma or a certificate course after the 10th grade, they had no option to get admission to a university or pursue a PhD without starting over through regular courses. Now, an ITI diploma-holder can earn credits through bridge courses, obtain a certificate equivalent to 10+2 and join a university.

We have introduced new regulations for deemed universities, replacing restrictive norms. We also allow students to pursue two academic programmes simultaneously.

Last year, we launched the Malaviya Mission Teacher Training Programme to train teachers in new pedagogical approaches required for implementing the National Education Policy 2020. Additionally, we created the CU Chayan Portal to simplify the application process for teaching positions in central universities, centralising all recruitment advertisements and helping the UGC monitor vacancies.

Q. Why is it that no Indian university figures among the top 10 or 20 in global rankings?

Understanding how global agencies rank higher educational institutions is crucial. Around 40 per cent of the weightage is given to peer perception, 10 per cent to employer perception and 20 per cent to research output, the remaining allocated to various other parameters. While Indian universities may not yet be in the top 10, their presence in global rankings is increasing rapidly. With the implementation of the NEP and various other reforms in higher education, the situation will improve. Consider this. The total number of researchers in India is about 18 per cent of those in China and only about 5 per cent of those in the US. However, India is the third largest in terms of published papers, and the increasing citations of our papers indicate the rising global status of our universities.

Q. A major issue in higher education is the vacancies in universities. The UGC has recently reminded universities to fill these posts. What has been the response?

Faculty selection is often a complex and lengthy process, requiring universities to recruit teachers with the necessary expertise who may not be readily available. Having said that, some state universities have filled vacancies with contractual teachers who may not have the incentive to remain as committed to teaching and research as a regular faculty. State governments must prioritise recruiting regular faculty members. As a regulatory body, we can only remind and request universities to fill these positions.

Q. Critics argue that the UGC's changes to PhD admissions curtail university autonomy. Is that true?

Universities can independently admit candidates who clear the Junior Research Fellowship (JRF) to their PhD programmes. The UGC provides an additional option: 70 per cent weightage to UGC-NET scores and 30 per cent to university interviews, benefitting students without JRF. This process is not mandatory. The four-year undergraduate to PhD pathway is a global practice. However, a four-year undergraduate student does not directly proceed to a PhD, as many might assume. The student must first earn their undergraduate degree with a 75 per cent score and then clear the UGC-NET or a university-conducted test. If they fail to do so, they will need to complete one year of post-graduation, score at least 55 per cent, and then clear the UGC-NET or a university-conducted test.

Q. The UGC has also introduced the UGC (Fitness of Colleges for Receiving Grants) Rules, 2024, for HEIs, replacing the 1975 guidelines. Some

"INDIA HAS ONLY 18% OF THE RESEARCHERS CHINA HAS, AND 5% OF WHAT THE US HAS. BUT INDIA IS THE 3RD LARGEST IN TERMS OF PUBLISHED PAPERS"

say these have imposed stricter conditions on HEIs for recognition and receiving government funding.

Just a while ago, you asked me about filling up vacancies in universities. The new rules require universities to fill at least 75 per cent of their sanctioned positions to be eligible for central assistance. Additionally, universities must develop an institutional development plan (IDP). These guidelines serve as incentives for institutions to develop in the right direction. Higher education institutes have six months to create and submit their IDPs to the UGC. A group of experts will evaluate these plans and select the 10 best IDPs. Leaders from these top institutes will then be invited to share their IDPs with other institutional leaders so that others can learn from these.

Q. The UGC has published a list of central universities that have been granted Graded Autonomy. How will it change things for them?

Universities demonstrating a certain quality of education, infrastructure and research achievements are categorised into three levels, each with varying autonomy. Category 1 universities, for instance, can open off-campus centres without UGC inspection and offer online courses without lengthy approval processes. That's the level of trust shown for these institutes.

Q. How is the UGC improving transparency in university accreditation under the NAAC?

Accreditation assesses the overall health of an institution across various parameters. This process is both data-driven and includes physical visits by teams. There has been some criticism regarding data analysis and the objectivity of physical visits. Last year, the Radhakrishnan committee submitted several recommendations to strengthen the accreditation process. Consequently, we have introduced a scheme of binary accreditation and maturity-based accreditation.

Binary accreditation is a data-driven approach based on certain minimum criteria that apply to all institutions, regardless of their level of excellence. We aim to include around 90-95 per cent of institutions in the scope of binary accreditation. The next step is maturity level accreditation, which has five levels—from 1 to 5. Levels 1 to 4 are for institutions that have demonstrated excellence within India, while Level 5 is reserved for institutions that have shown global excellence. This process involves more detailed inspections of institutions and their data. Currently, the NAAC is conducting national-level workshops to raise awareness about this new process.

Q. Recently, several entrance tests conducted by the National Testing Agency, including the UGC-NET, have come under a cloud. Is it a systemic failure?

To ensure admissions are fair and unbiased in a large and diverse country like ours, they must be entirely based on objectivity, which is why entrance exams are necessary. While every system has its deficiencies, I do not believe the recent controversies surrounding NTA-conducted exams are due to systemic failures. Whenever a robust system is created, there will always be elements that try to exploit it. We don't shut down online financial transactions because of cyber attacks and frauds; instead, we build more resilient systems to withstand such attacks. Similarly, rather than weakening our system by criticising the NTA, we need to strengthen it by developing more robust processes. This is why the government has formed a committee to recommend reforms.

"WE DON'T SHUT DOWN ONLINE TRANSACTIONS BECAUSE OF CYBER FRAUD. LIKEWISE, WE MUST MAKE NTA STRONGER, NOT CRITICISE IT"

Q. What is the new Life Skills Curriculum introduced by the UGC?

As technology becomes more prevalent in our lives, students must possess basic knowledge in various areas beyond their chosen discipline to navigate the real world effectively. For instance, they need better skills in communication and financial management, and they also need to understand how to conduct themselves ethically in both professional and personal lives. These skills cannot be taught solely in classrooms; they must be acquired through real-life experiences. Therefore, we are encouraging universities to involve students in community services, sports, cultural activities and debating clubs.

Students are becoming overly focused on competition and success. However, they also need to develop the ability to lead balanced lives. They should value the importance of good health and physical activity, know how to maintain cordial relationships and handle crises positively. Our institutional spaces should provide opportunities for students to think multi-dimensionally, helping them become better human beings. This is the rationale behind the introduction of this curriculum.

Q. Finally, when will we see the Higher Education Commission of India?

I'm confident the government will make a decision at the appropriate time. Meanwhile, the UGC and other regulators are in constant dialogue to bring synergy to our guidelines and regulations. ■

NO. 1 JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY, *New Delhi*

ERA OF INCLUSIVE EXCELLENCE

JNU STUDENTS KNOW THEY HAVE ACCESS TO THE BEST MINDS IN VARIOUS FIELDS. THIS YEAR, THE VARSITY IS ALSO EXPANDING INTO THE E-LEARNING SEGMENT

By Sonali Acharjee

DESPITE THE MANY CONTROVERSIES that have roiled its campus in the past few years, Jawaharlal Nehru University, or JNU as it is popularly known, remains the preferred destination for students pursuing social sciences or applied sciences. Admissions seem to be getting tougher every year with more and more applications pouring in. While five years ago, an average of 20 candidates competed for a seat, today the average is 40. Some courses, such as a master's in International Relations, one of the oldest courses at JNU, see intense competition with nearly 220 students competing for a single seat. "We remain the best university for social sciences study and research in the country. Students want to come here not just because of JNU's reputation but also because they know we provide access to the best minds in various fields," says vice-chancellor and alumna Santishree Dhulipudi Pandit. "JNU is a different world altogether. Students who come here find it difficult to leave because the atmosphere of intellectual debate and diversity is addictive."

For those aspiring to study here, there are exciting developments to look forward to. JNU's School of Engineering is replacing its five-year dual-degree courses with two new BTech and three new MTech courses. Admissions will be based on the JEE Main scores and Joint Seat Allocation Authority (JOSAA) counselling. JNU is also expanding its reach

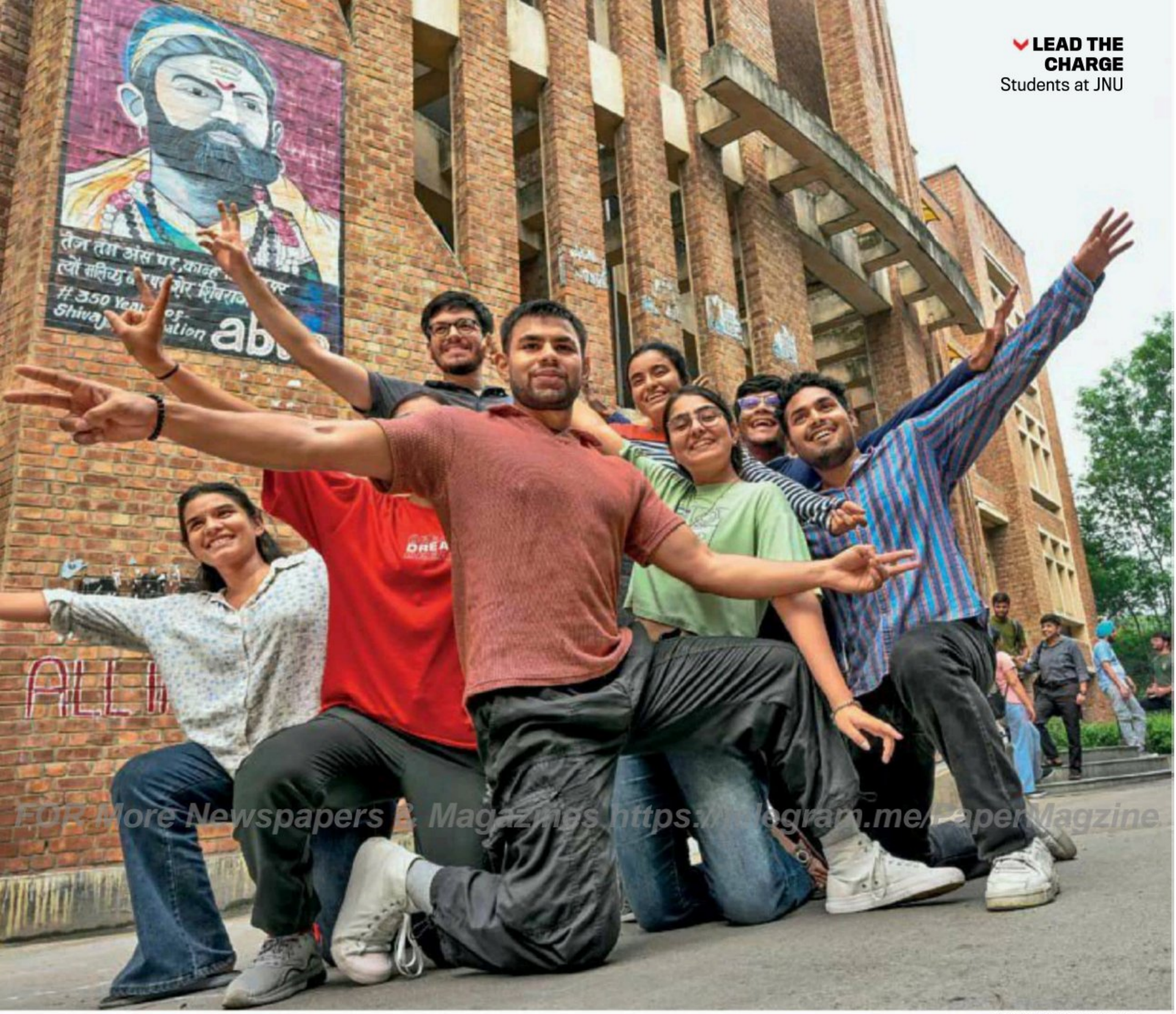
TOP 10

GENERAL UNIVERSITIES (GOVERNMENT)

RANK 2024	RANK 2023	RANK 2022	RANK 2021	RANK 2020	UNIVERSITY
1	1	1	1	1	JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY, NEW DELHI
2	2	2	2	NP	UNIVERSITY OF DELHI, NEW DELHI
3	3	4	4	3	ALIGARH MUSLIM UNIVERSITY, ALIGARH
4	4	3	3	2	UNIVERSITY OF HYDERABAD, HYDERABAD
5	7	7	NP	4	OSMANIA UNIVERSITY, HYDERABAD
6	9	12	12	NP	GURU GOBIND SINGH INDRAPRASTHA UNIVERSITY, NEW DELHI
7	11	10	10	7	COCHIN UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY, KOCHI
8	13	13	14	14	BHARATHIAR UNIVERSITY, COIMBATORE
9	10	9	9	10	DR. RAJENDRA PRASAD CENTRAL AGRICULTURAL UNIVERSITY, PUSA, SAMASTIPUR
10	15	15	NP	NP	ANNAMALAI UNIVERSITY, ANNAMALAINAGAR

NP: Not participated

LEAD THE CHARGE
Students at JNU



CHANDRADEEP KUMAR

beyond Delhi this year, offering courses in Kerala for the first time (a PG diploma in Journalism) through a meorandum of understanding with the Mahatma Gandhi College of Mass Communication (MAGCOM) in Kozhikode. It will also introduce a four-credit, 15-week-long massive open online course (MOOC) on Climate and Environment Protection, approved by the University Grants Commission (UGC), as part of its undergraduate programme on Indian Arctic Policy (IAP). In the pipeline are several more open online courses on International Relations, Political Science, social sciences and languages. A Rs 455 crore grant from the HEFA (Higher Education Financing Agency) is being used to give infrastructural support to the faculty on campus to record and conduct short-term online learning courses as the university is keen to enter the e-learning segment this year. "We are trying various

GURUSPEAK

SANTISHREE DHULIPUDI PANDIT
Vice-chancellor, JNU

"What makes JNU truly stand out is our deep commitment towards inclusivity. We have students from all walks of life and that makes studying at the university an enriching and informative experience like no other"

TOP 5

GOVERNMENT UNIVERSITIES OFFERING THE HIGHEST NUMBER OF PG COURSES

RANK	UNIVERSITY	NO. OF PG COURSES
1	ALIGARH MUSLIM UNIVERSITY, ALIGARH	149
2	ANNAMALAI UNIVERSITY, ANNAMALAINAGAR	104
3	OSMANIA UNIVERSITY, HYDERABAD	84
4	NAGALAND UNIVERSITY, LUMAMI	81
5	GURU NANAK DEV UNIVERSITY, AMRITSAR	78

TOP 5

GOVERNMENT UNIVERSITIES OFFERING THE HIGHEST NUMBER OF PhDs IN THE PAST 3 YRS

RANK	UNIVERSITY	NO. OF PhDs
1	UNIVERSITY OF DELHI, NEW DELHI	2,462
2	JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY, NEW DELHI	2,396
3	ANNAMALAI UNIVERSITY, ANNAMALAINAGAR	1,821
4	OSMANIA UNIVERSITY, HYDERABAD	1,472
5	UNIVERSITY OF KERALA, THIRUVANANTHAPURAM	1,319

TOP 5

GOVERNMENT UNIVERSITIES WITH THE HIGHEST NO. OF PATENTS FILED IN THE PAST 3 YEARS

RANK	UNIVERSITY	NO. OF PATENTS
1	GURU GHASIDAS VISHWAVIDYALAYA, BILASPUR	255
2	ACHARYA NAGARJUNA UNIVERSITY, GUNTUR	69
3	ANNAMALAI UNIVERSITY, ANNAMALAINAGAR	66
4	SRI PADMAVATI MAHILA VISVAVIDYALAYAM (WOMEN'S UNIVERSITY), TIRUPATI	65
5	CHAUDHARY CHARAN SINGH UNIVERSITY, MEERUT	62

STUDENTSPEAK

"JNU pushed me beyond my comfort zone, creating an environment for continuous learning and growth. The supportive community has played a crucial role in every aspect of my academic journey. I had abundant opportunities to develop my thoughts on issues of critical importance"

ANURADHA
PhD student, School of International Studies

ways to increase funding. JNU is an inclusive university which provides quality education regardless of what a student can or cannot afford. The issue then is finding funding. After so many years, the campus infrastructure needs urgent repair and significant funds are needed for such a large-scale investment," says Pandit.

In 2019, protests erupted in JNU after service charges of Rs 1,700 were introduced and the one-time refundable mess security fee was hiked from Rs 5,500 to Rs 12,000. Hostel rent was also raised from Rs 20 per month to Rs 600 for a single room, and from Rs 10 to Rs 300 for a double. But it's still not enough. "We don't charge students anything for electricity, water and other service charges in the hostels. So funds first need to cover the cost of so many people, then we need more on top to improve things," explains Pandit. Many of the central university's hostels, classrooms and messes require intensive repair. While the UGC subsidy has been hiked 1.5 times since the Modi government took over—it was Rs 3,030 crore in 2022-23—costs and the number of students have also increased. For example, the 18 hostels on campus were originally made to handle 5,500 students. But last year, the university had more than 9,500 students on campus. There are plans to grow the campus infrastructure, but Pandit says it can only be done slowly given the expenses the university incurs.

Another improvement that is of priority to

DID YOU KNOW?

Located on the southern ridge of the Aravallis, JNU remains committed to supporting the diverse wildlife within the university. Students often spot wild animals such as civets, jackals, blue bulls and a variety of rare birds and reptiles. The university has designated feeding spots for wildlife and works with various organisations for reptile protection and animal research.

TOP 5

GOVERNMENT UNIVERSITIES WITH THE HIGHEST NUMBER OF PATENTS PUBLISHED IN THE PAST 3 YEARS

RANK	UNIVERSITY	NO. OF PATENTS
1	GURU GHASIDAS VISHWAVIDYALAYA, BILASPUR	192
2	SRI PADMAVATI MAHILA VISVAVIDYALAYAM (WOMEN'S UNIVERSITY), TIRUPATI	121
3	OSMANIA UNIVERSITY, HYDERABAD	98
4	MAHATMA JYOTIBA PHULE ROHILKHAND UNIVERSITY, BAREILLY	92
5	ANNAMALAI UNIVERSITY, ANNAMALAINAGAR	68

TOP 5

GOVERNMENT UNIVERSITIES WITH THE HIGHEST NUMBER OF PATENTS GRANTED IN THE PAST 3 YEARS

RANK	UNIVERSITY	NO. OF PATENTS
1	GURU GHASIDAS VISHWAVIDYALAYA, BILASPUR	56
2	SRI PADMAVATI MAHILA VISVAVIDYALAYAM (WOMEN'S UNIVERSITY), TIRUPATI	34
3	CENTRAL UNIVERSITY OF HARYANA, MAHENDERGARH	24
4	COCHIN UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY, KOCHI	21
5	BHARATHIAR UNIVERSITY, COIMBATORE	20

TOP 5

GOVERNMENT UNIVERSITIES WITH THE BEST FACULTY-STUDENT RATIO

RANK	UNIVERSITY	RATIO
1	DR. Y.S.R. HORTICULTURAL UNIVERSITY, VENKATARAMANNAGUDEM	1.69
2	SRI KONDA LAXMAN TELANGANA STATE HORTICULTURAL UNIVERSITY, SIDDIPET	0.89
3	UNIVERSITY OF AGRICULTURAL SCIENCES RAICHUR, RAICHUR	0.83
4	TAMIL NADU AGRICULTURAL UNIVERSITY, COIMBATORE	0.75
5	JUNAGADH AGRICULTURAL UNIVERSITY, JUNAGADH	0.65

Note: Only PG student count was considered to calculate the ratio; Total faculty = Permanent faculty+visiting faculty+contractual/ad hoc faculty

the administration is student safety. "We have taken a lot of security measures to ensure peace and safety. We cannot have violence affecting students and academics," says Pandit. Not only does the university now take police action against those who incite campus violence, there have been fines as high as Rs 20,000 introduced for students who stage dharnas. There is also a Delhi High Court order restraining students from holding demonstrations, dharnas or mass gatherings within a 100-metre periphery of the administrative block. But this does not mean that there is no space for dissent or discussion on campus. "We encourage students to debate. There is nothing wrong with having strong opinions or opposing perspectives, but it is how you express them that matters," says Pandit. At the end of the day, JNU wants to be known as a campus that fosters academic and research excellence. ■

BUILDING THE FUTURE :
TOP PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES

GREATER EMPHASIS ON LEARNING, INNOVATION, RESEARCH AND PLACEMENTS

DR. S.B. MUJUMDAR
Chancellor
Symbiosis University

AZIM PREMJI
Founder
Azim Premji University

SRI MATA AMRITANANDAMAYI DEV
Chancellor
Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham

LAKSHMI N. MITTAL
Chancellor
LNMIIT

SUNEEL GALGOTIA
Chancellor
Galgotias University

With increased focus on research, innovation and entrepreneurship, aiming for inclusivity, multiculturalism and internationalization as mentioned in NEP 2020, Top Private Universities are set to transform India's future. This will boost the Indian education system and provide tough competition to global universities which shall further pave the way for the rise of more Indian universities in the global rankings.

India is one of the fastest-growing economies globally. Rapid digitisation in a short span of time has further boosted India's ambitions to become a knowledge economy. India's robust education system has been strengthened further with the formulation of the National Education policy 2020. The higher education system in India has exhibited impressive growth thanks to the significant increase in the number of private universities. With the number of students enrolling in private universities growing every year, the Indian education system is challenging the global standards of excellence at a rapid pace. Private universities play a significant role in transforming the higher education landscape in India given their commitment to upholding and maintaining the highest standards of integrity, professionalism, and ethical values.

Some of the leading top private Indian Universities are Galgotias University, Manipal Academy of Higher Education, BITS, J.S.S. Academy of Technical Education, the LNM Institute of Information Technology, Dr D. Y. Patil Vidyapeeth, Nirma University, Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham and Symbiosis International. All these premier institutions have one thing in common - their constant and unwavering adherence to high-quality academic freedom, research, transparency, and accountability. These universities endeavour to be recognized internationally for their contribution to the economy and society through excellence in teaching, learning, research, entrepreneurship, and leadership.

The huge response to Private Universities as top choices among students across the country in Common University Entrance Test (CUET) is a testimony of growing influence of private universities in the country. CUET which is conducted for the admission to undergraduate courses in the country for UG programs, including Central Universities saw second highest number of applications received for any entrance examination in the country this year.

The ascent of private universities truly represents one of the most significant transformations in the Indian higher education system over the last two decades. The underneath parameters enlighten us about the rising standards of private Indian universities which are rubbing shoulders with their foreign counterparts. While the selection of the right university is a daunting task, it becomes a little easy to decide based on the key areas which define the quality of education being offered at a university as it has all the potential to set one on a path to a successful career.

LEVEREGING ON CORE VALUES

Core values define the character of not just the organization but also the principles and priorities that guide the organization's actions. The core values set the top private universities apart from the rest. Owing to its great emphasis on excellence in teaching and research, Galgotias University is

> Galgotias University was born out of a dream. A dream for India to redefine higher education in India. Our Vision is to empower young India and young people for a sustainable and better future of mankind. We are committed to fulfill the dream of our Prime Minister Narendra Modi to make India a 'vishwaguru'.
>
> **— Suneel Galgotia, Chancellor, Galgotias University**

now synonymous with quality education. It further aims to create a niche for itself globally as a center of value-centric education, creativity, research, and innovation. It takes pride in its involvement in societal outreach programs that focus on identifying concerns and providing sustainable ethical solutions. Similarly, Birla Institute of Technology & Science vows to train young enthusiastic students to think, create and innovate ideas, methods, techniques, and information while JSS Academy of Technical Education aims for excellence in the teaching-learning process in the fields of engineering and management through nurturing its students' personality development.

FIELDS OF STUDY AND RESEARCH

All the leading private universities like Galgotias University, Manipal Academy of Higher Education, Dr. D. Y. Patil Vidyapeeth, Nirma University, Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham and Azim Premji University offer undergraduate, master and doctoral level courses at par with public universities. The advantage of enrolling in a private university is the diverse and massive range of subject choices available. The planning and successful execution of the courses has been possible due to their futuristic curriculum designed to cater needs of industries not only of the present but also of emerging technologies. These schools further offer unique combinations of specializations which have been cautiously designed after feedback from industry experts. Robust courses in Arts and Humanities like Classics and Ancient History, English Language and Literature, Archaeology, Architecture, Linguistics, Modern and foreign Language, Philosophy, Theology, Divinity & Religious Studies and Anthropology are also in great demand among students.

The university offers some of the most relevant and in-demand courses too like specialisation in artificial intelligence and machine learning, e-vehicles and autonomous vehicles, cyber security, data science, cloud computing etc. Future-oriented degree courses in areas like Solar Energy, Nuclear Science & Technology, Space Science and Nanotechnology are also being offered by the university as part of its endeavour to boost sustainable development in line with the standards of global universities. Galgotias University is deeply invested in ensuring that students develop cognitive skills such as critical thinking, reasoning and innovation that will help them as individuals to go beyond their described job roles and prove themselves as a true asset in future for both their organisation as well as their country.

INDUSTRY – ACADEMIA PARTNERSHIP

Top Private University's collaborative efforts with top industry leaders exemplify their commitment to providing students with practical, real-world experiences. These partnerships offer students of these top universities unparalleled opportunities to learn directly from industry experts, engage in hands-on projects, and gain insights into the latest technological advancements.

Galgotias University has consistently been at the forefront of integrating innovative educational practices to prepare students for the dynamic demands of the modern workforce. The institution's strategic focus on industry-academia partnerships has established it as a leader in delivering outcome-based education, ensuring that students not only excel academically but are also industry-ready by the time they graduate.

Transformative Learning with Apple & Infosys:
Galgotias University's iOS Student Developer Program, powered by Apple and Infosys, stands as a testament to the university's innovative approach to education. This program goes beyond traditional coding classes by cultivating confident product developers. Industry-trained faculty guide students through a transformative journey that emphasizes active learning, experiential learning, and challenge-based learning.

The program has produced 25 groundbreaking iOS apps, showcasing the remarkable capabilities of Galgotias students. Greg Joswiak, Senior Vice President of Worldwide Marketing at Apple, praised the students during his visit to the campus, saying, "It's unbelievably impressive. These kids were so well spoken, they have thought out what they

Galagotias University CEO Dr. Dhruv Galgotia signs historic MOU with Samsung India.

could do and they were taking advantage of all modern technologies... and to explain it with such competence."

Samsung India Partnership: A Historic Collboration: In a historic and groundbreaking partnership, Galgotias University has partnered with Samsung India Electronics. This collaboration took a step forward in the presence of Dr. Dhruv Galgotia, CEO of Galgotias University, Mr. Ieesoo Kim, Managing Director of Samsung India Electronics, and his team at one of the world's largest fully automated Samsung manufacturing facilities in Noida, inaugurated by Prime Minister Modi. This partnership aims to provide students with cutting-edge learning opportunities and direct industry engagement, further enhancing their career readiness and technical prowess.

Empowering Students with GUVI: In partnership with GUVI, a company under the HCL Group, Galgotias University has launched an initiative to unlock corporate careers for 4,000 students through more than 1,000 industry-recognized skill certifications. GUVI will deliver 300+ self-paced tech courses in multiple regional languages, bridging the gap between academia and industry by providing comprehensive practice tools, courses, and mentorship to nurture technical skills.

HCL Healthcare: Promoting Health and Well-Being : Galgotias University's collaboration with HCL Healthcare offers comprehensive health services, including doctor consultations, nursing support, and psychological services. This initiative fosters a culture of positive health and well-being among students and faculty, focusing on accessibility, convenience, continuity of care, and health promotion.

These partnership are a strategic efforts to upskill students, ensuring they are well-equipped to meet the demands of the technology-driven job market.

STATE OF THE ART INFRASTRUCTURE

An eye-catching feature of most of the popular private universities within the country is their infrastructure. Galgotias University aces with its excellent campus, buildings and facilities. The picturesque campus is set in 52 acres of rolling greens at a prime location. The state-of-the-art campus has been designed by renowned architects specializing in educational architecture. The laboratories, classrooms, library, hostels, cafeterias and other spaces are comparable with the global standards. The campus provides a suitable ambiance for teaching, learning and research. Its close proximity to the educational hub of Greater Noida makes it an excellent education destination. A fully Wi-Fi enabled campus, spacious classrooms with the audio-visual and multimedia facilities, State-of-the-art auditorium, well equipped conference hall and seminar hall, round the clock Internet connectivity, designated student activity centre for co-curricular and extracurricular activities are some of the major plus points of Galgotias University Campus. Another enviable campus is the JSS Academy of Technical Education. It is spread over more than 21 acres in Bengaluru, the IT Capital of India. Lush green trees, majestic academics, idly lake and hostel blocks and many sports facilities such as cricket ground, football ground, tennis court, basketball court, etc. are the main attractions of the campus. Labs are well-equipped with state-of-the-art equipment, tools and software.

GLOBAL EXPOSURE

Student exchange programs are key to the holistic development of students. Such Student exchange programs expose university students to global culture allowing them to learn cultural adaptability. It further allows them to broaden their knowledge and learn foreign languages to fit into a global workplace. Top Indian universities actively collaborate with several foreign universities and institutions and have established academic tie-ups with universities and institutions in several countries. Galgotias University is actively involved in providing some of the best student exchange programs. It keeps exploring the possibilities for academic collaborations with universities of repute within as well as outside the country. Galgotias University has MOUs and tie-ups with several of the world's top universities which offer faculty, students, and researchers several opportunities for international collaboration. The student exchange program is a key which can unlock many career avenues for the students thus these universities maintains and supports a good alumni network to enhance its students' careers.

RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT

Universities are invaluable assets for the economy as they are the hotspots for research, innovation and knowledge creation. Rigorous involvement in seminars, workshops and conferences sets a university apart from the rest. Be it Symbiosis University which takes pride in its sophisticated instrumentation for various kinds of analytical techniques to undertake research in high-priority areas or BITS which prioritises research by students and staff in newly emerging frontiers in the fields of engineering, technology, science etc, every university's quality of education is reflected through its endeavours in R&D. Galgotias University being a research and innovation-driven university prioritizes research and development programs with a strong emphasis on interdisciplinary research and innovation. It provides well-equipped labs and promotes strong culture of inter-and intra-institution research collaborations.

iOS Development Centre powered by Apple and Infosys at GU campus

iOS development center collaborative workspace

PLACEMENT OPPORTUNITIES

A dedicated placement cell at a university is an essential requirement for having a fruitful career. The significant role that campus placement plays in the formative years of a student's career is irreplaceable. The leading Private universities have an impeccable placement record owing to their industry needs-oriented curriculum. At Galgotias University the students are provided ample opportunities for full-time internships and on-the-Job training in reputed companies like Microsoft, Amazon, Capgemini, Forbes, Intel, Bosch, Cisco, Pega, Informatica, and Capgemini among several others. A dedicated team in the Placement Cell of the university helps the students obtain relevant work experience to complement their studies.

In addition to grooming students in soft skills, the placement cell also provides third-party assessments, sessions by industry experts, and company-specific mock drives Galgotias University is a favourite landing place for ace companies like NIIT, Vodafone, Aditya Birla Group, BMW, Airtel, Citibank, HCL and others every year as they value Galgotias University Alumni for their leadership qualities and all-round skills. Similarly, Azim Premji University also has a good record in campus placements with its alumni having found meaningful and impactful work in top companies. At BITS too, the Placement Cell constantly makes efforts to bring in organizations that have values, ethics and commitment that are very similar to that of the University. Indian higher educational institutions have grown by leaps and bounds. Private sector universities have complimented the public sector in imparting quality education over the years. They have further paved the way for the rise of more Indian universities in the global rankings. The nature of advanced scientific research projects being undertaken by these institutions is going to prove a game changer in the times to come. This will boost the Indian education system and provide tough competition to global universities which shall further pave the way for the rise of more Indian universities in the global rankings. Highly educated, experienced and innovative people are driving our education and in turn, our economy forward. With increased focus on research, innovation and entrepreneurship, aiming for inclusivity, multiculturalism and internationalization as mentioned in NEP 2020, leading private universities are set to transform India's future. Continuing the Path of Innovation Galgotias University remains committed to advancing its industry-academia partnerships, continually seeking new ways to enhance student learning and outcomes. The university's dedication to implementing active, experiential, and challenge-based learning methodologies ensures that it stays ahead of the curve, providing students with the tools they need to succeed in an ever-evolving global landscape.

Galgotias University has the ability to extract the best from the best. We are committed to continually challenge what we do and raise the bar of excellence to be a distinctive premier institution.

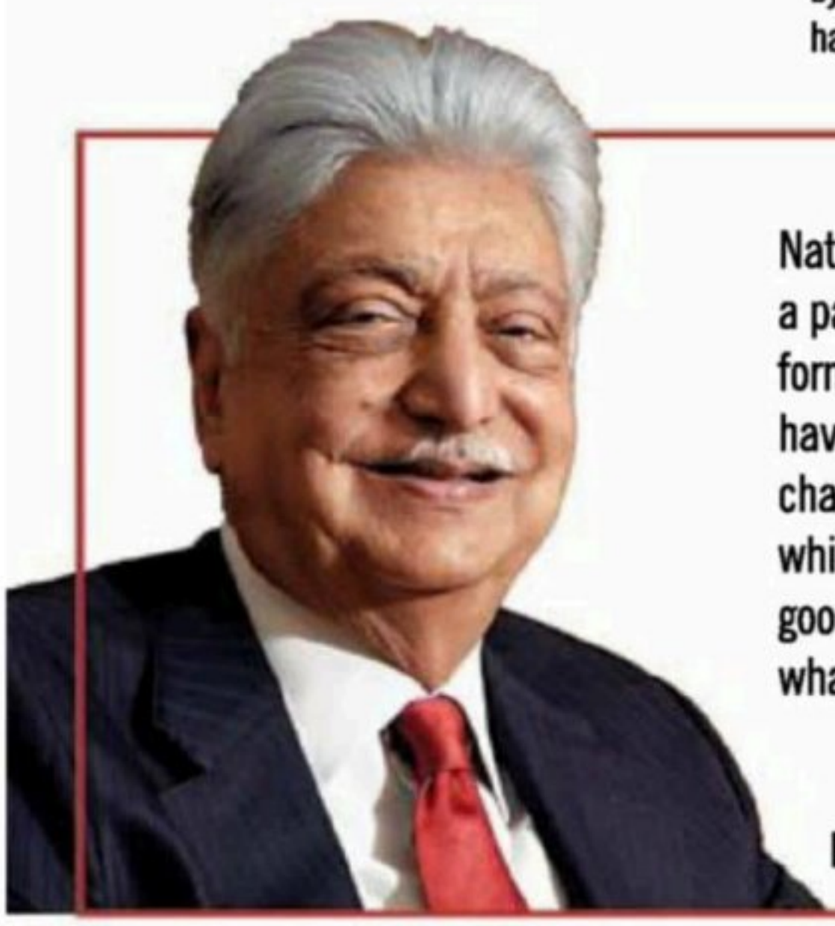
— Dr. Dhruv Galgotia, CEO, Galgotias University

SYMBIOSIS INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

AZIM PREMJI UNIVERSITY

AMRITA VISHWA VIDYAPEETHAM

LNM INSTITUTE OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY



National Education Policy 2020 has a particularly bold vision for transforming under-graduate education to have a multi-disciplinary and liberal character. It is this kind of education which truly develops good society and good human beings. In fact, that is what the NEP 2020 commits to doing.

— Azim Premji, Founder, Azim Premji University

SANTISHREE DHULIPUDI PANDIT

JNU is Addictive, Students Don't Want to Leave

JNU HAPPENED BY MISTAKE. This was the 1980s and Hindi professor Namvar Singh, a close friend of my father, had come to visit us in Madras. He was the one who suggested to my father that I should apply in JNU. I had just completed my masters and was keen on pursuing a PhD in international relations. Prof. Singh sent me the application forms which I duly filled out and submitted. I was called for the interview and coming to Delhi was such an eye opener. I had never been to the capital before and everything here was different. A little known fact is that when I came here I did not know even a word of Hindi. But I picked it up soon enough.

"JNU is very inclusive, with students helping one another greatly. It was the same in my time, with a strong sense of community regardless of where you came from..."

I was in JNU from 1985 to 1990 and completed my MPhil and PhD here. At the time, the campus was heavily polarised towards the Left but I never once felt unsafe or experienced any sort of ragging. It was a wonderful experience with people from all over the country coming in, brilliant professors and a diverse library collection. The atmosphere here was something I will never forget.

Today, I would like to say the atmosphere still remains largely the same. However, the polarisation aspect has waned. I wouldn't say it has gone completely. It still exists but we are trying to find healthier ways to debate, present arguments and overcome differences. While there is some polarisation, I still find JNU to be a highly inclusive university where students help one another greatly. This was the same during my time, a strong sense of community and inclusiveness regardless of where you came from.

And, of course, the number of students we have on campus has increased significantly. Infrastructure-wise, we have a lot more facilities today—such as hotels, library, schools of studies, messes—but the quality has deteriorated over the years due to poor maintenance. It is something we are working to fix as soon as possible.

In my time, we had some excellent professors to mentor us in our research work. Mine was K.P. Misra, an expert on diplomacy and non-alignment who was frequently consulted by the then prime minister, Indira Gandhi. He taught me so much about discipline, hard work and how to write research papers. Coming from a state university, many students like me didn't have good research writing skills, so an MPhil helped us learn the basics of great research work and writing. Today, we no longer offer an MPhil degree but professors still help students learn the basics. JNU is mainly a research university and we still encourage various types of study. Another thing that has remained the same is a commitment towards inter-disciplinary work and the encouragement of critical thinking.

Overall, JNU remains as addictive as it was in my time. After awhile, students do not want to leave at all. Campus life is completely different to the outside world. Students get so many facilities for an incredibly nominal cost. There are always activities and learning opportunities. With Left politics shrinking, and the safety and infrastructural improvements, the university remains the best place to pursue the social sciences in India. ■

(as told to ***Sonali Acharjee****)*

Dhulipudi Pandit is Vice-Chancellor of Jawaharlal Nehru University. She is from the 1980 batch

Needed: A Bold Vision

PROF. DINESH SINGH

As SOMEONE KEEN TO SEE THE WORLD of academe in India elevated to worthy heights I am often reminded of the lament—from the 1980s—of one of India's most distinguished academics and a former vice-chancellor of Allahabad University. His anguish stemmed from the fact that somewhere along the way independent India had been unable to steer our universities in the right direction. By way of illustration, I can provide many insightful instances but perhaps none would be as telling as that which has Srinivas Ramanujan at its centre and which transpired more than a hundred years ago.

As most of us know, Ramanujan's name had been struck off the rolls of Madras University after he failed to clear his English language examination. But by then he had already produced some profound work in mathematics and it was evident to many senior contemporaries that he was no ordinary student. Yet, Madras University had no hesitation in stripping him of his scholarship and disqualifying him as a student. Soon after that shameful episode, G.H. Hardy—that outstanding mathematician and humanist at Cambridge University—received a letter from Ramanujan. In no time he got Cambridge University to offer Ramanujan a handsome salary and a formal position. In addition, they awarded him their version of a proper doctoral degree, on the basis of the work he had produced in India. Remember, Ramanujan then had failed to clear the equivalent of the Grade 12 exam at Madras University. Did Cambridge care much about such formal niceties? Not when they understood that having Ramanujan in their midst would greatly enhance research at their institution.

Let us contrast that with the situation that prevails now, all these hundred and more years since Ramanujan's time in India. Had Ramanujan come to me at the University of Delhi when I served as its vice-chancellor (2010-15), I would not have been able to enrol him as a student at Delhi University nor would I have been allowed to award him a PhD degree. Of course, I would have hailed him as a mathematician with divine gifts, but the regulations—not of my choosing or making—imposed upon the university and others by weighty institutions that have charted the course of higher education in independent India would have prevented me from doing what Cambridge University could do for Ramanujan more than a hundred years earlier. To my mind, this more than aptly sums up what ails India's universities.

There are, of course, many other issues that have not helped our journey in the realm of higher education. However, if Indian universities wish to rise to great heights, then a prime requirement would be to enhance the quality of the human resource in their midst. In other words, we need academic leaders who carry a bold and enlightened vision, somewhat of the calibre of Hardy. And it's not like we have not had such leaders in our midst. Let me cite three names from among the many outstanding vice-chancellors to grace our varsities—Maurice Gwyer at the University of Delhi, Amarnath Jha at Allahabad University and Hansa Mehta at Baroda University.

Delhi University owes so much to the striking wisdom and actions of Gwyer, who singularly helped elevate the university to a high stature. Amarnath Jha, during British times, had the boldness of vision to appoint the Nobel laureate Erwin Schrodinger to succeed the redoubtable Meghnad Saha. Schrodinger had formally accepted the offer but could not join because of the out-

break of the Second World War. Hansa Mehta had been put in place by Sardar Patel. She went about her task with great dedication, wisdom and boldness. My own father—who had gained a reputation as a mathematician for the work he had done at the Sorbonne—was appointed as the first professor and head of the mathematics department at Baroda University while still in his thirties. Nobel laureate Venkat Ramakrishnan, who obtained his first degree at Baroda, accords much credit to his mathematical training there for his work later.

Some of the learnings from the tenures of these three greats are worth bearing in mind as lessons for our policy makers. The first point is that they worked within the regulatory boundaries but with the freedom and boldness of vision that it permitted. The other point worth noting is that none of them were renowned academics. Gwyer did not have a PhD and Hansa Mehta may not even have had a masters degree. She had certainly not served in the capacity of a professional academic. Amarnath Jha was a professor but I am not sure if his standing as an academic in the world of English literature has had the impact that would compare with personalities like Meghnad Saha, Firaq Gorakhpuri or his own father, the great Sanskrit scholar Ganganath Jha. However, all three—Gwyer, Mehta and Jha—were matchless as vice-chancellors. We must note that by today's norms (those which have prevailed for many decades now), Gwyer and Mehta would not be considered eligible for the position of vice-chancellor. Perhaps our policy makers need to pay heed to some of these lessons embedded in the lives and actions of these individuals.

One other major learning that flows from the distinguished tenures of these three great vice-chancellors is that they served for fairly long periods of time; Gwyer for 12 years, Mehta for nine and Jha for 16. This ensured a continuity of high level vision for a sustained period. Unfortunately, most universities in India do not allow such freedom and even when they grant the possibility of a V-C serving a second term, the deserving ones do not seem to be considered.

Had Ramanujan come to me at the University of Delhi when I was V-C, I wouldn't have been able to enrol him. The regulations wouldn't have allowed me

NEW WAVE Students at Shri Ram College of Commerce (SRCC), University of Delhi

HARDIK CHHABRA

But all things considered, we are making progress. One of the finest things to have happened to higher education in recent times is the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. Indian universities could not have asked for a more enlightened roadmap with clear and wise pathways. The challenge that faces us is to ensure its implementation does not get bogged down in unimaginative or counterproductive bureaucratic hurdles. We must grant a certain degree of freedom and space to institutions to attract eminent persons as V-Cs who shall then in turn attract and retain genuine academic talent from far and wide. Is that happening in any significant manner? I am afraid that, barring a few exceptions, the situation is disheartening.

The NEP has been hailed in many parts of the world, and has the potential to transform India into a knowledge economy. This is because it entails blending the curriculum around the needs and challenges of the nation and society. It prescribes that the pedagogy be based on solving problems through group-based project work. This also ensures a high degree of creative thinking, with various skills accruing to the learner largely through working on such projects. These are also required to be trans-disciplinary in nature, so that they help foster an entrepreneurial environment akin to what institutions like Stanford, Cambridge and almost every decent university fosters.

Lastly, I would like to draw attention to some of the good work happening in the universities and colleges of Jammu and Kashmir where I have the honour and pleasure of participating in the NEP's implementation. This is done in its true sense through activities like the much hailed new UG degree, christened 'Design Your Degree' formally, which embodies the true spirit of the NEP. ■

The author is Chancellor of K.R. Mangalam University and former vice-chancellor of Delhi University

INDIA'S BEST UNIVERSITIES

NO. 1 SYMBIOSIS INTERNATIONAL (DEEMED UNIVERSITY), *PUNE*

CLIMATE FOR BRILLIANCE

SET AMIDST VERDANT ENVIRONS, SYMBIOSIS COMBINES CUTTING-EDGE ACADEMIC CHOICES WITH A CULTURE OF TRANSPARENCY AND EMPHASIS ON ALL-ROUND KNOWLEDGE

By Aditi Pai

GO PAST THE WELL-GUARDED ENTRANCE GATE at the Lavale campus of Symbiosis International University (SIU) and you are instantly transported to a hill retreat with lush vegetation, winding roads, low hanging monsoon clouds and the call of birds that punctuates the animated chatter of students. Away from the bustle of the busy city, the SIU Lavale campus, situated in the hilly terrain of Mulshi near Pune, sprawls over 350 acres—a perfect setting for a centre of learning.

In preparation for President Droupadi Murmu's visit for the 21st convocation ceremony of SIU on July 29, the campus is buzzing with frenetic activity. Over the decades, eminent people from various walks of life have come to SIU to interact with students—a testament to the reputation the university, which got deemed status in 2002, enjoys as a leader in providing quality education.

"We don't make our students future-ready; we make them future-proof. We give them the best quality education, but also start entrusting them with responsibilities from the time they join college. Our institute fosters a culture of trans-

TOP 10

GENERAL UNIVERSITIES (PRIVATE)

RANK 2024	RANK 2023	RANK 2022	RANK 2021	RANK 2020	UNIVERSITY
1	NP	NP	NP	NP	SYMBIOSIS INTERNATIONAL (DEEMED UNIVERSITY), PUNE
2	1	1	1	1	AMITY UNIVERSITY UTTAR PRADESH, NOIDA
3	2	3	6	7	KONERU LAKSHMAIAH EDUCATION FOUNDATION (DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY), GUNTUR
4	3	2	3	3	CHRIST (DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY), BENGALURU
5	4	4	7	6	BANASTHALI VIDYAPITH, BANASTHALI VIDYAPITH
6	5	5	8	8	JAIN (DEEMED-TO-BE UNIVERSITY), BENGALURU
7	6	7	10	11	SATHYABAMA INSTITUTE OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY), CHENNAI
8	8	8	11	10	XIM UNIVERSITY, BHUBANESWAR
9	9	11	17	19	GALGOTIAS UNIVERSITY, GREATER NOIDA
10	7	6	9	9	NIRMA UNIVERSITY, AHMEDABAD

parency and accountability, whether it's in the admission process or in the management of the college fest," says Professor Shrirang Altekar, director, Symbiosis Institute of Business Management (SIBM), Pune.

The sprawling campus, with a 'hill base' section for undergraduate colleges and a 'hilltop' campus for post-graduate studies, houses multiple colleges with 32,600 students and a 900-bed hospital. It offers residential facilities for around 4,000 students and buses from the city for day scholars. Around 17 km away is the original and more modest campus at Senapati Bapat Road in Pune city, where SIU was born in 1971 as a centre to alleviate the problems international students encountered in Pune. It started with the founder Dr S.B. Mujumdar, then a professor of Botany, noticing a Mauritian student suffering from jaundice with little help at hand. Realising how helpless foreign students can be in an alien environment, he started Symbiosis, a name he chose to emphasise the mu-

GURUSPEAK

DR VIDYA YERAVDEKAR
Pro Chancellor, Symbiosis International University

"SIU has been founded by Dr S.B. Mujumdar with the motto 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam'—the world is one family. This is the only university that was established to promote international understanding between Indian and foreign students"

MANDAR DEODHAR

FREEDOM TO THINK SIBM students at the Lavale campus of Symbiosis International University

TOP 5

PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES OFFERING THE HIGHEST NUMBER OF PG COURSES

RANK	UNIVERSITY	NO. OF PG COURSES
1	AMITY UNIVERSITY UTTAR PRADESH, NOIDA	170
2	PARUL UNIVERSITY, VADODARA	92
3	VINAYAKA MISSION'S RESEARCH FOUNDATION (DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY), SALEM	84
4	SWAMI VIVEKANAND SUBHARTI UNIVERSITY, MEERUT	78
5	YENEPOYA (DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY), MANGALURU	67

TOP 5

PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES OFFERING THE HIGHEST NUMBER OF PHDS IN THE PAST THREE YEARS

RANK	UNIVERSITY	NO. OF PHDS
1	SYMBIOSIS INTERNATIONAL (DEEMED UNIVERSITY), PUNE	876
2	AMITY UNIVERSITY UTTAR PRADESH, NOIDA	839
3	BANASTHALI VIDYAPITH, BANASTHALI VIDYAPITH	681
4	SRI SATYA SAI UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY AND MEDICAL SCIENCES, SEHORE	494
5	VELS INSTITUTE OF SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND ADVANCED STUDIES (VISTAS), CHENNAI	472

TOP 5

PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES WITH THE HIGHEST NUMBER OF PATENTS FILED IN THE PAST THREE YEARS

RANK	UNIVERSITY	NO. OF PATENTS
1	CHITKARA UNIVERSITY, PATIALA	2017
2	GALGOTIAS UNIVERSITY, GREATER NOIDA	1693
3	JAIN (DEEMED-TO-BE UNIVERSITY), BENGALURU	1600
4	SHOOLINI UNIVERSITY OF BIOTECHNOLOGY AND MANAGEMENT SCIENCES, SOLAN	993
5	KONERU LAKSHMAIAH EDUCATION FOUNDATION (DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY), GUNTUR	989

TOP 5

PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES WITH THE HIGHEST NUMBER OF PATENTS PUBLISHED IN THE PAST THREE YEARS

RANK	UNIVERSITY	NO. OF PATENTS
1	JAIN (DEEMED-TO-BE UNIVERSITY), BENGALURU	1399
2	KONERU LAKSHMAIAH EDUCATION FOUNDATION (DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY), GUNTUR	989
3	CHITKARA UNIVERSITY, PATIALA	781
4	AMITY UNIVERSITY UTTAR PRADESH, NOIDA	500
5	CHRIST (DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY), BENGALURU	444

tually beneficial relationship that can be forged between Indian institutes and international students. "SIU has been founded with the motto of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam'—the world is one family. This is the only university that was established to promote understanding between Indian and foreign students," says Dr Vidya Yeravdekar, Pro Chancellor, SIU. Today, SIU has students from 85 countries studying at its various campuses.

Over the past 50 years, SIU has expanded to over 40 institutes offering education in eight faculties, including Law, Management, Computer Studies, Medical and Health Sciences, Media and Communication, Humanities and Social Sciences, Engineering and Architecture and Design. It has off-campus centres in Bengaluru, Noida, Nagpur and Hyderabad and is set to open a campus in Dubai this September. Some of the new subject being offered at the Dubai campus are Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning, Data Science and Data Analytics and Cloud Computing under the computer applications faculty.

The focus at SIU, stress its teachers, is on holistic education. Students are urged to gain all-round knowledge rather than become specialists in their chosen field. So, apart from the core

INDIA'S BEST

UNIVERSITIES

TOP 5

PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES WITH THE HIGHEST NUMBER OF PATENTS GRANTED IN THE PAST 3 YEARS

RANK	UNIVERSITY	NO. OF PATENTS
1	CHITKARA UNIVERSITY, PATIALA	394
2	SHOOLINI UNIVERSITY OF BIOTECHNOLOGY AND MANAGEMENT SCIENCES, SOLAN	380
3	KONERU LAKSHMAIAH EDUCATION FOUNDATION (DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY), GUNTUR	289
4	AMITY UNIVERSITY UTTAR PRADESH, NOIDA	216
5	SATHYABAMA INSTITUTE OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY), CHENNAI	162

DID YOU KNOW?

There are more than 32,000 students from 85 countries on the SIU campus in Pune.

TOP 5

PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES WITH THE BEST FACULTY-STUDENT RATIO

RANK	UNIVERSITY	RATIO
1	SIKKIM PROFESSIONAL UNIVERSITY, GANGTOK	4.76
2	VINAYAKA MISSION'S RESEARCH FOUNDATION (DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY), SALEM	1.22
3	SRI SATYA SAI UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY AND MEDICAL SCIENCES, SEHORE	1.13
4	SWAMI VIVEKANAND SUBHARTI UNIVERSITY, MEERUT	1.03
4	MANGALAYATAN UNIVERSITY, ALIGARH	1.03

Note: Only PG student count was considered to calculate the ratio; total faculty = permanent faculty + visiting faculty + contractual/ad hoc faculty

STUDENTSPEAK

"The vibrant campus life at SIBM is enriched by participation in leadership talks, including conclaves and guest lectures organised in collaboration with leading corporates. Nestled on a hilltop, the serene environs of our campus offer a perfect backdrop for academic pursuits"

ROHIT MORYE
MBA-2 Core, Marketing

subjects, there are several electives in other subjects.

Every campus has state-of-the-art amenities with a abundant scope for extra-curricular activities, multiple student councils and a big-budget festival, Transcend. At Lavale, students are encouraged to walk or use bicycles around the campus to keep it green and pollution-free. All students and staff are given medical insurance.

Faculty members are chosen through a stringent scrutiny of their academic records and research credentials. "We are constantly updating ourselves with the latest in industry," says Dr Altekar. Industry leaders are invited for lectures and workshops and industry work experience and internships are a must for a degree. Students, too, go through a rigorous admission process. At SIBM, candidates are selected through the entrance test, SNAP.

Every institute has a placement cell, with students involved in inviting recruiters. Over the past several years, SIBM has recorded 100 per cent placements and its alumni have made it to the top positions in industry. Other institutes such as those for media and communications, engineering and law also have alumni who are leaders in their respective fields.

To draw the best from the industry, SIU has noted personalities as its advisors. Actor Amitabh Bachchan is professor emeritus at the faculty of media and communication; former ambassadors Vijay Gokhale and Talmiz Ahmad head research chairs at the faculty of humanities.

SIU is a fulfilling experience. Faculty members are accessible to students at all times, multiple activities and projects encourage team work and offer a suitable environment to forge lasting friendships and the presence of students from so many foreign nations promotes cultural understanding and exchange of ideas. ■

RAGHAV KHANNA

Nurturer of Wholesome Vitality

IN ALL OF MODERN CULTURE, PERHAPS NO PHASE OF LIFE IS as romanticised as one's (uni)varsity years. And if those years are spent amid the lush greenery of the Western Ghats, with monsoon rains turning gentle crevices into meandering rivulets, it's an experience that could inspire a Coleridge. For many professionals across various industries—be it pharmaceuticals, telecommunications, marketing, or entertainment—this was their reality for two transformative years. Symbiosis, or Symbi, as it's colloquially known, is more than just a university or a shared campus; it's a shared life.

SYMBIOTIC GROWTH Students at a study session in a library at SIU

MANDAR DEODHAR

Years after graduating, alumni still recognise each other with a nod of familiarity, having eaten the same campus food, ridden the same bicycles from hostel to classroom, taken the same buses to the city, and missing the same buses back to the campus. Personally, my time at Symbiosis was a period when an abundance of time coincided, almost perfectly, with a deep sense of purpose. Before this, while time was plentiful, purpose was mostly a distant dream. Later, when purpose became a bold, highlighted, underlined goal, screaming to me—in all caps—every morning, time became a scarce commodity. The most valued elements of professional life—time, space, friendships and guidance—were nurtured during my years at Symbiosis. Reflecting back, more than a decade since leaving the Symbiosis Institute of Media and Communication (SIMC) at Symbiosis International (Deemed University) in Pune, these years remain the most memorable and formative of my journey.

The luxury to watch four films a day, attend two-hour seminars on film appreciation, or have midnight chats with fellow film enthusiasts is something I cherish from my time at SIMC. What truly enriched my learning experience at SIMC was the ease of access to resources like cameras, editing machines, expansive screening theatres, and, most importantly, a dedicated crew of peers, willing to give their all to realise our vision— essential for any filmmaker. Guest lectures from industry professionals added real-world insights that awaited us all.

As a recluse or, at best, an ambivert, I formed lifelong associations that have enriched my professional journey. Symbiosis is not just a network but a deeply entrenched community, even a family, for many of us. Over the years, my fondness for this time has only grown, nurturing me in ways that have shaped who I am today. ■

The author is a writer, director and producer. He graduated from Symbiosis Institute of Media and Communication in 2011 with an MA in audio-visual production

How To Pick a University Wisely

MOHAN KRISHNAN

FIRST, A WORD TO PARENTS. TAKE A CHILL PILL. STAY OUT OF THE PROCESS. Let the student take the lead. You have led the charge so far, through 15 years of pre-school and school. You've given them roots; that will be their foundation for their whole lives. Now, give them wings. It's their time to fly. Going to college is an important rite of passage, and allow them the autonomy to do it on their own. You are the safety net, the sounding board, but no longer the decision maker. They need to be independent, but never alone. So young folks, here are some home truths. You have already chosen the colleges available to you, by the marks you have scored in board exams. Don't be under any illusions that you will get into an IIT, if your marks are ITI level.

Yes, some private, deemed universities are less rigid about marks because they give weightage to extracurricular activities, and the way you perform in the entrance tests, group discussions and interviews. If you believe that your marks don't tell your whole story, then look for institutions that are willing to take a wider, more liberal view.

Please, please, don't buy your way into a prestigious, brand name college by paying ridiculous capitation fees. Their course will be rigorous, your co-students will be way ahead of you, and your years in college will be full of struggle and with a sense that you are not good enough. This can lead to burnout and drop out. Invest the money in a good mutual fund, and let it grow for 15 years. Find a college that is a good match for your abilities, and that will encourage and challenge you to stretch.

Why are you going to college anyway? To learn about life. To learn about making choices. To find areas of competence and passion. College will help you grow into a fully formed adult, ready for the world. You go to college to learn how to think. The days of rote learning and spoon feeding are over. Now, you will have to think if you are to succeed. You will learn to communicate, to interact with peers, and if you are good at this you will become a persuader, a leader. They call these soft skills but I call them 'life skills'. Years later, you may remember very little of the subjects you studied. You will always remember the teacher who challenged you to be better, or opened your mind to new possibilities. You also go to college to build a network of friends—your peeps who will be your source of support for the rest of your life. Find a group that is ambitious and are there to build their future. Hang out with them and you'll

HEMANT MISHRA

raise your game.

So, after being realistic and honest with yourself, how do you pick a college where you stand a good chance of getting admitted? First, pick a college in another city. Leave home, stay in a hostel. Along with the freedom that you will enjoy, you will learn responsibility. If your parents can't afford a hostel, take a part-time job. There are plenty in the services sector. It will give you immense pride to pay your own way; it will teach you the value of money and the life lessons will be solid gold.

Pick a college that is not an obvious money spinner for their owners. There are many tell-tale signs such as fancy buildings and exteriors and sub-par academic facilities. Beware of colleges with five-star amenities. You are looking for a centre of learning, not a restaurant or a spa.

Go visit the college. Even if they don't offer a tour, walk around. Take it in. Talk to the students. Find out everything that is posted online. What areas do they specialise in? The newly accredited deemed universities seem to offer a wider range of options. For the first year at least, you want to play with many courses, before you decide on your path and choose your majors. Check out what is being said in the online student forums...it's the real stuff.

Read the faculty bios. Where did they study? How long have they been at the institution? How many have PhDs? Have they published papers, or written books? These factors determine the quality of the teaching staff.

When you visit, remember to check out their facilities—science labs, language labs, the library, sports facilities and resource centres. What online data bases will you have free access to?

Make a checklist of things you want to know—arrangements, if any, for internships and campus placement opportunities, the kind of companies that have come to campus, the placement rate. If there is a career counselling office and campus placement office. A good university must have credible post-graduate programmes under different faculties.

All this is necessary and will lead you to a good choice of college. But the most important check is your Attitude Check or your own state of mind. You will get from a college exactly what you extract from the experience. Who do you want to be when you graduate four years from now? Have a clear mental picture of the grades you will have, the knowledge and skills you will have acquired, the personality, the balance of mind and body, the character qualities you will develop.

There will be a pool of colleges available for your grade level, so figure out which is the best fit. Don't choose one because it is next to your home or where three of your best friends are going.

You're off on a great adventure. Have fun, make it count and get ready for life. If you have a great college experience, congratulations, you did it. If you have a poor experience, sorry, you did it. Over to you. ■

The author is an adman, businessman and mentor

SETTING THE GOAL HIGH Students at the campus of Christ University, Bengaluru

CHANDRADEEP KUMAR

NO. 1 **ALL INDIA INSTITUTE OF MEDICAL SCIENCES (AIIMS),** *New Delhi*

EXTENDING THE FRONTIERS

RENOWNED FOR ITS PIONEERING PROCEDURES, CUTTING-EDGE TECHNOLOGY, AND EXCEPTIONAL MEDICAL EDUCATION, THE INSTITUTE CONSISTENTLY REMAINS IN POLE POSITION FOR THE COUNTRY'S ASPIRING DOCTORS

By Sonali Acharjee

COLLABORATIVE LEARNING Students at a lab in AIIMS, New Delhi

TOP 10

MEDICAL UNIVERSITIES

RANK 2024	RANK 2023	RANK 2022	RANK 2021	RANK 2020	RANK 2019	RANK 2018	UNIVERSITY
1	1	1	1	1	1	1	ALL INDIA INSTITUTE OF MEDICAL SCIENCES (AIIMS), NEW DELHI
2	2	2	2	2	2	NP	JAWAHARLAL INSTITUTE OF POSTGRADUATE MEDICAL EDUCATION & RESEARCH (JIPMER), PUDUCHERRY
3	3	3	3	3	3	NP	KING GEORGE'S MEDICAL UNIVERSITY, LUCKNOW
4	4	4	4	NP	NP	NP	NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF MENTAL HEALTH AND NEUROSCIENCES (NIMHANS), BENGALURU
5	5	6	6	NP	NP	NP	ALL INDIA INSTITUTE OF MEDICAL SCIENCES (AIIMS), JODHPUR
6	8	NP	NP	NP	NP	NP	ALL INDIA INSTITUTE OF MEDICAL SCIENCES (AIIMS), RISHIKESH
7	NP	NP	NP	NP	NP	NP	ALL INDIA INSTITUTE OF MEDICAL SCIENCES (AIIMS), RAIPUR
8	9	8	9	NP	NP	NP	INSTITUTE OF LIVER & BILIARY SCIENCES, NEW DELHI
9	10	NP	NP	NP	NP	NP	ALL INDIA INSTITUTE OF MEDICAL SCIENCES (AIIMS), PATNA
10	11	7	8	5	5	3	SRI RAMACHANDRA INSTITUTE OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND RESEARCH (DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY), CHENNAI

The first All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) was originally meant to be set up in Calcutta but following a rejection by the then West Bengal chief minister Bidhan Chandra Roy, it was eventually set up in New Delhi in 1956. Since then, the institute has become the top choice for medical education and specialisation for millions in the country.

What students at the institute say they value the most is the constant improvement in facilities and academics. AIIMS has never shied away from embracing new technologies and testing out new procedures. It was the first to perform a heart transplant in the country, the first to set up ventilator care and, in the past year, has performed three first-of-their-kind procedures in India. It has been the first to perform a dual kidney transplant (where two donor kidneys were placed without removing the recipient's kidneys), the first to do a renal autotransplant (where kidneys were shifted within the body),

GURUSPEAK

DR M. SRINIVAS
DIRECTOR, AIIMS, NEW DELHI

"AIIMS provides the best medical education, training and research opportunities. We have faculty who are the very best in their fields and state-of-the-art medical facilities, and are at the forefront of comprehensive patient care"

and the first to provide foetal blood transfusions to save a baby's life.

AIIMS, New Delhi, is also becoming an early adopter of robotic surgeries and artificial intelligence (AI). Under the guidance of hospital director Dr M. Srinivas, the faculty is busy researching how to use new technologies to improve medical care. This is necessary because there has been a surge in the number of procedures performed particularly when it comes to diagnostics. The total radiology investigations have risen from 369,607 in 2019-20 to 632,106 in 2023-2024. During the same period, the number of ultrasound scans went up from 70,619 to 93,062; computed tomography (CT) scans from 27,044 to 40,044; and magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) scans from 6,906 to 14,334. The institute is turning to AI to help handle the rising number of patients. It recently set up the country's first Smart Lab—an automated lab where patients can receive test and diagnostic reports on the same day. The lab uses AI to boost both speed and accuracy and can conduct up to 90,000 tests daily.

Recently, the institute inaugurated its surgical robotic training facility at the SET—skill, e-learning and telemedicine—facility on campus. The lab will offer clinical education and training for robotic-assisted surgeries to residents and faculty members. The 500 sq. ft space is the first-of-its-kind robotic training facility for healthcare professionals in a government set-up in India and also the first faculty-led procedural training centre in the Asia-Pacific region. Robotic-assisted surgeries are high in demand in the country already, as they are minimally invasive and patients recover much faster with very few side effects and no scars. "AI, drones and robotics are poised to revolutionise healthcare delivery in the near future. To make AIIMS, New Delhi,

TOP 5

MEDICAL UNIVERSITIES WITH THE HIGHEST NUMBER OF SUPER SPECIALITY STUDENTS PASSING OUT IN THE PAST THREE YEARS

RANK	UNIVERSITY	TOTAL NUMBER
1	ALL INDIA INSTITUTE OF MEDICAL SCIENCES (AIIMS), NEW DELHI	578
2	ALL INDIA INSTITUTE OF MEDICAL SCIENCES (AIIMS), RISHIKESH	200
3	JSS ACADEMY OF HIGHER EDUCATION & RESEARCH, MYSURU	190
4	NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF MENTAL HEALTH AND NEUROSCIENCES (NIMHANS), BENGALURU	138
5	JAWAHARLAL INSTITUTE OF POSTGRADUATE MEDICAL EDUCATION & RESEARCH (JIPMER), PUDUCHERRY	135

TOP 5

MEDICAL UNIVERSITIES WHERE STUDENTS (MS/MD) ATTEND THE HIGHEST NUMBER OF OPD PATIENTS

RANK	UNIVERSITY	AVERAGE NUMBER OF PATIENTS
1	ALL INDIA INSTITUTE OF MEDICAL SCIENCES (AIIMS), NEW DELHI	10,024
2	KING GEORGE'S MEDICAL UNIVERSITY, LUCKNOW	8,499
3	ALL INDIA INSTITUTE OF MEDICAL SCIENCES (AIIMS), PATNA	7,858
4	SRI RAMACHANDRA INSTITUTE OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND RESEARCH (DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY), CHENNAI	5,675
5	NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF MENTAL HEALTH AND NEUROSCIENCES (NIMHANS), BENGALURU	5,543

Average number of patients attended by a final-year student (MS/MD) with the help of senior doctors in various OPDs (in one year)

STUDENTSPEAK

"Medical research is placed deep at the core of the postgraduate curriculum along with patient care in AIIMS, New Delhi. So, the moment a postgraduate joins the institute, he/ she actually joins a community of dedicated doctors-cum-teachers-cum-researchers"

DIBAKAR
RESIDENT, MD (ANATOMY), AIIMS

INDIA'S BEST
UNIVERSITIES

DID YOU KNOW?

Since 2017, AIIMS, New Delhi, has been getting the health ministry's prestigious Kayakalp Award for being the cleanest medical university.

future-ready in the Amrit Kaal, it has been decided to have a special focus on research, adoption and application of AI, drones and robotics," says Srinivas.

AIIMS has also been working to manage patients better; it receives close to 8,000 of them per day for OPD visits alone. The need for prompt interventions, particularly in emergencies, is thus high and the institute plans to increase the capacities of various labs and departments. It has already decided to expand the capacity of its CATH lab given the growing demand for cardio and neuro consultations and procedures. A CATH lab is where tests and procedures, including ablation, angiogram, angioplasty and implantation of pacemakers/ ICDs, are carried out. It is essential for cardio patients and is usually the first port of call. With the patient load for strokes and heart disease increasing in the country, public institutions have to increase their capacities accordingly. "There are so many different patients coming into AIIMS, and as a student, you don't just learn theory here but can religiously practise that theory," says Keerthi Teja, a student.

In terms of courses, there is also a lot to look forward to. The institute plans to set up new disciplines in transplant medicine and spiritual medicine. It has also signed an agreement with the Armed Forces Medical Services to jointly develop a postgraduate course in medicine that will offer practical training to students at Leh (3,500-metre altitude) and Bengaluru (for space exploration). Such training will help high-altitude soldiers who often face acclimatisation issues such as squeezing of blood vessels, swelling of the brain, strokes due to frostbite and so on. There are also plans to set up a 970-bed super-speciality and tertiary care hospital with the Central Armed Police Forces Institute of Medical Sciences (CAPFIMS). In the 15th Finance Commission cycle, the Union Cabinet approved budgetary support of Rs 2,207.5 crore for the institute which is to provide healthcare facilities to all CAPFs employees, their dependents, pensioners, CGHS and Ayushman Bharat-Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana beneficiaries, and the general public.

TOP 5

MEDICAL UNIVERSITIES WITH THE LOWEST TUITION FEES (MS/MD)

RANK	UNIVERSITY	TUITION FEES (ENTIRE COURSE)
1	ALL INDIA INSTITUTE OF MEDICAL SCIENCES (AIIMS), NEW DELHI	₹702
1	ALL INDIA INSTITUTE OF MEDICAL SCIENCES (AIIMS), JODHPUR	₹702
1	ALL INDIA INSTITUTE OF MEDICAL SCIENCES (AIIMS), RAIPUR	₹702
4	ALL INDIA INSTITUTE OF MEDICAL SCIENCES (AIIMS), RISHIKESH	₹1,000
5	ALL INDIA INSTITUTE OF MEDICAL SCIENCES (AIIMS), PATNA	₹3,027

TOP 5

MEDICAL UNIVERSITIES WITH THE BEST FACULTY-STUDENT RATIO

RANK	UNIVERSITY	RATIO
1	INSTITUTE OF LIVER & BILIARY SCIENCES, NEW DELHI	2.36
2	JSS ACADEMY OF HIGHER EDUCATION & RESEARCH, MYSURU	1.99
3	NITTE (DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY), MANGALURU	1.82
4	NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF MENTAL HEALTH AND NEUROSCIENCES (NIMHANS), BENGALURU	1.72
5	KLE ACADEMY OF HIGHER EDUCATION & RESEARCH (DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY), BELAGAVI	1.52

Note: MS/MD student count was considered to calculate the ratio
Total faculty = Permanent faculty + visiting faculty + contractual/ad hoc faculty

Recently, AIIMS, New Delhi, was in the news due to student protests after a nursing student committed suicide in the hostel. The mental health department provided clinical support to teachers and students throughout the Covid pandemic and sources at the institute say there is a possibility that all students will have mandatory counselling sessions in the future to help them cope with the academic and work pressure. It is not just exposure to high-quality medical education that the institute promises, but also an opportunity to develop the personal skills and resilience required to be a doctor. ■

DR ANOOP K. GANJOO

A Bubble of Privileges

FOR MOST MEDICAL SCHOOL ASPIRANTS IN INDIA, AIIMS has always held a pride of place, and so it was for me too in 1974 when I joined this prestigious institute. A large campus, an impressive modern building, its various departments having abundant resources for cutting-edge equipment, its library stocked with all kinds of books, latest journals and later electronic literature search facility, an Olympic-size swimming pool, a large gymnasium with outdoor tennis and basketball courts, individual hostel rooms for all students, and a film club that regularly showed avant-garde indie movies sourced from the many foreign embassies in Delhi were part of what made AIIMS attractive. But I think there were two more significant features that added to its appeal: a small class size, the smallest in the country (only 50 undergraduates per year, though this number was increased later) allowing great camaraderie among the students, and a brilliant teaching faculty, some of whom were invited from their established positions in prominent institutions from India and abroad. Many of them were our role models.

We were surrounded by an environment that fostered not just academic brilliance but personal growth and development as well. I would say a robust, free and mutually respectful faculty-student relationship was a major highlight of my stay at the institute. For a long time, AIIMS offered us opportunities not available in other medical colleges and there were constant exchanges with prominent Indian and foreign doctors and researchers (including some Nobel laureates). We felt we were in a bubble of privilege.

There was an expectation of academic and medical excellence from us, as was a subtle understanding that most of us would be teachers and researchers (nearly half of my class started their professional careers as teaching faculty, in India and abroad). Quite a few AIIMS pass-outs have made a name for themselves in the medical world, holding key leadership positions. Private practice in those days was frowned upon, being seen as profiting unfairly from a patient's ill health.

Over the years, especially with the entry of corporates in the medical field, much of the exclusive image that AIIMS enjoyed has dimmed somewhat though it continues to maintain its pole position among the medical schools of this country. The central government is trying to replicate its success by opening several sister AIIMS centres all over the country and some of these are indeed doing better than the best medical facilities in their respective states. But with major strides made in the medical field in the last few years and the growth of good corporate hospitals, an increasingly aware patient population does not necessarily prefer an overcrowded government set-up like AIIMS over private entities (which however was a norm in our time there).

When I look back, I am pleased with the progress in India's medical field; we are among the best in the world in many areas. A testimony to this is the international acceptance of India as a destination for advanced medical care. But there is a sad side to this growth too. The altruistic nature of medical practice is giving in to the demands of commerce, which I firmly believe is a reflection of the changed zeitgeist of current times. Medicine is no longer a calling, the noble profession (a much-abused cliché) that it was touted to be. A doctor, expected to place care of the patient above all else, ignoring personal aspirations, is no longer as privileged in society as he was earlier and is often reviled and viewed with suspicion. It is unfair to expect doctors to sacrifice their personal and social lives in the service of patients, for an underwhelming remuneration, and still be subject to societal violence when things go wrong. No wonder, the field of medicine does not attract the same number of bright school students as before.

Be that as it may, centres like AIIMS shall continue to inspire thousands of young minds that choose medicine over a plethora of career options available now. ■

"Centres like AIIMS shall continue to inspire young minds that choose medicine over a plethora of career options"

The author is a senior cardiothoracic and vascular surgeon at Indraprastha Apollo Hospitals, New Delhi. He passed out of the AIIMS in 1978

Medical Education in the Time of Tech Transformation

DR ANURAG AGRAWAL

THE HEALTHCARE LANDSCAPE is evolving rapidly, driven by advancements in technology, changes in population demographics, commoditisation of information in a digital world, and the ongoing need for quality care. While physicians play a critical role in defining and delivering patient care, there is a growing recognition of the importance of non-physicians in imagining and creating health systems of tomorrow. Health is a superficially simple word, hiding a complexity such that its meaning changes from birth to death, from past to present, and from resource-constrained to resource-abundant. The future of health and healthcare systems is being shaped by new scientific, social and economic forces. In turn, medical education and research too will change; with the rise, fall and realignment of specialties. Here, I look at recent technological trends with the potential to disrupt medicine, and speculate about what it means for medical education and research.

The advent of artificial intelligence (AI) and digital health: While the practice of medicine today is not very different from what it was before the turn of the century, the next 25 years are expected to see radical change. Digital health, seen in a wider meaning of the convergence of digital connectivity, wearable devices, digital twins and AI, will embody this transformation. The last two years have seen breathtaking advances, with generative AI coming to the forefront. Whether answering difficult questions, given all relevant information, or holding fully interactive medical conversations with patients to obtain such information, large language models (LLM) have shown the potential for versatile applications. Image classification was already an area where AI may be better than humans, and now we have large multimodal models (LMM) that can handle multiple types of data. While humans still need to be in the

STRIVING FOR EXCELLENCE Students at King George's Medical University, Lucknow

loop for ethical reasons and to prevent potentially disastrous errors such as AI hallucinations, the impact of AI will not be restricted to imaging-based fields like radiology, contrary to common thinking. In my view, radiology might be more resilient to AI pressure, due to its ownership of the imaging ecosystem, compared to fields that are purely knowledge- and consultation-based.

In a country like India, where public health needs are diverse and substantial, leveraging these advancements can lead to significant improvements in healthcare delivery and outcomes, but needs to be carefully calibrated to context. We will need simultaneous investments in two types of digital health. First, that which scales quality health services from few to many—the so-called scaling of privilege. Second, developing new possibilities within health. Each requires substantial investments in education. Given the scale of the Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission, education about digital health should immediately become a cornerstone of medical education.

Changes to medical curriculum and specialisation: Current medical education systems are unfortunately not well prepared for the changes outlined in the previous section. Even in digital health, there is a wide difference between training doctors to use technology to increase efficiency within the current system versus training them to imagine and create futuristic systems. In the process, we may even need to introduce new subjects during MBBS and create new specialisations thereafter. For example, currently, medical genomics is a super-specialisation after training in paediatrics, a remnant of times when medical genetics meant heritable diseases. This is no longer valid at a time when genomics will be ubiquitous. There are no easy answers and despite some reservations on practicality, I wish success to engineering or science schools that are building captive hospitals and new medical training systems; an approach that will eventually be mirrored by premier medical schools creating technology-intensive verticals. Either way, medical education will need to evolve. The time when an MBBS graduate will seriously consider data science, AI, or genomics as a specialisation is around the corner. MBBS/PhD programmes, within or between institutions, will emerge. In my opinion, bright young doctors who jump in wholeheartedly to learn these new skills will soon be riding a massive wave of opportunity. In my opinion, one of the reasons that medical students are not taking this direction yet is simply because of a lack of exposure to the cutting edge of medical science.

Loss of information asymmetry and patient-empowerment: Driven by advances in information technology, digital content and AI, medicine will move out of hospitals. A corollary of this is that health science will grow beyond medical schools. Shift from intermittent sickness care in hospitals to continuous wellness care at home will be a major driver towards this. Such care will be personalised, enabled by wearables, AI and complex algorithms. Being primarily consumer-driven, social sciences and economics would become an integral aspect of 'health science'. Where would such training occur and who would be the students? Universities teaching a wide array of subjects and courses would be most suitable for customised interdisciplinary education directed towards new health opportunities beyond conventional medicine. When I was a first-year MBBS student at AIIMS Delhi in 1989, I had classmates studying 'Human Biology'. I thought it was a great idea—to train people who will not prescribe drugs or do surgery but are well-informed about the functioning of the human body and health research. It also helps that non-medical training is more likely to teach you the value of uncertainty and thinking, rather than a false certainty of protocol-driven care. Sadly, the course no longer exists, but perhaps 'health science' taught outside medical colleges with a diverse blend of faculty is more apt for the changing landscape.

To conclude, there are many new opportunities for young physicians in a rapidly changing world. Their education needs to keep up. ■

MANEESH AGNIHOTRI

"There are many new opportunities for young physicians in a rapidly changing world. Their education needs to keep up"

The author is Dean, BioSciences and Health Research, Trivedi School of Biosciences, Ashoka University

INDIA'S BEST UNIVERSITIES

NO. 1 INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY (IIT) DELHI, *New Delhi*

FOUNTAINHEAD OF INNOVATION

BY BROADENING ITS SCOPE AND FORGING INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS, IIT DELHI IS FOSTERING A NEW GENERATION OF RESEARCHERS AND INNOVATORS

By Shelly Anand

CUTTING-EDGE RESEARCH Students conducting experiments at the Robotic Welding Cell of IIT Delhi

CHANDRADEEP KUMAR

IN THE EVER-EVOLVING LANDSCAPE OF LEARNING, technical education acts as a catalyst for fostering innovation. Focusing on equipping students with practical skills and preparing them for the real-world challenges, it teaches them how to find practical solutions. And that's exactly what IIT Delhi has been doing for the past six decades—training its students to fit in, adapt and grow in the careers or specialisations of their choice while addressing the pertinent issues faced by society.

TOP 10

TECHNICAL UNIVERSITIES

RANK 2024	RANK 2023	RANK 2022	RANK 2021	RANK 2020	UNIVERSITY
1	1	1	1	1	INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY DELHI
2	2	2	4	NP	INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY KANPUR
3	3	3	3	3	INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY BOMBAY, MUMBAI
4	4	4	2	2	INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY KHARAGPUR
5	NP	NP	NP	NP	INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY ROORKEE
6	5	5	5	4	INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY GUWAHATI
7	6	6	7	5	DELHI TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY, NEW DELHI
8	7	7	6	6	INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY MANDI
9	8	8	8	10	INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY BANGALORE, BENGALURU
10	9	9	9	7	BIRLA INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY AND SCIENCE, PILANI

GURUSPEAK

"We have an enabling research ecosystem—a high-performance computing facility, cutting-edge characterisation and fabrication facilities, an excellent library, strategic links with industry, defence and government, excellent faculty and a relevant curriculum"

RANGAN BANERJEE
Director, IIT Delhi

TOP 5

TECHNICAL UNIVERSITIES WITH THE BEST VALUE FOR MONEY

RANK	UNIVERSITY	RoI
1	INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY ROORKEE	113.4
2	INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY KANPUR	92.1
3	INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY GUWAHATI	82.6
4	INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY KHARAGPUR	76.8
5	INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY GANDHINAGAR	40.0

Note: RoI (return on investment) is calculated based on average annual salary (MTech) / tuition fees (MTech entire duration)

TOP 5

TECHNICAL UNIVERSITIES WITH THE BEST FACULTY-STUDENT RATIO

RANK	UNIVERSITY	RATIO
1	NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY UTTARAKHAND, SRINAGAR, PAURI GARHWAL	2.40
2	DELHI TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY, NEW DELHI	1.70
3	UNIVERSITY OF ENGINEERING & MANAGEMENT JAIPUR	1.64
4	INDIRA GANDHI DELHI TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY FOR WOMEN (IGDTUW), NEW DELHI	1.32
5	NOORUL ISLAM CENTRE FOR HIGHER EDUCATION, KANYAKUMARI	1.23

Note: MTech student count was considered to calculate the ratio

TOP 5

TECHNICAL UNIVERSITIES OFFERING THE HIGHEST NUMBER OF PHDS IN THE PAST 3 YEARS

RANK	UNIVERSITY	NO. OF STUDENTS
1	INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY KHARAGPUR	1,140
2	INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY DELHI	950
3	INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY BOMBAY, MUMBAI*	948
4	INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY GUWAHATI	766
5	INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY KANPUR	675

**IIT Bombay's current publicly available data used*

TOP 5

TECHNICAL UNIVERSITIES WITH THE HIGHEST NUMBER OF PATENTS FILED IN THE PAST 3 YEARS

RANK	UNIVERSITY	NO. OF PATENTS
1	INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY BOMBAY, MUMBAI*	505
2	INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY DELHI	335
3	INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY KANPUR	319
4	UNIVERSITY OF ENGINEERING & MANAGEMENT JAIPUR	303
5	INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY ROORKEE	234

**IIT Bombay's current publicly available data used*

TOP 5

TECHNICAL UNIVERSITIES WITH THE HIGHEST NUMBER OF PATENTS PUBLISHED IN THE PAST THREE YEARS

RANK	UNIVERSITY	NO. OF PATENTS
1	INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY BOMBAY, MUMBAI*	536
2	INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY DELHI	370
3	INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY ROORKEE	279
4	UNIVERSITY OF ENGINEERING & MANAGEMENT JAIPUR	270
5	INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY KANPUR	172

**IIT Bombay's current publicly available data used*

TOP 5

TECHNICAL UNIVERSITIES WITH THE HIGHEST NUMBER OF PATENTS GRANTED IN THE PAST THREE YEARS

RANK	UNIVERSITY	NO. OF PATENTS
1	INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY DELHI	357
2	INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY BOMBAY, MUMBAI*	308
3	INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY KANPUR	304
4	INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY ROORKEE	148
5	INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY KHARAGPUR	143

**IIT Bombay's current publicly available data used*

TOP 5

TECHNICAL UNIVERSITIES WITH THE HIGHEST NUMBER OF PATENTS LICENSED IN THE PAST THREE YEARS

RANK	UNIVERSITY	NO. OF PATENTS
1	INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY DELHI	32
2	INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY KHARAGPUR	24
3	INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY KANPUR	17
4	INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY ROORKEE	14
5	INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY, HYDERABAD	8

Note: IIT Bombay's data on patents licensed is not available and hence not included in the table

STUDENTSPEAK

"The institute provides a vibrant student life, full of academic and non-academic opportunities. Not only that, the Office of Career Services (OCS) is trying its best to help us find jobs and internships"

JYOTI RANI NATH,
PhD Scholar, IIT Delhi

Among the five oldest IITs, IIT Delhi was set up in 1961 and got the 'Institution of Eminence' status in 2018. Today, it offers a plethora of technical programmes post higher secondary, but its approach to postgraduate education is particularly striking. With 5,857 students enrolled in masters and PhD programmes, IIT Delhi is fostering a new generation of researchers and innovators. The number and variety of masters, doctoral and joint degree programmes offered go on to show that the institute believes in diversity and a multidisciplinary approach to education, blending theoretical foundations with hands-on experimentation and industry exposure.

Rangan Banerjee, director, IIT Delhi, shares an example: "We have an international masters programme in renewable energy supported by the International Solar Alliance, where we have students from 20 countries in the same batch." The institute's expanding roster of MTech programmes now includes everything from traditional engineering disciplines to cutting-edge fields like cyber security, electric mobility and machine intelligence. IIT Delhi is also breaking new ground in unexpected areas—recent additions to the curriculum include MA in Culture, Society and Thought, MSc in Biological Sciences and Executive MBA, clear signals that the institute recognises the value of a broader educational perspective.

Recently, the institute launched its joint PhD programme with the University of Queensland, Australia. This initiative will allow doctoral students to split their time between the two institutions, fostering international collaboration and cross-pollination of ideas. Also actively involved in collaborative programmes with industry, academia, and governments, IIT Delhi continues to remain at the forefront of technical education and innovation in India. ■

QUEUED UP
Students at IIT Kanpur, which is ranked No. 2

MANEESH AGNIHOTRI

DID YOU KNOW?

IIT Delhi has been extending its boundaries. An extension campus, spread over 50 acres, has been established in Sonepat, which houses a Technopark equipped with high-class facilities. Another such campus will come up in Jhajjar.

AROGYASWAMI PAULRAJ

How a Project at IIT Delhi Gave a Fillip to India's Defence Tech

I WAS NOT A TYPICAL IIT STUDENT. After joining the National Defence Academy in Khadakwasla, Maharashtra, in 1961, I spent seven years in service and engineering training. Following a brief stint on warships, the Navy sent me to IIT Delhi in July 1969 for a two-year MTech programme. The IIT, with its impressive labs and libraries, offered a different world from the Navy and a new opportunity.

At IIT, Professor P.V. Indiresan (who later served as the director of IIT Madras) helped me switch to a PhD programme within my approved two-year Navy deputation. As a PhD scholar, I worked on a rather abstract theory of non-linear filtering, utilising tools from stochastic calculus and diffusion models. This work caught the attention of researchers at Stanford University and UC Berkeley, eventually leading to my faculty position at Stanford two decades later.

After my two years at IIT Delhi, I returned to the Navy in July 1971. Unexpectedly, I was back at the institute in early 1972 to lead a sonar redesign project, far removed from my PhD research. This project followed the Indo-Pak war of December 1971, where the Navy lost INS Khukri, a frontline anti-submarine frigate, along with 194 lives. A Pakistani submarine, PNS Hangor, had successfully torpedoed Khukri. The British-designed 170B sonar on Khukri had apparently failed to detect Hangor. The Navy tasked me with developing an improved design for the 170B, which I naturally chose to undertake at IIT Delhi, leading a small team of DRDO scientists and PhD students.

The 18-month project yielded a significantly enhanced transmitter and receiver system, leveraging advanced signal processing technology. After extensive sea trials, the Navy approved the equipment for production in 1973. A defence-related production unit manufactured several systems for deployment in the Indian fleet. This achievement—conceived at IIT Delhi—marked the first successful development of a complex electronic system in independent India, inspiring later successes in Indian defence technology.

"The Navy tasked me with developing an improved design for the 170B sonar. The 18-month project yielded a significantly enhanced transmitter and receiver system, leveraging advanced signal processing technology"

My IIT days left me with many pleasant memories. As a naval officer, I resided at the faculty house instead of student hostels, and was grateful for the numerous comforts it provided. I also forged lasting friendships that have endured for decades.

Prof. Indiresan and IIT Delhi gave me, a naval sailor, a chance at an R&D career. After 20 years in India, I moved to Stanford University, and with that came many opportunities. At Stanford, I invented MIMO (Multiple-Input Multiple-Output) wireless, which became the core technology for today's 4G/5G mobile and WiFi networks used worldwide. I am indeed most grateful for the formative years at IIT Delhi. ■

The author, a globally recognised pioneer of modern wireless communications technology, is an Emeritus Professor at Stanford University, USA. He is a 1973 PhD graduate from IIT Delhi

Choose What's Best for You

PROF. JASKIRAN ARORA

TECHNICAL EDUCATION IS ONE OF the most sought-after choices for higher education as it lays focus on skill development and enhancing the employability of students, setting the way to a rewarding career path. With technological transformation deepening its roots into almost every aspect of our lives, economic transformation shifting the terms of global trade and social transformation changing how we socialise, there is nothing that has remained untouched—how we communicate, bank, travel, shop, read, study and even entertain ourselves. Therefore, technical education is assuming importance like never before.

So, what is that a student should be mindful of when seeking admission into technical programmes? The breadth and depth of the curriculum to widen the foundational base, integration with research opportunities to promote critical thinking, pedagogical interventions to be able to analyse the knowledge gained, and field immersions and exposure to real-world situations to apply the knowledge are the essential attributes.

Breadth and depth of the curriculum: Today technology, management, entrepreneurship and innovation are fusing to offer disruptive solutions to businesses. And therefore, students must review the curriculum of the programmes they want to join—when was it revised last, how well is technology woven into it, what are the opportunities to diversify their base and study multidisciplinary courses, and most importantly what is the focus on enhancing their skills.

Research opportunities: The pace at which knowledge is being created is unprecedented. Unfortunately, India's education system promotes creating conformists and not the ones who question. Opportunities to conduct research promote one's ability to inquire and critique. So, students need to check if they will get such an opportunity and will get to study courses such as critical thinking and problem-solving.

Pedagogical interventions: Students must enquire how technical education is imparted. What percentage of the programme is 'taught' by the teacher and what is that the students 'do' in the classrooms or field? Is there a greater focus on textbooks or are more contemporary case studies taken up and industry speakers called to classrooms? Answers to these questions will help students understand whether the institute is truly preparing the students for an ever-evolving technical landscape.

"The landscape of technical education is evolving rapidly. Industries demand more tech-savvy and adaptable professionals"

Field immersions: Higher education institutes are spaces where the students are buffered from the real world and groomed to face it when they graduate. But even while studying, they must get to have a sneak peek into the real world for them to be better prepared. Field immersions, internships, live projects and apprenticeships provide such opportunities to the students, thereby condensing the time they will take to contribute to the workplaces they later on join.

Technical education is evolving rapidly, as industries demand more tech-savvy and adaptable professionals. Thus, the importance of choosing a technical education programme wisely cannot be overstated in shaping a person's future career endeavours. ■

The author is Dean, Education Quality, BML Munjal University, Gurugram

INDIA'S BEST UNIVERSITIES

NO. 1 NATIONAL LAW SCHOOL OF INDIA UNIVERSITY (NLSIU), *Bengaluru*

SETTING THE BAR HIGH

THE PREMIER LAW UNIVERSITY IS INCREASING STUDENT INTAKE AND EXPANDING ITS POSTGRADUATE PROGRAMMES, WHILE ALSO FOCUSING ON EMERGING AREAS OF LAW

By Ajay Sukumaran

Technology has been a key focus area at the National Law School of India University (NLSIU) given the emergence of generative artificial intelligence (Gen AI) in the past couple of years. The objective, explains Sudhir Krishnaswamy, vice chancellor, is to understand the foundations of Gen AI and the techniques to customise a large language model so as to apply it to a corpus of material in various fields of law.

Last November, NLSIU embarked on a unique research project in the field of consumer law using AI. This project, in collaboration with IIT Bombay and the Department of Consumer Affairs, will explore how openly available large language models, such as Llama, can be used for building public solutions for enhancing efficiency in India's consumer grievance redressal system. The initiative aims at creating the proof of concept of a chatbot designed to guide consumers on the procedural aspects of drafting a complaint and answering questions relating to consumer law in India. It will also design a decision-assist tool for searching case laws and summarisation of documents to provide assistance to judicial authorities in the area of consumer affairs.

"We are ahead of the curve compared to any other academic intervention in this field in In-

› LAWYERS OF THE FUTURE Students at the Bengaluru campus of the National Law School of India University

TOP 5

LAW UNIVERSITIES

RANK 2024	RANK 2023	RANK 2022	RANK 2021	RANK 2020	RANK 2019	RANK 2018	UNIVERSITY
1	1	1	1	1	1	1	NATIONAL LAW SCHOOL OF INDIA UNIVERSITY (NLSIU), BENGALURU
2	2	2	2	NP	NP	2	THE WEST BENGAL NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF JURIDICAL SCIENCES (NUJS), KOLKATA
3	3	4	4	3	NP	NP	GUJARAT NATIONAL LAW UNIVERSITY (GNLU), GANDHINAGAR
4	4	3	3	2	2	NP	NATIONAL LAW INSTITUTE UNIVERSITY (NLIU) BHOPAL, BHOPAL
5	5	5	5	4	7	NP	DR. RAM MANOHAR LOHIYA NATIONAL LAW UNIVERSITY (RMLNLU), LUCKNOW

HEMANT MISHRA

GURUSPEAK

PROF. SUDHIR KRISHNASWAMY

Vice Chancellor, NLSIU

"The university is deeply invested in research and interventions using Generative AI in law. Our work in consumer law is cutting edge, not just for the university but for the industry and for the entire emerging field of technology in AI and law"

INDIA'S BEST

UNIVERSITIES

TOP 5

LAW UNIVERSITIES WITH THE LOWEST TUITION FEES

RANK	UNIVERSITY	TUITION FEES
1	HIDAYATULLAH NATIONAL LAW UNIVERSITY (HNLU), RAIPUR	₹65,000
2	THE WEST BENGAL NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF JURIDICAL SCIENCES (NUJS), KOLKATA	₹68,000
3	NATIONAL LAW UNIVERSITY ODISHA (NLUO), CUTTACK	₹70,000
4	DR. RAM MANOHAR LOHIYA NATIONAL LAW UNIVERSITY (RMLNLU), LUCKNOW	₹1,03,000
5	GUJARAT NATIONAL LAW UNIVERSITY (GNLU), GANDHINAGAR	₹1,20,000

Note: For LLM, which is a one-year course

TOP 5

LAW UNIVERSITIES WITH THE BEST FACULTY-STUDENT RATIO

RANK	UNIVERSITY	RATIO
1	NATIONAL LAW SCHOOL OF INDIA UNIVERSITY (NLSIU), BENGALURU	1.31
2	DR. RAM MANOHAR LOHIYA NATIONAL LAW UNIVERSITY (RMLNLU), LUCKNOW	1.19
3	GUJARAT NATIONAL LAW UNIVERSITY (GNLU), GANDHINAGAR	1.16
4	THE WEST BENGAL NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF JURIDICAL SCIENCES (NUJS), KOLKATA	0.85
5	THE NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF ADVANCED LEGAL STUDIES (NUALS), KOCHI	0.62

Note: Only LLM student count was taken to calculate the ratio

TOP 5

LAW UNIVERSITIES OFFERING THE HIGHEST NUMBER OF PHDS IN THE LAST THREE YEARS

RANK	UNIVERSITY	NUMBER OF STUDENTS
1	DR. RAM MANOHAR LOHIYA NATIONAL LAW UNIVERSITY (RMLNLU), LUCKNOW	34
2	THE WEST BENGAL NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF JURIDICAL SCIENCES (NUJS), KOLKATA	23
3	NATIONAL LAW SCHOOL OF INDIA UNIVERSITY (NLSIU), BENGALURU	18
4	THE NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF ADVANCED LEGAL STUDIES (NUALS), KOCHI	15
5	GUJARAT NATIONAL LAW UNIVERSITY (GNLU), GANDHINAGAR	11
5	NATIONAL LAW UNIVERSITY ODISHA (NLUO), CUTTACK	11

dian law," says Krishnaswamy, adding that the project is led by NLSIU faculty. It will involve creating a corpus of Indian legal resources to map the landscape of consumer disputes in the country on which the large language model will be trained.

As a premier law university, NLSIU also sees the necessity to integrate technology as a theme into the core teaching curriculum, points out Nigam Nuggehalli, registrar. "We are headed towards a situation where, in any area of law—whether it is Constitutional Law, Criminal Law, Tax Law, or Corporate Law—we have to integrate the issues that technology brings into the curriculum at the core level," he says. Currently, NLSIU offers courses on tech and AI as electives. "But what we want to do is put law and technology into the core of the programme," adds Krishnaswamy. "So, we want to teach students basic analytical approaches to coding, and thinking about these techniques. But that will only happen from 2025 onwards." The idea is to enable students to work on applications for the use of technology in law.

In the past few years, NLSIU has pursued an expansion programme to gradually increase its student headcount. That phase reaches its peak this academic

TOP 5

LAW UNIVERSITIES WITH THE MAXIMUM NO. OF VICTORIES IN INTER-UNIVERSITY MOOT COURT COMPETITIONS

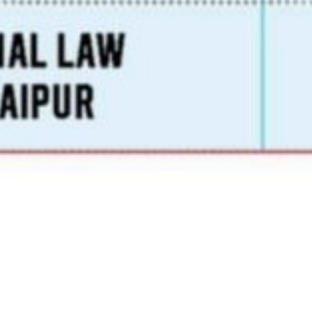
RANK	UNIVERSITY	COMPETITIONS WON
1	GUJARAT NATIONAL LAW UNIVERSITY (GNLU), GANDHINAGAR	19
2	DR. RAM MANOHAR LOHIYA NATIONAL LAW UNIVERSITY (RMLNLU), LUCKNOW	18
3	THE NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF ADVANCED LEGAL STUDIES (NUALS), KOCHI	8
4	NATIONAL LAW INSTITUTE UNIVERSITY (NLIU) BHOPAL, BHOPAL	5
5	THE WEST BENGAL NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF JURIDICAL SCIENCES (NUJS), KOLKATA	4
5	HIDAYATULLAH NATIONAL LAW UNIVERSITY (HNLU), RAIPUR	4

Note: For AY 2022-23

STUDENTSPEAK

"The opportunity to learn from faculty who are right in the middle of the public policy discourse in India has been a great experience. The course is very interdisciplinary in nature, so that too has expanded my own horizons of learning"

LARISSA CLITUS
Masters in Public Policy, NLSIU



DID YOU KNOW?

In the 2024–25 academic year, NLSIU is offering LLM students the option of specialised study, or concentrations, in four areas—Public Law, Criminal Law, Commercial Law and Law and Technology. This will enable LLM students to delve deeper into these specific legal domains.

year in terms of student intake across all courses. While pointing out that legal education in India has historically been focused more on undergraduate programmes in both teaching and research, Nuggehalli says that NLSIU is now in a position to emphasise its postgraduate programmes, such as the one-year LLM (Legum Magister) and two-year Master's in Public Policy. "We have also sharpened our PhD intake. We are now paying very close attention to the kind of candidates we are getting for PhD," says Nuggehalli, adding that candidates are signing up for interdisciplinary areas such as Law and Finance, Law and Social Science or Law and Public Policy. "We really want to up our research game."

For this, NLSIU has hired a large number of research-intensive faculty members over the past few years. In the past year alone, NLSIU added 30 new faculty members to its staff. "We want to make sure that any faculty member who joins us has an active research agenda. So, we are getting people who are experts in their fields," says Nuggehalli.

The postgraduate programmes, he adds, demand a versatile style and way of teaching that is different from teaching undergrads. Typically, LLM graduates are inclined towards academic careers, either going on to pursue a PhD or opting for teaching experience at various universities. "Lately, we have seen a number of them apply for positions in the judicial services in various states," he says.

On the cards at NLSIU is also a new centre that will look at emerging areas of law such as technology and climate change among others, drawing on the funding that the leading law university has received from the government and as private philanthropy. Equally, NLSIU is keen to build on the research ecosystem in Bengaluru, where it has its campus. The city is home to other prestigious centres of learning such as the Indian Institute of Science and Indian Institute of Management-Bangalore. Nuggehalli says the goal is to deepen the research links with these institutions. "We want to draw on the ecosystem we are in," he adds. ■

How a One-Year Course Became Memories for Life

PADMAPRIYA JANAKIRAMAN

AFTER MY MBA IN FINANCE, I wanted to transition in my education to a non-profit kind of orientation. By then, I was already into films. In fact, my first film happened in the midst of my first year of work at GE Research in Bengaluru as a risk consultant working on statistical models, which I took up soon after my MBA. For six months, I juggled films and work before quitting my job to focus on the former.

In 2007, I was shooting for the Malayalam film *Kerala Varma Pazhassi Raja* and it was a long shoot during which I couldn't sign up for anything else. That's when I took up a one-year Postgraduate Diploma in Environmental Law at the National Law School of India University (NLSIU). It was a long-distance course with three or four classroom sessions. Plus you had to write a thesis. It was more a one-and-a-half-year course, including the time taken for the dissertation.

So in that way, my association with NLSIU was very critical. Environment was something close to me but I realised it is such a humongous space that probably the best way to start studying about it was through law. Because it kind of defines the very many parameters and outlooks in a much more concise way. In the scenario that you didn't do your BA LLB [Legum Baccalaureus], the PG diploma was a great way to understand not only how to break down legal language but more importantly get a 360-degree understanding of a particular sector.

The faculty was brilliant. They started with environmental ethics which really got me headlong into the subject. Those four-five days of classroom sessions were quite intense. We were just 15-20 of us and I'm still in touch with a couple of my course mates who are full-time environmental engineers. The only unfortunate part was that the long-distance course classes were held during the university vacation breaks, so we never really got to meet students of other courses. But since we had free access to the library, I spent a lot of research time there. I was obsessed about the course. I loved the canteen which served proper *ghar ka khaana*—simple *dal-rotis* and *sambhar*. The classroom sessions were very intense because they would pack a lot into the four-five days. We would be asked to prep and study beforehand. Hence, we wouldn't get breathing time. The sessions would be open to questions, discussions and conversations. I have very strong, happy memories of my time at NLSIU—*chai*, library, canteen food, a great cohort of people and a great faculty. That's what I would say.

"The PG diploma was a great way to understand not only how to break down legal language but get a 360-degree understanding of a particular sector"

I really hold my NLSIU experience to extreme importance because it connected me to Samata, which is a tribal rights organisation where I found my mentor. In 2013, when I took a break from films, my experience at NLSIU propelled me to take a three-credit course in the US with New York University on Public Finance, Gender & Food Policy. The best part of the course at NLSIU was that it was very self-initiated, and so a lot of what I had studied there prepared me when I went to the US. I still have my notes from NLSIU and all the books which I had acquired. So, I hold my experience there as very precious. ■

(As told to ***Ajay Sukumaran****)*

Janakiraman is a National Award-winning actor and was part of the 2007 batch of Post Graduate Diploma in Environmental Law at NLSIU

INDIA'S BEST UNIVERSITIES

Taking India's Law Universities into the Future

LEGAL EDUCATION, SADLY, HAS NEVER been a top priority for India's higher education policymakers. Engineering, medicine and management, epitomised through the creation of numerous Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs), Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs), and All India Institutes of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), have hogged the spotlight. In legal education, a mini-revolution started in the 1990s with the advent of the national law universities (NLUs) in India. Today, there are around 25 NLUs in the country. The word 'national' in the names of these universities is a misnomer. Unlike the IITs, IIMs, and AIIMS, which are truly 'national' institutions created by an Act of the Parliament, NLUs have been created by Acts of state legislatures. Thus, technically, NLUs are state universities.

PROF. PRABHASH RANJAN

Successes and Failures

The most considerable success of the NLU model, which floated a five-year law degree straight after school, is that it has been able to attract high-quality students to study law. The formation of the NLUs in the 1990s and early 2000s coincided with the liberalisation of the Indian economy. The waves of economic reforms and neoliberalism lifted many boats by creating high-paying jobs in corporate law firms. A new breed of lawyers burst onto the Indian legal scene. These lawyers did not wear black robes to argue cases for their clients in court. Instead, sitting in plush corporate offices, they drafted multi-billion-dollar agreements for their corporate clients, advised and supervised mergers and acquisitions of companies, and became an essential instrument for businesses to navigate the complex Indian regulatory maze. This significantly altered the traditional black-robe-wearing image of a lawyer outside a court scouting for clients.

It isn't just the corporate prac-

> ALL SET FOR COURTROOMS
The campus of West Bengal National University of Juridical Sciences in Kolkata

DEBAJYOTI CHAKRABORTY

tice. NLU graduates have ventured into various fields. Some got admitted to top universities of the world to pursue master's and doctorate degrees, with quite a few bagging prestigious scholarships like Rhodes, Inlaks, and Chevening; joined the civil services and judiciary; worked in the development sector; and some decided to join the Bar and litigate in courts.

However, the success of NLU graduates and a few others from good law schools should not blind us to the state of hundreds of other public and private law schools nationwide that essentially represent a "sea of institutionalised mediocrity". Several law schools are plagued by problems such as a lack of resources, outdated curriculums, listless leadership, inadequate and demotivated faculty members, and a lack of academic autonomy. Even most NLUs, while successfully attracting excellent students, have failed to emerge as centres of excellence in legal research. Only two Indian law schools–Jindal Global Law School and National Law School of India University–figure in the QS [universities] rankings of the top 200 law schools worldwide.

Need for Reforms

This brings us to the reforms needed to bolster legal education in India. First, legal education requires suitable regulators. The Bar Council of India (BCI) is the key regulator of legal education. The BCI's role in regulating legal education, which pertains to acquiring basic eligibility for practicing in the courts, is indispensable. However, several other facets of legal education, especially at the post-graduation level, do not pertain to litigation. Accordingly, a Parliamentary Standing Committee on Legal Education recently recommended that regulating these parts of legal education should be entrusted to an independent body called the National Council for Legal Education and Research. This proposed body will develop qualitative benchmarks to regulate legal education.

Second, law schools need to update their curricula regularly. The legal field is dynamic and keeps changing through the enactment of new laws, novel interpretations, and evolving doctrines. The new set of criminal laws recently enacted in India is a case in point. Moreover, law schools need to develop new courses and a global curriculum given the newfangled realities and challenges ranging from climate change to the ethics of artificial intelligence.

Third, there's an urgent need to bolster legal research in our law schools. Many of India's 1,700-odd law schools principally focus on teaching with scant attention to research. Consequently, India is chiefly the consumer of legal knowledge generated in the West, not its producer. Prioritising and promoting research in legal education will lead to better teaching outcomes and help students develop a critical perspective. As Albert Einstein said, "The value of an education is not the learning of many facts but the training of the mind to think". Law schools need to make strident efforts in this direction by incentivising research and creating a research-friendly environment.

"Law schools need to develop new courses and a global curriculum given new realities and challenges such as climate change and AI"

Furthermore, our law schools should enjoy complete academic freedom and autonomy. As Jawaharlal Nehru said, "A university stands for humanism, for tolerance, for reason, for the adventure of ideas and for the search of truth". A law school or any other academic institution can accomplish this goal only if academicians are free to offer their well-researched views without any fear, even if these views are at variance with popularly held beliefs in society or contest the dominant ideas of the time.

Fourth, a major structural reform that needs to be undertaken is to convert all NLUs to full-fledged central institutions and bestow on them the status of institute of national importance (INI). As INIs, these NLUs will become truly 'national' and create new qualitative benchmarks that other law schools can aspire to. There's already a precedent for this. In 2007, the National Institute of Technology Act was enacted, which elevated the status of various regional engineering colleges to INIs. The move will also ensure the Centre provides more funds to NLUs, making an NLU degree affordable for the poor and the marginalised. Currently, most NLUs charge a fee of around three lakh rupees per annum. The high fee is due to most NLUs not getting adequate financial support from the respective state governments.

Fifth, the leadership positions in our law schools should be held by passionate, charismatic and visionary academicians who inspire and create an enabling and supportive environment that allows younger academicians to realise their potential as outstanding teachers and brilliant researchers.

However, this is only possible once higher education is everyone's top priority. Legal education is at a crossroads, and the proper state intervention can yield good results. ■

The author is a professor at the Jindal Global Law School, O. P. Jindal Global University. Views are personal

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HOW KLH DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY HYDERABAD'S CUTTING-EDGE PROGRAMS IN AI, DATA SCIENCE AND CYBERSECURITY PROPEL CAREER GROWTH AND ASPIRANT SUCCESS

In today's digital landscape, industries increasingly depend on AI, Data Science, and Cybersecurity for innovation and efficiency, driving a high demand for skilled professionals. Recognizing this need and potential, KLH Deemed to be University equips students with cutting-edge knowledge and practical skills through comprehensive programs, preparing them to lead in these vital fields.

Comprehensive Educational Ecosystem: Across its Aziz Nagar and Bachupally campuses in Hyderabad, KLH offers advanced engineering programs in AI and Data Science, CSE, and ECE. These specialized B.Tech programs are designed to equip students with the theoretical knowledge and practical skills needed for successful careers in technology.

Progressive curriculum to nurture future-ready skills: The AI and Data Science program at KLH offers career opportunities as AI Engineers, Data Scientists, Data Analysts, Product Analysts, Machine Learning Engineers, and Architects. The curriculum includes Machine Learning, Deep Learning, NLP, and Data Mining, with hands-on projects, labs, and internships with leading tech companies. CSE graduates can pursue careers as Software Developers, System Analysts, Network Engineers, Cybersecurity Specialists, Database Administrators, and Research Scientists. The curriculum covers Algorithms, Data Structures, Operating Systems, and Computer Networks. ECE graduates can become Embedded Systems Engineers, Telecommunication Engineers, VLSI Design Engineers, Signal Processing Experts, and Robotics Engineers. The curriculum includes Digital Signal Processing, Microprocessors, Communication Systems, IoT, Wireless Communications, and Robotics.

Sophisticated Infrastructure and Digital Labs: The infrastructure includes high-performance computing and AI research labs, advanced computer systems, and an extensive digital library. The HPC setup features Lenovo nodes, high-performance GPUs, robust networking, and efficient cluster management software for cutting-edge research. The CSE program focuses on deep AI skills with specialized electives ensuring AI literacy. The ECE program emphasizes industry internships, hardware design, coding skills, and advanced ECE tools training like VLSI Cadence and PCB design. Top-notch ECE labs with advanced hardware design and simulation tools enhance learning.

Faculty Leading the Way in Innovation: KLH faculty members, with PhDs and Post-docs from esteemed institutes, are actively engaged in research, collaboration, and consultancy, supported by a mentor-mentee program for students. Dr. P. Lalitha Surya Kumari's team was granted a patent for "Smart Spectacle for Visually Challenged Persons," while Dr. Pavan Kumar Pagadala's team published a patent for an "Internet-of-Medical Things based Health Monitoring System." Dr. Ramesh Ade received a Rs. 27.50 lakh Start-up Research Grant from SERB, DST for spinel ferrite thin films research. Dr. Preeti Jha secured a Rs. 3.50 lakh SEED Research Grant for machine learning in genomics, and Dr. S. Srinivasa Rao obtained Rs. 6 lakhs for hybrid solar cells research. These achievements underline the faculty's commitment to innovation.

Engineering Solutions for Society: KLH Hyderabad has partnered with Purdue University for the 'Engineering Projects in Community Service (EPICS)' program, allowing students to design, build, and deploy engineering solutions for local communities. The program includes a credit course, "Social Immersive Learning," encouraging practical solutions to real-world problems. Each year, students develop innovative prototypes to address community challenges.

Mentoring and Success Ventures: The Entrepreneurship Development Cell (EDC) at campus supports entrepreneurs with structured incubation programs, providing office space, infrastructure, and access to funding opportunities. Through partnerships with investors and venture capitalists, the EDC offers networking opportunities, helping startups connect with potential collaborators and investors.

Record-Breaking Placement Offers: KLH students have consistently achieved stellar placement offers. Recently, seven students secured positions in reputed companies, with an offer of Rs. 50.57 lakhs and a monthly stipend of Rs. 1,10,000. Additionally, 18 students received offers from OpenText, with a stipend of Rs. 20,000 and a post-internship CTC of Rs. 10 lakhs per annum. The campus boasts a 100 percent placement success rate for its registered and eligible graduating students.

Industry Future and Relevance: As industries embrace emerging technologies, KLH Deemed to be University keeps pace with industry trends, ensuring graduates are job-ready and capable of leading innovations. The university's focus on practical skills, industry collaborations, and cutting-edge research prepares students to excel in their careers and significantly impact the tech industry.

For admissions, visit website https://klh.edu.in/ or call: 9490361111, +91 7815901716

INDIA'S BEST UNIVERSITIES

THE COMPLETE RESULTS

GENERAL (GOVERNMENT) — RANKS & SCORES OF UNIVERSITIES

	OVER-ALL RANK 2024	OVERALL RANK 2023	UNIVERSITY	REPUTATION & GOVER-NANCE	ACADEMIC & RESEARCH EXCELLENCE	INFRASTRUCTURE & LIVING EXPERIENCE	PERSONALITY & LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT	CAREER PROGRESSION & PLACEMENT	OBJECTIVE SCORE	PERCEPTU-AL SCORE	OVERALL SCORE
				208	250	175	150	217	1,000	1,000	2,000
↔	1	1	JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY, New Delhi	170.5	184.8	152.8	124.4	180.1	812.6	992.0	1,804.6
↔	2	2	UNIVERSITY OF DELHI, New Delhi	161.5	169.2	130.1	117.3	187.9	766.0	988.5	1,754.5
↔	3	3	ALIGARH MUSLIM UNIVERSITY, Aligarh	159.9	181.6	144.9	81.3	161.5	729.2	956.5	1,685.7
↔	4	4	UNIVERSITY OF HYDERABAD, Hyderabad	149.1	138.4	148.5	124.9	113.5	674.4	960.3	1,634.7
↑	5	7	OSMANIA UNIVERSITY, Hyderabad	167.1	144.4	121.7	89.1	128.6	650.9	970.4	1,621.3
↑	6	9	GURU GOBIND SINGH INDRAPRASTHA UNIVERSITY, New Delhi	158.4	149.6	118.1	104.0	134.4	664.5	940.5	1,605.0
↑	7	11	COCHIN UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY, Kochi	156.3	174.5	111.1	87.5	171.9	701.3	869.8	1,571.1
↑	8	13	BHARATHIAR UNIVERSITY, Coimbatore	170.1	159.4	136.2	98.4	107.2	671.3	877.2	1,548.5
↑	9	10	DR. RAJENDRA PRASAD CENTRAL AGRICULTURAL UNIVERSITY, Pusa, Samastipur	134.0	160.0	125.4	111.5	112.1	643.0	900.3	1,543.3
↑	10	15	ANNAMALAI UNIVERSITY, Annamalainagar	156.0	156.4	116.8	85.3	116.6	631.1	901.2	1,532.3
↑	11	14	GURU NANAK DEV UNIVERSITY, Amritsar	152.1	142.1	110.2	98.5	137.1	640.0	878.4	1,518.4
↑	12	16	ACHARYA NAGARJUNA UNIVERSITY, Guntur	143.0	148.3	122.0	110.5	139.8	663.6	853.8	1,517.4
↑	13	17	THE UNIVERSITY OF BURDWAN, Burdwan	158.4	158.2	125.0	76.1	146.4	664.1	849.1	1,513.2
↑	14	19	UNIVERSITY OF LUCKNOW, Lucknow	159.2	150.3	91.9	47.2	114.9	563.5	889.3	1,452.8
–	15	NP	UNIVERSITY OF ALLAHABAD, Prayagraj	149.4	147.0	115.5	59.3	127.9	599.1	851.7	1,450.8
–	16	NP	UNIVERSITY OF KERALA, Thiruvananthapuram	178.6	164.2	142.6	96.8	96.8	679.0	768.0	1,447.0
↑	17	18	MANGALORE UNIVERSITY, Mangaluru	129.8	162.7	134.8	107.6	73.1	608.0	836.1	1,444.1
↑	18	22	CHAUDHARY CHARAN SINGH UNIVERSITY, Meerut	155.8	142.9	113.8	70.4	101.0	583.9	842.0	1,425.9
–	19	NP	UNIVERSITY OF MYSORE, Mysuru	147.9	160.7	103.4	81.8	119.2	613.0	788.4	1,401.4
↑	20	24	UNIVERSITY OF CALICUT, Malappuram	165.2	132.8	104.7	72.0	92.7	567.4	828.4	1,395.8
↑	21	23	THE ENGLISH AND FOREIGN LANGUAGES UNIVERSITY, Hyderabad	142.4	128.4	119.9	76.6	83.2	550.5	837.8	1,388.3
–	22	NP	GURU GHASIDAS VISHWAVIDYALAYA, Bilaspur	163.7	163.1	118.4	81.7	138.1	665.0	657.6	1,322.6
↑	23	25	GOA UNIVERSITY, Panjim	131.0	123.7	100.5	76.2	145.7	577.1	741.9	1,319.0
–	24	NP	CENTRAL SANSKRIT UNIVERSITY, New Delhi	148.9	96.4	115.9	66.9	85.8	513.9	781.0	1,294.9
↑	25	28	TAMIL NADU AGRICULTURAL UNIVERSITY, Coimbatore	147.1	181.3	131.9	91.6	114.0	665.9	560.6	1,226.5
↑	26	29	MIZORAM UNIVERSITY, Aizawl	133.0	153.7	108.8	50.8	104.6	550.9	635.4	1,186.3
–	27	NP	CENTRAL UNIVERSITY OF PUNJAB, Bathinda	133.4	132.5	73.0	54.4	123.7	517.0	653.5	1,170.5
↑	28	30	KUMAUN UNIVERSITY, Nainital	137.2	136.0	122.9	75.4	76.5	548.0	612.9	1,160.9
–	29	NP	CENTRAL UNIVERSITY OF HIMACHAL PRADESH, Dharamshala	136.3	139.9	102.3	74.2	100.3	553.0	462.9	1,015.9
↑	30	32	VIDYASAGAR UNIVERSITY, Midnapore	123.9	134.5	98.1	48.1	101.6	506.2	473.2	979.4
↑	31	33	JUNAGADH AGRICULTURAL UNIVERSITY, Junagadh	119.4	155.1	130.4	81.3	147.8	634.0	340.7	974.7
↑	32	34	DR. Y.S.R. HORTICULTURAL UNIVERSITY, Venkataramannagudem	104.1	165.2	147.7	82.2	110.9	610.1	272.3	882.4
↑	33	35	SRI PADMAVATI MAHILA VISVAVIDYALAYAM (WOMEN'S UNIVERSITY), Tirupati	137.9	150.5	83.3	82.8	65.0	519.5	321.7	841.2
–	34	NP	MAHATMA JYOTIBA PHULE ROHILKHAND UNIVERSITY, Bareilly	165.5	112.1	94.3	70.6	122.4	564.9	269.6	834.5
–	35	NP	CENTRAL UNIVERISTY OF HARYANA, Mahendergarh	121.3	133.3	98.4	44.9	92.4	490.3	298.9	789.2

INDIA'S BEST UNIVERSITIES

THE COMPLETE RESULTS

GENERAL (GOVERNMENT) — RANKS & SCORES OF UNIVERSITIES

	OVER-ALL RANK 2024	OVERALL RANK 2023	UNIVERSITY	REPUTATION & GOVER-NANCE	ACADEMIC & RESEARCH EXCELLENCE	INFRASTRUCTURE & LIVING EXPERIENCE	PERSONALITY & LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT	CAREER PROGRESSION & PLACEMENT	OBJECTIVE SCORE	PERCEPTU-AL SCORE	OVERALL SCORE
				208	250	175	150	217	1,000	1,000	2,000
↑	36	37	MAHATMA GANDHI KASHI VIDYAPITH, Varanasi	123.5	115.2	90.0	56.3	118.5	503.5	268.2	771.7
–	37	NP	NORTH-EASTERN HILL UNIVERSITY, Shillong	146.4	118.3	90.1	38.5	134.0	527.3	185.2	712.5
–	38	NP	CENTRAL UNIVERSITY OF KARNATAKA, Kalaburagi	118.6	121.3	124.3	30.5	102.8	497.5	212.8	710.3
–	39	NP	KAVIKULAGURU KALIDAS SANSKRIT UNIVERSITY RAMTEK, Ramtek	133.4	95.3	77.9	89.2	52.0	447.8	257.2	705.0
–	40	NP	UNIVERSITY OF AGRICULTURAL SCIENCES RAICHUR, Raichur	126.8	163.4	128.5	77.2	133.7	629.6	71.9	701.5
↓	41	38	MAKHANLAL CHATURVEDI NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF JOURNALISM & COMMUNICATION, Bhopal	68.6	77.5	87.6	16.8	68.8	319.3	364.6	683.9
↓	42	40	BABA GHULAM SHAH BADSHAH UNIVERSITY, Rajouri	110.4	125.8	109.0	73.5	79.2	497.9	162.5	660.4
↓	43	41	SRI KONDA LAXMAN TELANGANA STATE HORTICULTURAL UNIVERSITY, Siddipet	65.1	122.0	98.0	53.7	95.8	434.6	182.1	616.7
–	44	NP	NAGALAND UNIVERSITY, Lumami	120.6	120.5	87.8	31.7	89.2	449.8	81.4	531.2

GENERAL (PRIVATE) — RANKS & SCORES OF UNIVERSITIES

	OVER-ALL RANK 2024	OVERALL RANK 2023	UNIVERSITY	REPUTATION & GOVER-NANCE	ACADEMIC & RESEARCH EXCELLENCE	INFRASTRUCTURE & LIVING EXPERIENCE	PERSONALITY & LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT	CAREER PROGRESSION & PLACEMENT	OBJECTIVE SCORE	PERCEPTU-AL SCORE	OVERALL SCORE
				208	250	175	150	217	1,000	1,000	2,000
–	1	NP	SYMBIOSIS INTERNATIONAL (DEEMED UNIVERSITY), Pune	150.6	147.9	117.8	118.7	183.7	718.7	932.8	1,651.5
↓	2	1	AMITY UNIVERSITY UTTAR PRADESH, Noida	124.8	150.6	143.4	112.4	137.4	668.6	925.4	1,594.0
↓	3	2	KONERU LAKSHMAIAH EDUCATION FOUNDATION (DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY), Guntur	136.6	162.0	137.0	102.9	148.2	686.7	848.5	1,535.2
↓	4	3	CHRIST (DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY), Bengaluru	132.8	137.8	131.2	115.8	147.1	664.7	859.7	1,524.4
↓	5	4	BANASTHALI VIDYAPITH, Banasthali Vidyapith	134.0	128.4	142.6	115.7	151.0	671.7	795.5	1,467.2
↓	6	5	JAIN (DEEMED-TO-BE UNIVERSITY), Bengaluru	130.6	141.3	112.8	87.5	144.2	616.4	811.5	1,427.9
↓	7	6	SATHYABAMA INSTITUTE OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY), CHENNAI	148.0	161.6	135.0	103.1	86.6	634.3	785.5	1,419.8
↔	8	8	XIM UNIVERSITY, Bhubaneswar	93.9	135.4	112.3	90.3	181.9	613.8	778.9	1,392.7
↔	9	9	GALGOTIAS UNIVERSITY, Greater Noida	111.8	163.6	112.8	87.5	126.7	602.4	779.6	1,382.0
↓	10	7	NIRMA UNIVERSITY, Ahmedabad	133.9	150.8	121.5	83.1	125.3	614.6	752.6	1,367.2
↓	11	10	MANIPAL UNIVERSITY JAIPUR, Jaipur	113.8	155.5	143.8	111.7	132.5	657.3	704.9	1,362.2
↓	12	11	ICFAI FOUNDATION FOR HIGHER EDUCATION, Hyderabad	122.3	100.0	126.5	113.5	174.1	636.4	670.0	1,306.4
↔	13	13	MANAV RACHNA INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF RESEARCH AND STUDIES, Faridabad	128.7	142.4	134.3	109.3	103.8	618.5	675.4	1,293.9
↑	14	15	CHITKARA UNIVERSITY, Patiala	102.6	171.0	127.3	101.1	146.3	648.3	616.1	1,264.4
↑	15	16	MAHARISHI MARKANDESHWAR (DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY), MULLANA, Ambala	127.1	145.4	122.3	61.6	122.9	579.3	649.6	1,228.9
↑	16	20	GLA UNIVERSITY, Mathura	120.1	134.4	117.2	79.6	128.6	579.9	646.3	1,226.2
↑	17	18	AMITY UNIVERSITY HARYANA, Gurugram	115.1	147.4	140.6	84.3	118.3	605.7	614.4	1,220.1
↑	18	19	SHOOLINI UNIVERSITY OF BIOTECHNOLOGY AND MANAGEMENT SCIENCES, Solan	110.3	118.7	105.2	104.5	99.5	538.2	624.8	1,163.0
↑	19	22	AMITY UNIVERSITY RAJASTHAN, Jaipur	122.9	127.6	130.1	89.8	115.5	585.9	575.9	1,161.8

GENERAL (PRIVATE) RANKS & SCORES OF UNIVERSITIES

	OVER-ALL RANK 2024	OVERALL RANK 2023	UNIVERSITY	REPUTATION & GOVER-NANCE	ACADEMIC & RESEARCH EXCELLENCE	INFRASTRUCTURE & LIVING EXPERIENCE	PERSONALITY & LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT	CAREER PROGRESSION & PLACEMENT	OBJECTIVE SCORE	PERCEPTU-AL SCORE	OVERALL SCORE
				208	250	175	150	217	1,000	1,000	2,000
↑	20	21	SIKKIM MANIPAL UNIVERSITY, Gangtok	124.5	133.4	128.5	68.0	135.8	590.2	524.4	1,114.6
↑	21	23	VELS INSTITUTE OF SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND ADVANCED STUDIES (VISTAS), Chennai	109.2	136.2	101.8	83.5	115.2	545.9	529.1	1,075.0
↑	22	24	B.S. ABDUR RAHMAN CRESCENT INSTITUTE OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY, Chennai	134.6	124.5	139.6	109.1	106.3	614.1	447.2	1,061.3
↑	23	26	AVINASHILINGAM INSTITUTE FOR HOME SCIENCE AND HIGHER EDUCATION FOR WOMEN, Coimbatore	156.2	127.4	121.6	85.7	86.0	576.9	472.1	1,049.0
–	24	NP	SHOBHIT INSTITUTE OF ENGINEERING AND TECHNOLOGY (DEEMED-TO-BE UNIVERSITY), Meerut	106.3	122.5	130.6	123.9	109.3	592.6	431.5	1,024.1
↔	25	25	SWAMI VIVEKANAND SUBHARTI UNIVERSITY, Meerut	117.0	124.7	137.9	86.1	106.8	572.5	429.8	1,002.3
–	26	NP	YENEPOYA (DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY), Mangaluru	115.8	140.4	98.8	80.9	118.4	554.3	413.4	967.7
↑	27	31	REVA UNIVERSITY, Bengaluru	96.6	128.2	115.0	98.7	121.1	559.6	403.3	962.9
↑	28	29	AMITY UNIVERSITY MADHYA PRADESH, Gwalior	81.2	124.3	135.0	80.6	93.5	514.6	446.9	961.5
↑	29	32	IHMR UNIVERSITY, Jaipur	76.7	92.5	97.6	65.7	167.8	500.3	430.5	930.8
↑	30	35	PARUL UNIVERSITY, Vadodara	136.2	118.0	116.4	88.4	100.0	559.0	335.0	894.0
–	31	NP	SRI SRI UNIVERSITY, Cuttack	115.3	132.2	128.6	74.5	128.4	579.0	312.3	891.3
↑	32	36	VINAYAKA MISSION'S RESEARCH FOUNDATION (DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY), Salem	118.6	110.7	146.4	89.9	107.5	573.1	314.0	887.1
↓	33	30	DR. C. V. RAMAN UNIVERSITY, BILASPUR, Bilaspur	106.0	70.4	83.5	87.8	74.6	422.3	454.8	877.1
↓	34	33	JECRC UNIVERSITY, Jaipur	80.0	114.2	94.2	85.9	123.8	498.1	372.0	870.1
↓	35	34	ICFAI UNIVERSITY, Tripura, Agartala	93.6	92.4	135.5	79.0	57.6	458.1	386.5	844.6
↑	36	42	INTEGRAL UNIVERSITY, Lucknow	120.3	105.5	108.0	57.8	83.8	475.4	366.4	841.8
–	37	NP	SRI SIDDHARTHA ACADEMY OF HIGHER EDUCATION, Tumkur	121.8	107.6	141.6	98.7	118.8	588.5	244.8	833.3
–	38	NP	MANGALAYATAN UNIVERSITY, Aligarh	126.7	140.2	132.3	91.2	58.3	548.7	251.0	799.7
↑	39	41	JAIPUR NATIONAL UNIVERSITY, Jaipur	118.6	92.0	122.5	66.0	77.4	476.5	303.9	780.4
↑	40	47	PRESIDENCY UNIVERSITY, Bengaluru	67.9	138.3	106.5	55.6	119.2	487.5	282.1	769.6
↑	41	44	RABINDRANATH TAGORE UNIVERSITY, Raisen	91.6	83.1	123.4	114.7	99.6	512.4	239.1	751.5
↑	42	49	GANPAT UNIVERSITY, Mehsana	125.0	135.1	127.3	94.0	105.0	586.4	158.6	745.0
–	43	NP	IMT UNIVERSITY, Meerut	75.7	136.2	121.7	108.9	125.5	568.0	162.8	730.8
–	44	NP	QUANTUM UNIVERSITY, Roorkee	54.8	144.9	138.7	71.8	138.1	548.3	179.9	728.2
↓	45	40	ICFAI UNIVERSITY, DEHRADUN, Dehradun	80.2	92.0	109.3	66.9	117.1	465.5	260.2	725.7
–	46	NP	AMITY UNIVERSITY KOLKATA, Kolkata	75.7	132.6	102.8	122.9	132.7	566.7	125.8	692.5
↑	47	53	AMITY UNIVERSITY MAHARASHTRA, Mumbai	63.6	115.9	99.8	62.4	126.0	467.7	220.8	688.5
↑	48	56	SAGE UNIVERSITY, Indore	96.1	78.9	85.7	47.5	91.2	399.4	288.9	688.3
↑	49	50	JAGRAN LAKECITY UNIVERSITY, Bhopal	57.1	107.0	136.2	102.8	49.6	452.7	231.5	684.2
–	50	NP	LINGAYA'S VIDYAPEETH, Faridabad	97.7	96.2	120.1	81.6	113.1	508.7	161.4	670.1
–	51	NP	AMITY UNIVERSITY JHARKHAND, Ranchi	73.5	138.6	124.1	92.0	126.9	555.1	106.0	661.1
–	52	NP	ARKA JAIN UNIVERSITY, Gamharia	90.3	101.8	123.9	87.1	71.9	475.0	184.7	659.7
–	53	NP	AMITY UNIVERSITY PATNA, Patna	57.2	114.7	124.1	112.2	125.3	533.5	114.3	647.8
↑	54	61	SIKKIM PROFESSIONAL UNIVERSITY, Gangtok	78.5	123.2	140.1	89.6	72.8	504.2	132.3	636.5
↑	55	58	AVANTIKA UNIVERSITY, Ujjain	56.1	92.0	116.8	96.9	104.0	465.8	163.7	629.5
↓	56	54	POORNIMA UNIVERSITY, Jaipur	51.0	109.6	111.2	95.2	89.8	456.8	150.6	607.4

INDIA'S BEST UNIVERSITIES

THE COMPLETE RESULTS

GENERAL (PRIVATE) — RANKS & SCORES OF UNIVERSITIES

	OVER-ALL RANK 2024	OVERALL RANK 2023	UNIVERSITY	REPUTATION & GOVER-NANCE	ACADEMIC & RESEARCH EXCELLENCE	INFRASTRUCTURE & LIVING EXPERIENCE	PERSONALITY & LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT	CAREER PROGRESSION & PLACEMENT	OBJECTIVE SCORE	PERCEPTU-AL SCORE	OVERALL SCORE
				208	250	175	150	217	1,000	1,000	2,000
–	57	NP	RAYAT BAHRA UNIVERSITY, Mohali	94.3	106.5	114.4	81.6	114.8	511.6	71.3	582.9
↓	58	55	ORIENTAL UNIVERSITY, Indore	68.4	94.4	90.1	81.3	123.4	457.6	123.1	580.7
↑	59	60	AMITY UNIVERSITY CHHATTISGARH, Raipur	59.9	109.5	128.9	85.7	82.4	466.4	106.3	572.7
–	60	NP	SRI SATYA SAI UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY AND MEDICAL SCIENCES, Sehore	65.2	102.2	98.0	88.0	110.5	463.9	105.4	569.3
–	61	NP	DAV UNIVERSITY, Jalandhar	56.1	104.1	122.7	48.0	66.2	397.1	171.7	568.8
–	62	NP	SHRI RAMSWAROOP MEMORIAL UNIVERSITY, Barabanki	82.5	84.1	111.5	55.3	85.5	418.9	137.3	556.2
↓	63	57	SHOBHIT UNIVERSITY GANGOH, Gangoh	54.7	48.2	71.1	53.1	99.8	326.9	219.9	546.8
↓	64	59	LNCT UNIVERSITY, Bhopal	61.1	87.7	98.1	33.5	62.1	342.5	202.1	544.6
–	65	NP	SANGAM UNIVERSITY, Bhilwara	91.0	103.0	97.1	63.6	114.5	469.2	70.2	539.4
–	66	NP	BHAGWANT UNIVERSITY, Ajmer	87.5	75.1	86.0	83.4	124.3	456.3	74.0	530.3
–	67	NP	BAHRA UNIVERSITY, Solan	71.4	88.9	108.4	19.8	54.9	343.4	127.0	470.4
↓	68	66	ICFAI UNIVERSITY, JHARKHAND, Ranchi	54.2	120.4	97.5	62.3	81.7	416.1	39.1	455.2
↓	69	67	MARTIN LUTHER CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY, Shillong	56.8	64.2	51.2	56.1	64.8	293.1	143.2	436.3
↓	70	68	AISECT UNIVERSITY, Hazaribag	51.7	26.9	21.5	23.3	105.6	229.0	114.0	343.0
–	71	NP	DR. C. V. RAMAN UNIVERSITY, KHANDWA, Khandwa	48.6	52.7	68.8	67.0	23.1	260.2	73.7	333.9
↓	72	69	DR. C. V. RAMAN UNIVERSITY, BHAGWANPUR, Vaishali	41.9	31.5	52.1	21.1	68.7	215.3	82.6	297.9
–	73	NP	MANSAROVAR GLOBAL UNIVERSITY, Sehore	41.3	27.9	70.5	27.4	58.4	225.5	68.1	293.6

MEDICAL — RANKS & SCORES OF UNIVERSITIES

	OVER-ALL RANK 2024	OVERALL RANK 2023	UNIVERSITY	INTAKE QUALITY & GOVERNANCE	ACADEMIC & RESEARCH EXCELLENCE	INFRASTRUCTURE & LIVING EXPERIENCE	PERSONALITY & LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT	CAREER PROGRESSION & PLACEMENT	OBJECTIVE SCORE	PERCEPTU-AL SCORE	OVERALL SCORE
				225	225	200	150	200	1,000	1,000	2,000
↔	1	1	ALL INDIA INSTITUTE OF MEDICAL SCIENCES (AIIMS), NEW DELHI, Delhi	209.9	209.9	195.6	140.2	198.5	954.1	1,000.0	1,954.1
↔	2	2	JAWAHARLAL INSTITUTE OF POSTGRADUATE MEDICAL EDUCATION & RESEARCH (JIPMER), Puducherry	191.3	177.1	182.7	129.7	195.0	875.8	985.5	1,861.3
↔	3	3	KING GEORGE'S MEDICAL UNIVERSITY, Lucknow	181.1	173.0	172.8	110.6	159.7	797.2	971.0	1,768.2
↔	4	4	NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF MENTAL HEALTH AND NEUROSCIENCES (NIMHANS), Bengaluru	180.9	175.1	158.8	104.3	191.3	810.4	956.5	1,766.9
↔	5	5	ALL INDIA INSTITUTE OF MEDICAL SCIENCES (AIIMS), JODHPUR, Jodhpur	183.5	157.0	158.2	118.7	149.1	766.5	907.2	1,673.7
↑	6	8	ALL INDIA INSTITUTE OF MEDICAL SCIENCES (AIIMS), RISHIKESH, Rishikesh	174.3	150.9	135.6	82.6	172.5	715.9	863.8	1,579.7
–	7	NP	ALL INDIA INSTITUTE OF MEDICAL SCIENCES (AIIMS), RAIPUR, Raipur	173.1	127.4	138.4	80.2	151.7	670.8	878.3	1,549.1
↑	8	9	INSTITUTE OF LIVER & BILIARY SCIENCES, New Delhi	170.3	138.9	131.7	114.9	170.3	726.1	811.6	1,537.7
↑	9	10	ALL INDIA INSTITUTE OF MEDICAL SCIENCES (AIIMS), PATNA, Patna	177.6	136.1	146.0	107.1	158.6	725.4	805.8	1,531.2
↑	10	11	SRI RAMACHANDRA INSTITUTE OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND RESEARCH (DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY), Chennai	174.0	152.8	158.5	110.4	145.4	741.1	698.6	1,439.7
↑	11	12	JSS ACADEMY OF HIGHER EDUCATION & RESEARCH, Mysuru	171.2	162.4	161.9	125.4	131.4	752.3	681.2	1,433.5

MEDICAL — RANKS & SCORES OF UNIVERSITIES

	OVERALL RANK 2024	OVERALL RANK 2023	UNIVERSITY	INTAKE QUALITY & GOVERNANCE	ACADEMIC & RESEARCH EXCELLENCE	INFRASTRUCTURE & LIVING EXPERIENCE	PERSONALITY & LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT	CAREER PROGRESSION & PLACEMENT	OBJECTIVE SCORE	PERCEPTUAL SCORE	OVERALL SCORE
				225	225	200	150	200	1,000	1,000	2,000
↑	12	13	NITTE (DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY), Mangaluru	155.8	171.2	141.6	99.2	116.5	684.3	675.4	1,359.7
↑	13	14	BLDE (DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY), Vijayapura, Karnataka	164.4	114.0	137.5	76.0	147.1	639.0	649.3	1,288.3
↑	14	16	KLE ACADEMY OF HIGHER EDUCATION & RESEARCH (DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY), Belagavi, Karnataka	149.8	150.7	170.6	82.0	122.0	675.1	501.4	1,176.5
–	15	NP	MGM INSTITUTE OF HEALTH SCIENCES, NAVI Mumbai	153.7	113.9	140.5	86.4	151.0	645.5	411.6	1,057.1
↑	16	17	D.Y. PATIL EDUCATION SOCIETY (DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY), Kolhapur	147.0	118.1	145.0	70.1	105.6	585.8	463.8	1,049.6
↑	17	18	SRI GURU RAM DAS UNIVERSITY OF HEALTH SCIENCES, Amritsar	155.4	108.2	159.1	64.3	91.2	578.2	327.5	905.7
↑	18	19	SRI BALAJI VIDYAPEETH (DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY), Puducherry	130.9	123.5	146.0	103.5	141.7	645.6	217.4	863.0
–	19	NP	CHETTINAD ACADEMY OF RESEARCH AND EDUCATION, Kelambakkam, Tamil Nadu	138.3	119.1	141.1	91.4	104.8	594.7	194.2	788.9

TECHNICAL — RANKS & SCORES OF UNIVERSITIES

	OVERALL RANK 2024	OVERALL RANK 2023	UNIVERSITY	INTAKE QUALITY & GOVERNANCE	ACADEMIC & RESEARCH EXCELLENCE	INFRASTRUCTURE & LIVING EXPERIENCE	PERSONALITY & LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT	CAREER PROGRESSION & PLACEMENT	OBJECTIVE SCORE	PERCEPTUAL SCORE	OVERALL SCORE
				208	250	175	150	217	1,000	1,000	2,000
↔	1	1	INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY DELHI, New Delhi	185.9	226.0	164.4	126.6	187.1	890.0	1,000.0	1,890.0
↔	2	2	INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY KANPUR, Kanpur	161.1	189.4	163.5	131.0	206.2	851.2	983.6	1,834.8
↔	3	3	INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY BOMBAY, Mumbai	169.1	194.7	149.5	134.3	195.7	843.3	979.8	1,823.1
↔	4	4	INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY KHARAGPUR, Kharagpur	159.6	196.5	153.4	126.8	201.7	838.0	959.2	1,797.2
–	5	NP	INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY ROORKEE, Roorkee	151.8	183.1	138.1	105.4	187.2	765.6	951.2	1,716.8
↓	6	5	INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY GUWAHATI, Guwahati	154.5	191.4	145.4	114.3	158.0	763.6	943.2	1,706.8
↓	7	6	DELHI TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY, New Delhi	155.5	160.8	147.8	104.9	159.3	728.3	914.5	1,642.8
↓	8	7	INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY MANDI, Mandi	135.7	177.0	151.3	108.4	170.8	743.2	894.7	1,637.9
↓	9	8	INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY BANGALORE, Bengaluru	135.7	165.7	134.1	105.8	166.7	708.0	889.7	1,597.7
↓	10	9	BIRLA INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY AND SCIENCE, PILANI, Pilani	144.1	169.7	152.8	97.9	156.4	720.9	861.9	1,582.8
↓	11	10	INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY, HYDERABAD, Hyderabad	125.5	172.9	124.5	80.6	146.8	650.3	836.6	1,486.9
↓	12	11	INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY GANDHINAGAR, Gandhinagar	139.0	184.7	150.2	64.5	127.3	665.7	750.3	1,416.0
↓	13	12	INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY PATNA, Patna	129.4	159.8	111.1	93.9	156.8	651.0	742.7	1,393.7
↓	14	13	INDIRA GANDHI DELHI TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY FOR WOMEN (IGDTUW), New Delhi	108.2	158.9	121.4	108.2	146.1	642.8	738.9	1,381.7
↔	15	15	VISVESVARAYA NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY NAGPUR, Nagpur	139.3	156.2	132.3	81.4	125.6	634.8	735.2	1,370.0
↔	16	16	NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY SILCHAR, Silchar	130.5	137.6	135.7	78.3	133.3	615.4	669.9	1,285.3
–	17	NP	JAWAHARLAL NEHRU TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY HYDERABAD, Hyderabad	121.7	111.5	123.7	77.8	109.5	544.2	703.2	1,247.4

INDIA'S BEST UNIVERSITIES

THE COMPLETE RESULTS

TECHNICAL — RANKS & SCORES OF UNIVERSITIES

	OVERALL RANK 2024	OVERALL RANK 2023	UNIVERSITY	INTAKE QUALITY & GOVERNANCE	ACADEMIC & RESEARCH EXCELLENCE	INFRASTRUCTURE & LIVING EXPERIENCE	PERSONALITY & LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT	CAREER PROGRESSION & PLACEMENT	OBJECTIVE SCORE	PERCEPTUAL SCORE	OVERALL SCORE
				208	250	175	150	217	1,000	1,000	2,000
↔	18	18	SCHOOL OF PLANNING AND ARCHITECTURE, BHOPAL, Bhopal	122.0	124.6	123.3	61.7	138.8	570.4	676.6	1,247.0
–	19	NP	GUJARAT TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY, Ahmedabad	126.3	125.4	113.2	101.8	110.3	577.0	661.5	1,238.5
↑	20	21	NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY UTTARAKHAND, Srinagar, Pauri Garhwal	110.1	134.9	135.9	66.9	112.9	560.7	666.1	1,226.8
↓	21	19	NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY SRINAGAR, Srinagar	106.1	181.8	120.9	112.9	118.8	640.5	571.4	1,211.9
↑	22	24	JSS SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY UNIVERSITY, Mysuru	107.2	154.8	127.1	128.0	128.1	645.2	508.6	1,153.8
–	23	NP	INDIAN INSTITUTE OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY BHAGALPUR, Bhagalpur	97.4	122.2	119.5	75.8	133.2	548.1	605.1	1,153.2
↓	24	22	HINDUSTAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY AND SCIENCE (DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY), Chennai	109.6	163.8	120.7	74.1	97.3	565.5	579.8	1,145.3
↔	25	25	VIGNAN'S FOUNDATION FOR SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & RESEARCH (DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY), Guntur	134.1	151.0	128.1	114.8	93.9	621.9	521.3	1,143.2
–	26	NP	MADAN MOHAN MALAVIYA UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY, Gorakhpur	122.5	160.1	111.4	85.2	114.9	594.1	454.7	1,048.8
↔	27	27	UNIVERSITY OF ENGINEERING & MANAGEMENT JAIPUR, Jaipur	118.2	174.7	145.7	98.6	110.7	647.9	371.8	1,019.7
↑	28	29	NOORUL ISLAM CENTRE FOR HIGHER EDUCATION, Kanyakumari	99.1	133.6	120.0	73.3	107.8	533.8	231.6	765.4

LAW — RANKS & SCORES OF UNIVERSITIES

	OVERALL RANK 2024	OVERALL RANK 2023	UNIVERSITY	INTAKE QUALITY & GOVERNANCE	ACADEMIC & RESEARCH EXCELLENCE	INFRASTRUCTURE & LIVING EXPERIENCE	PERSONALITY & LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT	CAREER PROGRESSION & PLACEMENT	OBJECTIVE SCORE	PERCEPTUAL SCORE	OVERALL SCORE
				175	250	150	200	225	1,000	1,000	2,000
↔	1	1	NATIONAL LAW SCHOOL OF INDIA UNIVERSITY (NLSIU), Bengaluru	149.3	214.1	137.3	180.9	178.1	859.7	1,000.0	1,859.7
↔	2	2	THE WEST BENGAL NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF JURIDICAL SCIENCES (NUJS), Kolkata	141.9	193.8	132.1	181.6	189.8	839.2	913.0	1,752.2
↔	3	3	GUJARAT NATIONAL LAW UNIVERSITY (GNLU), Gandhinagar	146.0	212.5	142.5	185.1	169.8	855.9	834.8	1,690.7
↔	4	4	NATIONAL LAW INSTITUTE UNIVERSITY (NLIU) BHOPAL, Bhopal	143.6	217.4	135.7	143.0	178.6	818.3	826.1	1,644.4
↔	5	5	DR. RAM MANOHAR LOHIYA NATIONAL LAW UNIVERSITY (RMLNLU), Lucknow	139.4	177.5	145.7	162.2	183.4	808.2	782.6	1,590.8
↔	6	6	THE NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF ADVANCED LEGAL STUDIES (NUALS), Kochi	131.6	179.6	128.6	144.6	178.0	762.4	721.7	1,484.1
↔	7	7	NATIONAL LAW UNIVERSITY ODISHA (NLUO), Cuttack	130.9	171.2	128.3	158.6	130.2	719.2	591.3	1,310.5
↔	8	8	HIDAYATULLAH NATIONAL LAW UNIVERSITY (HNLU), Raipur	125.8	164.2	125.1	110.6	101.9	627.6	634.8	1,262.4
↑	9	10	DAMODARAM SANJIVAYYA NATIONAL LAW UNIVERSITY (DSNLU), Visakhapatnam	116.8	129.4	126.3	141.7	95.8	610.0	495.7	1,105.7

Note: 1. Ranking is based on objective data & perceptual survey data; 2. Only universities that submitted their objective data have been ranked. Universities like IIT Madras, BHU, IISc Bangalore, NALSAR etc. that did not submit their objective data on time or refused to participate have not been ranked. In addition, IIT Bombay could not submit their data. Hence, it was ranked on the basis of its previous submitted data & current publicly available data; 3. Only universities that fulfilled the below criteria were considered eligible for participation in ranking: (i) minimum three batches graduated, (ii) offering full-time postgraduate (PG) programme; 4. All scores have been rounded off to one decimal place. This may result in rounding-off errors while adding the parameter-wise score; 5. Universities not ranked during the perceptual survey have got 0.0 marks in perceptual score.

Q. Why have you sub-titled your new album *Shakkar* #SongsAboutStayingAlive WhenYouDon'tWantTo?

It was written during a phase when I was not keen on being alive. I was fighting this phase of depression and absolute loss of direction. I could have written dark and sad songs, reflecting the emotion of the moment, but the idea was to write songs as an antithesis to the phase I was going through.

Q. How did you get out of this phase?

I finally [sought] therapy. It was very beautifully designed by two therapists who work as a team, one as a spiritual healer and the other in cognitive behavioural therapy. [Playing] Lollapalooza [in Mumbai this January also] changed the game for me. The set went down so well, and there was so much love around me, I went back home [to Bengaluru], and just felt right in my head. We didn't stop recording for the next 10 to 12 days.

Q+A

BITTER PILLS, SWEET REWARDS

Folk-fusion rock singer-songwriter **Raghu Dixit**'s long-awaited new album *Shakkar* was made during the most difficult phase of his life

Q. What triggered your feeling that way?

There was a series of things that happened one after the other. I couldn't believe that so many things could go wrong. It was a culmination of all those hitting [me] and my letting them affect me so badly that I didn't want to live anymore. I just couldn't take it. (Dixit was accused of sexual harassment, ended his marriage, and suffered a family tragedy, all within the span of a few years.)

Q. What did you learn about yourself while making the album?

That there's absolutely nothing better than everyone being kind to each other and sharing each other's burdens once in a while. That's the way the world is meant to live.

—with Amit Gurbaxani