



# 'Age of admission to Class 1 in Kerala will remain 5 years'

**The Hindu Bureau**  
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Age of admission to Class 1 in Kerala will remain five years, State Minister for General Education V. Sivankutty has said.

Any sudden change in the minimum age of admission to six years will create social problems, the Minister said at a press meet here on Wednesday. The Union Ministry of Education had a few days ago written to States and Union Territories to fix six years as the minimum age of admission to Class 1 this year.

The Ministry's latest missive, dated February 15, is the third time that States and Union Territories have been asked to align the age

**The Centre had written to States to fix six years as the minimum age of admission to Class 1 in line with NEP**


of admission to Class 1 at six in line with the National Education Policy (NEP).

Similar notices were issued last year and in 2021 in the wake of the NEP launch. The Ministry's directive also points to the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, that covers education of children from the age of six to 14.

Last year too, the State had decided against raising the minimum age. Then,

the Minister had said the government would bring clarity on the issue in the next academic year on the basis of the M.A. Khader Committee report on school education.

However, the Minister on Wednesday said the State had good school enrolment numbers and few dropouts. Also, children here joined kindergarten at the age of three and by the age of five, were ready to join Class 1. In such a context, there was no need to delay their Class 1 admission by a year.

States had a right to take decision on matters of education, and Kerala has decided to stick to the age of five for school admission, the Minister said. 

# Govt may halt funds under key scheme to 6 non-NDA states

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**NEW DELHI:** The Union government is likely to halt the disbursement of funds under its flagship Samagra Shiksha Scheme for the current financial year to five states and one Union Territory, all administered by parties that are not part of the Bharatiya Janata Party's NDA, that are yet to sign Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) with it to adopt the Pradhan Mantri Schools For Rising India (PM-SHRI) scheme, senior government officials said on Wednesday.

So far, 30 states and Union territories (UTs) have signed MoUs with the Union ministry of education for the PM SHRI programme, which targets to upgrade 14,500 schools benefiting 1.8 million students, and ensuring that these schools serve as model institutes and encapsulate the spirit of National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. The government has already selected 6,448 schools from 28 states and UTs for the upgrade in the first round.

According to senior government officials, despite several requests from the ministry to the states and UTs of Delhi, West Bengal, Odisha, Tamil Nadu, Punjab and Kerala, urging them to adopt the scheme, there has been reluctance on their part.

While five of these states have not signed the MoUs yet, Punjab has stopped the implementation of the PM SHRI scheme after initially signing the MoU, said a senior government official, asking not to be named. "Despite taking funds from the Centre for Samagra Shiksha Scheme, the refusal of the five to sign MoUs for PM SHRI schools, reflects a troubling pattern. It is a clear politicization move by the States/UTs, where they accept funds under Samagra Shiksha but resist signing an MoU for PM SHRI," added the official.

The Samagra Shiksha Scheme or Abhiyaan is the largest central government scheme for universal school education. "PM SHRI schools, to showcase all initiatives of NEP-2020, will work as

exemplar schools for neighbouring cluster schools as well. Therefore, the Centre is going to halt the remaining funding by under the Samagra Shiksha scheme for these states for the financial year 2023-24," the official added.

The fund sharing pattern for the scheme between Centre and States is 60:40 for all states and Union Territories with legislatures except for the North-Eastern states where the Centre contributes 90% of the total funds.

According to the government records, the remaining funds for West Bengal under the scheme for the current financial year is ₹1,273 crore, Tamil Nadu, ₹1,045 crore, Kerala, ₹168 crore, Punjab, ₹370 crore, and Delhi, ₹190 crore. The details for Odisha were not available. TMC MP Santanu Sen, said, "The Centre has already frozen funds under various schemes to Bengal. The amount is around ₹1.6 lakh crore. The Centre wants to break the federal structure by creating financial blockades to all non-BJP states."

In 2022, the Centre withheld funds to West Bengal including the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS). In February, a report by the Comptroller and Auditor General of India alleged that West Bengal didn't submit utilisation certificates of ₹2.29 lakh crores against allocations made under different schemes by the Centre.

Meanwhile, officials in Odisha and Punjab said that they are yet to receive a communication from the Centre regarding this. "I can't comment unless there is a communication from Centre," said the secretary Odisha school and mass education secretary Aswathy S.

Punjab school education minister Harjot Singh Bains said there is no issue of funds being cut so far. A Delhi government official, requesting anonymity, said: "Though there is no official word from the Centre... but if they decide to halt funds, it would be a violation of the Right to Education Act."

(Inputs from state correspondents)



# Learning outside syllabus, beyond the board exams

A young student I know is writing his Class XII CBSE Board Examination. The other day I talked to him, sent my prayers, and conveyed my best wishes. Even though I believe he will do extremely well, satisfy his parents and impress his teachers, I am disturbed by some questions. Will he be able to find his *swadharma*, and live creatively and meaningfully with a life-affirming relationship with the world, even if with, say, 99% marks in the exam, he manages to get admission in a branded medical/engineering college or a top-ranking university?

It is not that I am concerned only about him. As a teacher and keen observer of the prevalent societal neurosis, I think of the fate of this entire generation, a terribly tense and anxiety-ridden one. Schools sell their success stories; coaching centres transform the toppers into brand ambassadors of their heavily commodified success manuals; and even the brigade of lucky parents seek to enhance their status in the neighbourhood through the mythologies of their children's success stories. But then, some of us must ask a series of critical questions, and rethink education.

In this context, let me make three points.

First, I have no hesitation in saying that the kind of education we have normalised is essentially life-killing. Far from encouraging our children to remain peaceful and meditative with creative ecstasy, it causes chronic nervousness, restlessness and fear of lagging behind in the hyper-competitive rat race. We seem to have forgotten that education is not merely about the acquisition of a set of academic, technical and logical-mathematical skills but is essentially about the cultivation of a mind that is empathic, sensitive, dialogic and compassionate. Physics and Mathematics, or History and Sociology are definitely important. But then, the intelligence sharpened through the study of these disciplines need not be reduced to mere instrumental/technocratic reasoning — or, just a skill for cracking all sorts of standardised tests. Instead, science, technology, arts, literature and social sciences should equip children with theories and practices for nurturing the spirit of a humane and egalitarian world.

Possibly, some of our finest educationists — from Rabindranath Tagore to Jiddu Krishnamurti — repeatedly reminded us of these higher objectives of education. But then, think of our fall, our collective decadence. We have normalised the phenomenon called the Kota coaching factory, the tales of suicide in the IITs and other institutions no longer puzzle us, and while posh international schools in Gurugram and Noida charm the aspiring class from our gated communities,

**AS A TEACHER AND KEEN OBSERVER OF THE PREVALENT SOCIETAL NEUROSIS, I THINK OF THE FATE OF THIS ENTIRE GENERATION, A TERRIBLY TENSE AND ANXIETY-RIDDEN ONE.**

the lucrative business of psychiatrists, counsellors and motivational speakers goes on to manage our children's mental health.

Second, what frightens me further is the dark world these youngsters — even the successful ones — will eventually enter after their board exams. Possibly, they will eventually become either self-centred/non-reflexive careerists or cynics/defeatists living without any project of a better world. Think of the nature of the world (beyond the protective milieu of their families) they will enter. They will be eventually told that their 99% marks in Physics or English mean nothing if they do not manage to get appropriate jobs with lucrative salary packages. Hence, they will be advised to be practical, forget their unique traits and aptitudes, choose a place of learning (or, training?) from the supermall of medical/engineering colleges, and lead a one-dimensional life for somehow managing a lucrative job through the mechanism of the much-hyped campus placement. Time and again, they will be advised to handle the resultant nervous disorder and stand up as tough exam warriors.

Three, they will find themselves in a world in which there is no higher ideal to pursue. They will realise that whatever their school principals told them on the eve of Mahatma Gandhi's birth anniversary or Independence Day makes no sense in the real world. In fact, they will see how everything has been turned into its opposite — patriotism into the violence of hyper-nationalism; spirituality into toxic/divisive politics; democracy into electoral autocracy; ethical/moral principles into stupidity; and smartness into narcissistic aggression. Yes, they will confront a high-risk society filled with war and hunger, climate crisis and rising authoritarianism.

All these apprehensions and anxieties were making me somewhat uneasy when I offered my best wishes to the young student appearing for the board examination. Yet, amid this culture of disillusionment, I feel like recalling the wisdom of some of our finest thinkers and visionaries and urging this anxiety-ridden generation to expand their mental horizons, redefine their life pursuits, and strive for a sane society. I wish to tell them that no coaching factory will make them aware of the liberating potential of Paulo Freire's critical pedagogy — the kind of education that activates the learner's creative agency and inspires them to resist all sorts of domination and strive for a humane and egalitarian world.

I want to tell them about social psychologist Erich Fromm's reminder: The "having mode of existence" (the ceaseless craving for more money, more fame, or more property) the culture of consumerism normalises is a kind of neurosis, and to live meaningfully is to find the treasure inside, or to realise that, as Schumacher would have said, "small is beautiful". And I feel like appealing to them to see beyond the reduction of Gandhi into his spectacles and relive the spirit of non-cooperation with the culture of greed and violence. But this is outside the official syllabus of board exams.



Avijit Pathak



# How to choose the right university to study abroad

Weigh factors like living costs, job opportunities before settling on the right destination

## OUR CORRESPONDENT

Choosing to study abroad is a major decision. It shouldn't be based on whims and fancies. Rather, one should weigh factors such as the cost of living, entry requirements, and employment rates in potential destinations before reaching the final decision. Here's a checklist of considerations to ensure you select the right country for your studies and avoid making impulsive choices.

## CLEAR VISION

Is your best friend heading to Germany for her studies, and is that why you're thinking about going abroad too? But, do you genuinely want to do this? What subject do you want to study overseas? Don't let someone else's plans be the main reason for your decision. It's important to figure out what you really want based on your strengths and life expectations. In short, you should have a clear idea why you want to go abroad and study.

**The crucial aspect in deciding to study abroad is gaining clarity about your field of interest and the specific course you want to pursue**

## CHOOSING THE RIGHT COURSE

Once you've decided to advance your career in a foreign country, make sure you're clear about the subject you want to study. Consider whether the opportunities you seek are available in India or not. The crucial aspect in deciding to study abroad is gaining clarity

about your field of interest and the specific course you want to pursue. Various factors play a role in choosing a course, such as personal interest, career prospects, and employment opportunities in the destination country. It's essential to research and find the country that best suits your chosen course; for instance, Canada is renowned for its hospitality and tourism management courses, while England is known for English and creative studies.

## MEDIUM OF EDUCATION

Pragya Kaur, a student from Himachal Pradesh, wanted to study medicine in Russia. After spending a lot of money and two years there, she realised that most classes were in Russian, not English. Struggling with the language, she came back and joined Chandigarh University and got a degree

in journalism. Language is crucial when studying abroad. Since English is widely used, it's important to choose a country where English is spoken and the courses are in English. Facing a language barrier can be tough for daily tasks, shopping, talking to people, and travelling.

## SHORTLIST THE UNIVERSITY

Many Indian students aspire to study in popular destinations like the USA, UK, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and Germany. However, thorough research about universities and colleges in these countries offering programmes aligned with your career goals is crucial. Shortlist the colleges or universities that best match your aspirations and objectives.

## CHECK RANKINGS

Once you've shortlisted universi-

ties, it's essential to check their rankings. Keep in mind that rankings can differ based on the institution and country, so it's wise to consult multiple sources for your research. Moreover, note that these rankings typically focus on universities rather than colleges, so take that into consideration while making the decision.

## POCKET PINCH

Studying abroad can be financially demanding, and your choice of college is significantly influenced by financial factors. Begin by creating a budget for yourself, and then explore options that can offer financial assistance, such as scholarships and student education loans. Keep in mind that the availability of scholarships and assistantships varies by country, so it's important to research the financial support options specific to your chosen destination.

## ACCOMMODATION

Numerous Indian students in Canada are grappling with a significant housing crisis, leading some to return to their home country. Therefore, it is crucial to thoroughly research housing and living expenses. Analyse all the factors involved to determine the overall cost of living in the area where you have chosen to study. Understanding these aspects beforehand can help you make informed decisions and avoid potential challenges related to accommodation and living costs.

Deciding to study abroad is a big deal. Think about the pros and cons in detail before making a choice because once you decide, you won't get a chance to regret.





# Youth in India have immense possibilities for building a great future: President

**STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE**

NEW DELHI, 28 FEBRUARY

Noting that the government has set a target of making India a developed nation by 2047, President Droupadi Murmu said on Wednesday that the country's youth not only have

immense possibilities for building a golden future but also have favourable conditions for them to achieve this target.

"The youth are India's biggest resource and biggest capital. Our country has one of the highest youth populations in the world. India's economy today ranks fifth in the world and by 2030 we are going to become the third largest economy," she said while addressing the third convocation of the Central University of Jharkhand at Ranchi.

The President told the students that their responsibility is not only to create a good life for themselves; it is also their moral duty to play an important role in building the society and country. They should take a pledge today that wherever they do, they would work to build a prosperous and developed India, work to build a society where there is harmony and where every person's life is dignified.

She advised them to always keep in mind whether the people from backward or deprived sections will benefit from their work or not.

The President said whenever she comes to Jharkhand, she feels as if she has returned to her home. She has a connection with people of Jharkhand, especially with the tribal brothers and sisters. She stated that there are many traditions in tribal lifestyle that can improve the lives of other people and communities. They live in balance with nature and if we can learn from their lifestyle and methods, then we can face big challenges like global warming. *std*



# KIUG 2023: Nagaraj wins 3000m steeplechase gold

**STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE**  
GUWAHATI, 28 FEBRUARY

After Nagaraj Venkatesha's father passed away in 2017, the middle-distance runner has been doubling up as one of the bread-earners of the family while trying to keep his athletics career on track.

The Hubli resident has been doing a commendable job and bagged a 3000m steeplechase gold at the 4th Khelo India University Games 2023, Ashtalakshmi, with a dominant performance in Guwahati.

"This was my first gold at the Khelo India University Games, and it comes as a big morale booster for me. I have worked hard on my endurance

and fitness, and this medal is an outcome of the hard work. But for me, this is just the start, there's a lot to achieve. The KIUG has given me the wings to fly higher," said Nagaraj, who stopped the clock at 9:38.58s to top the podium here for Karnataka University.

The journey to the KIUG gold for Nagaraj, who trains at the RN Shetty ground in Dharwad since Hubli doesn't have an athletics track, has been nothing short of challenging ever since he took up the sport in 2016.

He lost his father, an electrician by profession, to cancer a year later and put the family under financial stress.

"That was probably the

lowest moment of my life, we did all we could to save him, but our prayers went in vain. We lost him, and since then my mother has been my biggest support. I am doing everything for her now, I run Open marathons to run the family," Nagaraj said.

"The prize money from the Open marathons helps me to support my family, it gets difficult at times, but that's how we somehow manage things," he added.

But just when Nagaraj came to terms with the loss and began concentrating on his athletics career again, he had to undergo appendix surgery which kept him out of action for a considerable period. *grad*



# Sports science must for development of players: Anurag Thakur

**STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE**

NEW DELHI, 28 FEBRUARY

Union Minister of Youth Affairs and Sports, Anurag Thakur on Wednesday emphasized the importance of sports science while addressing the Bharat Sports Science Conclave here.

The conclave was attended by several current and former athletes, including India's first individual Olympics gold medalist Abhinav Bindra, 2003 World Championship bronze medalist Anju Bobby George and Indian cricketer Deepak Chahar.

"It's been a pleasure to join the inaugural Bharat Sports Science Conclave organized by TransStadia and the government of India. It is heartening to see an organization like TransStadia taking initiative and organizing such an important conclave," Thakur said.

"Sports science plays an important role in the development of players and is a unique body of knowledge and understanding," He opined.

"Elements of sports science are used to support athletes in their training to help them



understand their strengths, improve and challenge their strengths toward their goals. From this, we learn that with

a combination of strength, strife and support, everyone can achieve their dreams no matter what kind of challenge he or she is facing. Sports science has played a crucial role in the success of most major athletes across sports disciplines. So, we are also ensuring the presence of a sports science department at our National Centers of Excellence in the country." He added.

Abhinav Bindra also reckoned the need for sports science in athletes' lives and urged

the coaches to embrace it in their programs as well.

He said, "The gathering here is a testament to the pioneering spirit in the forward-thinking approach of our nation in the realm of sports science. The deliberations underscore the critical importance of sports science in the evolution and enhancement of athletic performance and well-being. It is a spirit of creative exploration that I see reflected in the work of sports scientists, practitioners, and enthusiasts present at the Conclave." *SPS*



# 'Dummies' Over Traditional Schooling

## Many Top-Performing Students Taking This Route As XII Boards Being Seen As Merely A Qualification

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**New Delhi:** Many parents now believe that the Class XII board exams are merely year-end qualifying tests that permit a student to sit for the Common University Entrance Test, the result of which is crucial for admission to preferred universities. They are, therefore, questioning the value of investing time in traditional schooling because exams like CUET, JEE for engineering and NEET for medical studies seem more relevant assessments.

However, while schooling may not be important in this regard, there is still the criterion requiring students to have 75% mandatory attendance to be able to sit for the board exams. To meet this requirement, parents are opting to put their children in 'dummy' schools, which tie up with coaching and tuition centres for specialised teaching while facilitating the attendance need.

TOI spoke to principals who were part of the first ever inspection of dummy schools by CBSE last Dec.

They rued the growth of dummy schools, leading to a decline in plus two-admissions in CBSE-affiliated schools because many top-performing students were disengaging from traditional schools after Class X. They cautioned that dummy schools compromised the holistic development of a child that a traditional school ideally offers. Such dummy schools, the principals noted, were lo-

**TIMES Special**

cated mostly in Delhi's border areas, like Narela.

The post-inspection report has been submitted to CBSE but the education board is yet to act on it. The team inspected 34 schools across states and deemed 23 to fit with the idea of a dummy institution. "While inspecting one such institution, we were told there were 60 students each in classes IX and X, but the number skyrocketed to 500 each in classes XI and XII. We found no students attending in Class XI and around 50 in Class

XII," disclosed Raji N Kumar, director, NK Bagdoria School, and member of CBSE's inspection team.

Experts caution against neglecting traditional schooling, citing studies that show a correlation between school attendance and academic performance. Furthermore, concerns regarding the mental health and career readiness of students are also of interest, as highlighted in the well-accepted Annual Status of Education Reports by Pratham Foundation report indicating a lack of clarity among 18-year-olds about their future plans.

"Amidst these shifts, the role of schools in providing holistic education, including career counselling and mental health support, becomes paramount. Schools make efforts to expose students to diverse opportunities through debates, symposiums, industry interfaces and internships aimed at nurturing well-rounded individuals," Sudha Acharya, principal, IITL Public School, Dwarka, told TOI.

Acharya stated that the

### NON-ATTENDING SCHOOLS

Unlike 75% mandatory attendance in CBSE-affiliated schools, regular attendance not a must in dummy schools

#### How they work

► Dummy schools are virtual platforms established in collaboration with private schools and coaching institutes, which are officially recognised as schools by CBSE, even though they do not provide regular education or have a physical campus  
► Unlike 7 hours of class in traditional schools, in dummy schools, there is only 1-2 hours of classes



**FEE**  
Ranges from  
₹15,000 to  
₹50,000

► Focus is on school and Board exams

#### Why they are in demand

- 'Decreased' dependence on Board exams
- Increased competition in entrance exams like NEET, JEE CUET
- Gives students extra time for coaching classes

#### Official view

Last year, Delhi High Court had stated that the unchecked growth of dummy schools adversely affected students



petitors rather than allies."

Acharya added that the post-Covid paring down of the syllabus made parents less confident of their children doing well in the competitive exams. "That is why parents prefer coaching centres to classrooms. But we make sure to touch upon all topics necessary to fill the learning gap," the principal claimed.

Tania Joshi, principal, Indian School, revealed, "We were shocked that the dummy schools lacked laboratories, had unqualified teachers and the students were unaware even of the name of their teachers. The school head went missing when we wanted to query him about the functioning. His personal assistant told us, 'There is a reason why this school is running, madam.'"

TOI's attempt to seek CBSE's response to the issue met with silence. A principal had quipped, "It was a good initiative on the board's part to inspect the dummy school nuisance. But whether this will yield any results remains a question."

dummy schools had low student numbers in lower classes, but the admission rate was high at the plus two level. "It is herd mentality that leads parents to push their children into these setups. But they don't realise that if

the students don't do well in Class XII, they will do poorly in CUET too," she said. "Students who attend school regularly do well in all exams. The competitive environment fosters a mindset where fellow students are viewed as com-

# Given admit cards, denied chance to take Boards: Students move HC against CBSE

Ridhima Gupta &  
Abhinav Garg | TNN

## HIGH COURT JUDGE SAYS

**CBSE is expected to be vigilant about the entitlement of students to appear in the examinations. It is inhuman to first issue an admit card to a student and when the student appears for the examination, make her stand outside the exam hall. CBSE has no right whatsoever to do this**

**New Delhi:** Many students were recently dismayed to find themselves being debarred from the ongoing Class X and Class XII board exams because the Central Board of Secondary Education has insisted on their uploading their domicile certificate. Many of those who were not permitted to sit for their exams despite holding valid admit cards have now petitioned Delhi High Court on the matter:

In their petitions, the students have demanded that CBSE clarify the status of their pending exams. In a couple of petitions, the high court has recognised the students' travails and expressed displeasure with CBSE. "This is unacceptable," said justice C Hari Shankar. "CBSE is expected to be vigilant about the entitlement of students to appear in the examinations. It is inhuman to first issue an admit card to a student and when the student appears for the examination, make her stand outside the exam hall. CBSE has no right whatsoever to do this."

The bench made it clear that

any other candidate similarly stopped outside the examination hall for want of uploading the domicile certificate in time would be "entitled to enter the examination hall and undertake the examination with extension of time".

Deepak Kumar, 15, a native of Bihar who stays in a blind hostel, was one of the affected students. The Class X private candidate did write two of his papers but was surprised to be denied entry for his third paper, Hindi. "I have an admit card, I wrote two exams but in the third, the officials told me that I couldn't sit for the exam because I had submitted my domicile documents late," said the teenager. "I broke down and begged the officials to allow me to sit for the exam, but they were of no help."

The distraught boy said, "I

had thoughts of ending my life." Kumar missed two of his exams and is in distress about papers he still has to write.

Adil Khan, 22, private Class XII examinee, too is in hot water. He said, "We submitted our documents in Sept last year but weren't informed about the domicile certificate. Months later, we were told we needed to submit our domicile paper by Feb 15, which, of course, I did. And right before the exams, I got my admit card and appeared for three exams. Then, on the day of my English exam, I was told that my domicile had been submitted late and I wouldn't be allowed to write further exams. How is this fair?"

This was an additional trauma for visually impaired Khan, who said, "It is anyway difficult for us

to avail education and get past the hurdles in the system." He is worried that CBSE's "lackadaisical" attitude will hurt his Class XII scores and he will not be able to apply in Delhi University, a dream he has held for long. "I want the board to inform us about what will happen now. Will there be new exams? Will I get grace marks?" Khan asked.

Another visually-impaired Class X student, Luvkush, 17, too fretted about the uncertainty. "I have my one exam pending. Even if CBSE allows me to sit for it, what will happen about the marks of the papers I was forced to miss for no fault of mine? This can completely ruin my future," he said.

A lawyer told TOI. "We have filed a new PIL and the matter is listed for March 15. We have asked Delhi High Court to urge CBSE to urgently give private students proper guidelines on their pending exams so they can arrange for their scribes for the exams."

TOI received no response to its queries from CBSE till the time of filing this story.

TOI



# Ex-DGP appointed Sports University of Haryana's VC

**TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE**

**PANIPAT, FEBRUARY 28**

Uttarakhand's former Director General of Police (DGP) Ashok Kumar has been appointed as the new Vice-Chancellor (VC) of the Sports University of Haryana.

SS Deswal, former DGP, Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP), was the first VC of the university. He had joined in December, 2022, and was appointed as the VC till December, 2025. But, he resigned from the post a few days ago. Ashok Kumar, a 1989-batch IPS officer, hailing from Kurana village of Panipat district, would join as



Ashok Kumar

the VC on March 1. He did his Class X from the village government school and Class XII from the Hindu College (Sonepat). He pursued Mechanical Engineering and post-graduation from IIT-Delhi and then joined the IPS services and got UP cadre.



# A cautionary tale for startups

Byju's slump underlines need for good governance and close investor-founder relationships



**SUSHMA RAMACHANDRAN**  
SENIOR FINANCIAL JOURNALIST

**T**HE Indian startup ecosystem is in a state of shock. Its poster boys are in trouble and mighty decacorns (valued at \$10 billion) have hit rock bottom in valuations. In the spotlight is Byju's — the venture that was considered top of the heap for a long time, with a gigantic valuation of \$22 billion. For years, it consistently topped the charts as the most successful startup in the country. Now, the former decacorn is facing multiple lawsuits along with cases filed in the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT), while both domestic and foreign investors are clamouring for the removal of founder Byju Raveendran from the helm.

Meanwhile, the ubiquitous Paytm had to face the closure of its popular wallet facility for millions of consumers earlier this month. This followed stringent directives from the Reserve Bank of India, which declared that the closure was a consequence of repeated violations of earlier orders. Paytm founder Vijay Shekhar Sharma, widely considered to be the harbinger of the digital payment revolution in the country, has stepped down as chairman of the Paytm Payments Bank in a bid to stem the tide of criticism.

Right now, Byju's is the startup in the soup. The story of this celebrated edtech company is well known. It was originally an offline concern when it was launched in 2011. By all accounts, Raveendran is an excellent teacher who developed innovative, interactive ways of learning when it turned online in 2015. The company came into



**IN TROUBLE:** It was in the post-Covid era that Byju's fortunes began to decline. X (TWITTER)

its own during the Covid-19 pandemic when there was an urgent need for online education. It offered tutoring for all classes right up to college level and had millions of students signed up during this period.

Domestic and foreign investors pumped funds into the company. Reputed venture capital names like Sequoia Capital, Prosus and Blackrock, along with Qatar Investment Authority, backed the venture. The valuation shot up to \$22 billion by 2022. It then rapidly acquired several edtech firms specialising in different areas. As a result, a hugely successful offline company like Aakash, along with Great Learning and Epic, was taken over by a Byju's company, Think and Learn. In retrospect, analysts claim that there was little method in the random acquisitions but one does not recall much criticism at the time.

It was in the post-Covid era that the company's fortunes began to decline. Media reports surfaced of arm-twisting of parents by Byju's marketers to sell online tutorials. Home schooling also began to decline as physical schools resumed classes. The demand for online education

The drying up of venture capital funds is a global phenomenon, but in India's case, there are concerns over startup valuations that have dipped sharply.

fell, affecting not just Byju's but the entire edtech sector that had thrived during the pandemic.

Financial mismanagement began to be alleged as the company not only ran into losses but faced disputes over non-payment of dues to a host of companies. During the Covid era, the firm had sponsored the Indian cricket team and even hired football superstar Lionel Messi as a brand ambassador. Investors alleged that there was opacity over financial issues, which led

to the resignation of auditing firm Deloitte. Investors are now seeking complete withdrawal of Raveendran and his family from the firm, while the founder is fighting a rearguard battle to stay on as CEO.

The situation reached a flashpoint last week, with shareholders led by Prosus convening an Extraordinary General Meeting seeking to remove Raveendran. A high court stay on any such decision, however, has kept these moves on hold for the time being. Meanwhile, complaints of oppression and mismanagement have prompted hearings by the NCLT, while the Corporate Affairs Ministry has launched its own investigation into the company's affairs.

In other words, the celebrity decacorn is on a sticky wicket. For the startup community in general and the edtech sector in particular, there are many lessons in this episode. First, good governance and close investor-founder relationships need to be developed in startup ventures. Second, acquisitions need to be carefully appraised by financial experts before taking large funding decisions. Third, founders who are excellent in one field, as Raveendran was in teaching, are

not necessarily the best business minds. They need to be guided by experienced and trusted financial advisers.

In this case, as in that of Paytm, the need to follow guidelines laid down by the regulator must be paramount. The RBI has pointed out that the radical decision to suspend operations of the Paytm Payments Bank followed the company's failure to abide by a series of earlier directives regarding monitoring of accounts. There are reports of money laundering by customers relying on Paytm's lax enforcement of KYC (know your customer) guidelines. The brilliant success of some startups can embolden founders to think that rules can be bypassed with impunity. The crackdown on Paytm has rightly sent a clear signal that the regulator will not allow rule-breaking that can lead to financial malfeasance.

These controversies have occurred in the midst of a funding winter for startups that began in 2021. The drying up of venture capital funds is a global phenomenon, but the reasons in India's case include concerns over startup valuations that have dipped sharply in many cases. Funding received in 2023 dipped to \$7 billion from \$25 billion in the previous year, according to a Traxcn report.

In this backdrop, the Byju's case is a cautionary tale for all startup founders. It could lead to fears among venture capitalists about the viability of investments in this country. This is unfortunate, given that so many Indian startups have developed into efficient corporate entities. More than ever, it is now imperative for investors to provide greater support in terms of financial expertise for high achievers in the startup ecosystem. The overused Spider-Man phrase is apt in this context — with great power comes great responsibility. Both startup founders and investors have the responsibility to keep a sharp focus on financial stability.



# DHE to introduce 5 online courses to enhance pupils' skills

**TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE**

**ROHTAK, FEBRUARY 28**

The Department of Higher Education (DHE) will introduce five online courses for undergraduate and post-graduate students of government colleges and polytechnic institutes under its skill enhancement training programme.

The courses' duration will be from notional 30 hours to 90 hours and these will initially be introduced at 20 government colleges located in Rohtak, Jhajjar, Mahendragarh, Rewari, Palwal, Sonapat, Panchkula, Faridabad, Gurugram, Hisar, Jind, Kaithal, Karnal, Bhiwani, Sirsa, Fatehabad, Ambala and Panipat districts.

The proposed online courses aim at imparting skill training to the students for various jobs like the GST executive, statutory executive, finance executive and other employment.

"The spoken English at

Aimed at helping students get jobs

workplace course will be the duration of 60 notional hours and the students will be trained in using simple English language sentences, expressions and text to meet communication needs, including direct customer interface. Similarly, the students, under the employability skills programme, will be taught how to use and display skills effectively during recruitment, selection, processes and on the job for improved work performance," said a college principal.

He said the principals of all 20 colleges had been asked to take consents of their students who want to enroll themselves in the online skill development training programme subject to bearing 50 per cent cost of the course. They had been directed to provide the information about it within the next four days.

# HAU signs pact with seed firms to provide improved wheat variety to farmers

HISAR, FEBRUARY 28

To provide improved variety of wheat WH 1270 seed to maximum number of farmers, Chaudhary Charan Singh Haryana Agricultural University (HAU) signed an agreement with leading seed companies promoting technology commercialisation under the public private partnership (PPP), on Wednesday.

The university has signed an agreement with Jagdish Hybrid Seeds Company, Super Seeds, Hisar, Yamuna Seeds, Indri, and Gopal Seeds Farm, Mansa.

The Vice-Chancellor of the University, Prof BR Kamboj, said the variety developed by scientists of the HAU was proving to be very beneficial for farmers. The variety was providing immense benefit to the farmers of Haryana as well as the wheat-growing states in the country.

He said considering the yield and disease resistance of the improved variety WH 1270, its demand was continuously growing in other states also. WH 1270 developed by the wheat section of the department of

genetics and plant breeding of the university was proving to be a boon for early sowing farming in the irrigated areas of north-western plains of India. Its demand was continuously growing in Punjab, Haryana, Delhi, Rajasthan and Western Uttar Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand.

He said the improved variety and techniques developed here reached maximum number of farmers and would strengthen their economic status. Under the current agreement, the company would prepare the seeds of WH-1270, a variety developed by the university, and send these to the farmers so that they could get reliable quality seeds of variety and their yield could be increased.

Prof Kamboj said, "We are here to help the farmers and a reliable partnership with private partners is always a good and win-win situation for all stakeholders, including farmers." He congratulated both parties for signing the pact. — TNS



Vice-Chancellor Prof BR Kamboj and scientists who developed the improved wheat variety. TRIBUNE PHOTO



# पेपर लीक न होने की भी गारंटी मिले

**पि**छले दिनों चार पालियों में हुई यूपी पुलिस कांस्टेबल भर्ती परीक्षा का पेपर लीक होने के चलते निरस्त कर दिया गया। फिलहाल उत्तर प्रदेश सरकार इसकी जांच करा रही है। उसने छात्रों को छह माह के अंदर दोबारा परीक्षा कराने का भरोसा दिया है। सरकारी नौकरी पाना लाखों युवाओं का सपना है, जिसे साकार करने के लिए छात्र खूब पढ़ाई करते हैं, लेकिन जब पेपर लीक हो जाता है तो उनके वर्षों के परिश्रम पर पानी फिर जाता है। माता-पिता द्वारा उन पर खर्च किया गया पैसा भी व्यर्थ चला जाता है। जो भी उम्मीदवार दूर-दराज से परीक्षा देने आते हैं, उनके आने-जाने और रहने का पूरा खर्चा बर्बाद हो जाता है। हालांकि सरकारें इसे लेकर गंभीरता दिखाती हैं। फिर भी पेपर लीक रोकने के उनके प्रयास नाकाफी साबित हो रहे हैं। बात यहां नीयत और नीति, दोनों की है, जिसका जवाब युवा वर्षों से तलाश रहे हैं। हर बार जब तक जांच होती है, तब तक पेपर लीक की दूसरी घटना घटित हो जाती है।

राज्यों में भले ही सरकारें अलग-अलग पार्टियों की हों, मगर उनमें पेपर लीक का सिस्टम एक जैसा ही है। पिछले सात वर्षों में ही देश के अलग-अलग राज्यों में 70 से अधिक भर्ती परीक्षाओं के पेपर लीक हुए हैं। जैसे कि उत्तर प्रदेश में यूपी पावर कारपोरेशन लिमिटेड, बीएड प्रवेश परीक्षा, यूपीटेट एवं सहायता प्राप्त स्कूल शिक्षक/प्रधानाचार्य की भर्ती के लिए हुई परीक्षाओं के पेपर लीक हुए। राजस्थान में एलडीसी, कांस्टेबल, पटवारी, लाइब्रेरियन, जूनियर इंजीनियर, सब इंस्पेक्टर एवं रीट भर्ती के पेपर लीक हुए हैं। गुजरात में टेट, मुख्य सेविका, गैर सचिवालय क्लर्क, हेडक्लर्क, सब आडिटर, वनरक्षक एवं पंचायत सर्विस सलेक्शन बोर्ड के जूनियर क्लर्क की भर्ती के पेपर लीक हुए हैं। ऐसे ही बंगाल में डीएलएड पाठ्यक्रम की वार्षिक परीक्षा, बिहार लोक सेवा आयोग द्वारा आयोजित बीपीएससी परीक्षा, हिमाचल प्रदेश कर्मचारी चयन आयोग की जेओए आइटी की भर्ती परीक्षा, मध्य प्रदेश प्राथमिक शिक्षक पात्रता परीक्षा, तमिलनाडु में दसवीं और बारहवीं की बोर्ड परीक्षा, अरुणाचल प्रदेश लोक सेवा आयोग द्वारा आयोजित सहायक अभियंता भर्ती परीक्षा तथा उत्तराखंड अधीनस्थ चयन आयोग की स्नातक स्तर के पदों के लिए परीक्षा के प्रश्नपत्र लीक होने के मामले



डा. ब्रजेश कुमार तिवारी



लखनऊ में दोबारा परीक्षा की मांग करते छात्र • फाइल सामने आए हैं। पंजाब और हरियाणा में तो यह एक तरह से रिवाज जैसा बन गया है। इनसे लगभग करीब डेढ़ करोड़ से ज्यादा युवाओं के करियर प्रभावित हुए हैं। क्या उन्हें पेपर न लीक होने देने की 'गारंटी' नहीं दी जा सकती?

पेपर लीक न रोक पाना संबंधित परीक्षा आयोजित करने वाली संस्थाओं और सरकारों की एक बड़ी नाकामी है। यह केवल परीक्षा व्यवस्था में खामी का मामला नहीं, बल्कि लाखों युवाओं के सपनों को चकनाचूर करने वाला एक अत्यंत जघन्य अपराध है। भारत एक युवा देश है। युवाओं के सपने भी बड़े हैं। वे परिश्रमी एवं प्रतिभाशाली हैं और तमाम कठिनाइयों एवं अभावों से संघर्ष कर इन प्रतियोगी परीक्षाओं की तैयारी करते हैं। अव्वल तो देश में भर्ती परीक्षाएं नियमित अंतराल पर होती नहीं और जब होती भी हैं तो पेपर लीक की भेंट चढ़ जाती हैं। पेपर लीक के दोषी पाए जाने वालों के खिलाफ कुछ राज्य सरकारों ने सख्त कानून भी बनाए हैं, लेकिन इन कानूनों के बावजूद पेपर लीक बदस्तूर जारी है। स्कूली बोर्ड परीक्षाओं के पेपर लीक होने की समस्या भी आम है।

हाल में केंद्र सरकार ने भी सार्वजनिक परीक्षा (अनुचित साधनों की रोकथाम) अधिनियम,

**राज्यों में भले ही सरकारें अलग-अलग दलों की हों, मगर उनमें पेपर लीक का मामला एक जैसा ही है**

2024 बनाया है। इसमें किसी परीक्षा में कदाचार में मदद पहुंचाने वालों को तीन से दस साल की जेल और भारी जुर्माने तक के प्रविधान हैं। यह कानून केंद्र सरकार और उसकी टेस्टिंग एजेंसियों द्वारा आयोजित की जाने वाली ज्यादातर केंद्रीय परीक्षाओं पर लागू होगा। फिर भी सिर्फ कड़ी सजा के प्रविधान भर से इस समस्या का कोई प्रभावी हल नहीं निकलने वाला है। देश में ऐसी संस्थाएं बनाई जानी चाहिए, जो संघ लोक सेवा आयोग (यूपीएससी) की तरह निश्चित समय पर प्रतियोगी और भर्ती परीक्षाएं कराएं और उनके परिणाम भी तय समय में घोषित करें। इसके साथ ही भर्ती आयोगों में राजनीतिक संबंधों-संपर्कों वाली नियुक्तियां पूरी तरह बंद होनी चाहिए। परीक्षा आयोग का अपना प्रिंटिंग प्रेस होना चाहिए। एक घंटे पूर्व प्रश्नपत्र की साफ्ट कापी को कोड लाक के माध्यम से सीधे परीक्षा केंद्रों पर भेजा जाना चाहिए। परीक्षा केंद्रों में मौजूद अभ्यर्थियों को प्रश्नपत्र वहीं प्रिंट करके वितरित किया जाना चाहिए। इस विधि से प्रश्नपत्रों को छापना थोड़ा महंगा जरूर होगा, लेकिन परीक्षाएं सुरक्षित और लीकप्रूफ होंगी। इसी तरह प्रश्नपत्रों के कई सेट बनाए जाने चाहिए।

यह आवश्यक है कि पेपर लीक के मामलों को एक महीने के भीतर निपटाने के लिए फास्ट ट्रैक कोर्ट में सुनवाई सुनिश्चित की जाए। किसी कोचिंग संस्थान की संलिप्तता मिलने पर सिर्फ संबंधित आरोपितों पर ही कार्रवाई न हो, बल्कि उस कोचिंग संस्थान को भी बंद किया जाना चाहिए। पेपर तैयार होने से लेकर परीक्षा केंद्रों तक उनके वितरण तक की प्रक्रिया में सैकड़ों लोग शामिल रहते हैं। ऐसे में कोई एक कमजोर कड़ी भी दबाव या प्रलोभन में पेपर लीक जैसा गुनाह कर बैठती है। इसलिए ऊपर से नीचे तक सभी की जिम्मेदारी तय होनी चाहिए। चूंकि हर युवा को सरकारी नौकरी नहीं मिल सकती, इसीलिए आज भारत में स्टार्टअप और स्वरोजगार का चलन तेजी से बढ़ रहा है और बहुत से युवा प्राइवेट नौकरियों को तवज्जो दे रहे हैं। फिर भी जो छात्र सरकारी नौकरियों की तैयारी में जीवन खपा देते हैं, उनके साथ पेपर लीक का मजाक बंद होना चाहिए। सरकारों को इसकी गारंटी देनी चाहिए।

(लेखक जेएनयू के अटल स्कूल आफ मैनेजमेंट में प्रोफेसर हैं)

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## डीयू व सीटीआरटीआइ में रेशम उद्योग पर एमओयू

जागरण संवाददाता, नई दिल्ली : 'भारत टेक्स-2024' में बुधवार को सेंट्रल सिल्क बोर्ड, सीटीआरटीआइ रांची और डीयू के बीच एक महत्वपूर्ण समझौता ज्ञापन (एमओयू) पर हस्ताक्षर किए गए। इस दौरान केंद्रीय रेशम बोर्ड के सदस्य सचिव व सीईओ पी शिवकुमार और डीयू एसओएल की निदेशक एवं कौशल संवर्धन समिति की अध्यक्ष प्रो. पायल मागो मौजूद रहीं। एमओयू पर हस्ताक्षर के बाद प्रो. मागो ने कहा, यह समझौता ज्ञापन रेशम क्षेत्र में सहयोगात्मक अनुसंधान और नवाचार को बढ़ावा देने में एक महत्वपूर्ण कदम साबित होगा। यह समझौता रेशम उत्पादन, मानव संसाधन विकास और स्टार्टअप को बढ़ावा देने पर केंद्रित है। इस साझेदारी का उद्देश्य शिक्षा जगत और उद्योग जगत की विशेषज्ञता का लाभ उठाकर रेशम उत्पादन और कौशल वृद्धि में चुनौतियों का समाधान करना और अवसरों का पता लगाना है। इस मौके पर एसएसएनसी, डीयू से डा. अमित वशिष्ठ और डा. ईशा गुणवाल एवं सीटीआरटीआइ रांची के निदेशक डा. एनबी चौधरी एवं अन्य उपस्थित रहे।

## महिला वर्ग में आइजीआईपीईएसएस कालेज ने जीता हाकी टूर्नामेंट



पद्मश्री श्यामलाल मेमोरियल हाकी टूर्नामेंट के महिला वर्ग की विजेता आइजीआईपीईएसएस की टीम को ट्राफी देकर सम्मानित करते पदाधिकारी व अन्य • सौजन्य- आयोजक

जागरण संवाददाता, पूर्वी दिल्ली : इंदिरा गांधी इंस्टीट्यूट आफ फिजिकल एजुकेशन और स्पोर्ट्स साइंसेज ने दिल्ली यूनिवर्सिटी एलुमिनी को फाइनल मुकाबले में 4-2 से हराकर दसवें पद्मश्री श्यामलाल मेमोरियल हाकी टूर्नामेंट के महिला वर्ग का खिताब अपने नाम किया। विजेता टीम की तरफ से शालिनी ने तीन और कंचन ने एक गोल किया। पराजित टीम की ओर से दोनों गोल सोनाली ने किए। शालिनी को विमन आफ द मैच मिला।

प्लेयर आफ द टूर्नामेंट का अवार्ड इंदिरा गांधी इंस्टीट्यूट आफ फिजिकल एजुकेशन और स्पोर्ट्स साइंसेज की खिलाड़ी सोमवती को

मिला। यह मुकाबला श्यामलाल कालेज में खेला गया था।

प्राचार्य प्रो. रवि नारायण कर ने कहा कि मैदान पर लड़कियां भी किसी से कम नहीं हैं। खेल में दिल्ली यूनिवर्सिटी एलुमिनी की टीम को हार का सामना करना पड़ा। खेल संयोजक वीएस जग्गी ने बताया कि विजेता टीम ने सेमीफाइनल मुकाबले में विवेकानंद कालेज को 3-1 से मात देकर फाइनल में जगह बनाई थी। शुरुआत से ही टीम ने उम्दा प्रदर्शन करते हुए टूर्नामेंट में पकड़ बनाए रखी थी। इस मौके पर कालेज की गर्वनिंग बाडी की चेयरपर्सन सविता गुप्ता, डा. पीके मिश्रा और अन्य लोग मौजूद रहे।

## केन्या में आइआईटी दिल्ली का प्रोजेक्ट शुरू

जासं, नई दिल्ली : आइआईटी दिल्ली के शोधकर्ता स्वदेश के साथ अंतरराष्ट्रीय स्तर पर लाइमस्टोन कैल्क्लाइंड सीमेंट (एलसी3) को बाजार में स्थापित कर रहे हैं। इसके लिए केन्या के मेरु विश्वविद्यालय में एलसी3 टेक्नोलाजी रिसोर्स सेंटर (टीआरसी) अफ्रीका प्रोजेक्ट आइआईटी दिल्ली की सलाह के तहत स्थापित किया गया है। परियोजना पिछले पखवाड़े में आइआईटी दिल्ली के प्रोफेसर शशांक बिश्नोई और ईपीएफएल, स्विट्जरलैंड के प्रोफेसर करेन स्क्रिप्नर द्वारा किया गया था। प्रो. शशांक ने बताया कि एलसी3-टीआरसी प्रोजेक्ट वहां सीमेंट अनुसंधान के क्षेत्र में क्षमता निर्माण करेगा। आइआईटी दिल्ली ने अफ्रीकी सीमेंट और निर्माण उद्योग का समर्थन करने के लिए एक लैब खोलने के लिए मेरु वि. के साथ सहयोग किया है।

सिविल इंजीनियरिंग विभाग के प्रो. शशांक के नेतृत्व में आइआईटी दिल्ली के शोधकर्ताओं ने अनुसंधान में सबसे बड़ा योगदान दिया, जिसने सीमेंट को प्रयोगशाला से बाजार तक पहुंचाया।



# साक्षरता का मतलब सिर्फ दस्तखत करना नहीं

सरकार ने शत-प्रतिशत साक्षरता का लक्ष्य रखा है। इसके लिए 2022 में नया अभियान शुरू हुआ जो साक्षरता को पारंपरिक धारणा से आगे ले जाता है



संजय कुमार,



अर्चना शर्मा अवस्थी

76 साल की उम्र में रामचंद्र म्हस्कर ने जिला सामाजिक चेतना केंद्र का रुख किया, जहां दृढ़ संकल्प के साथ उन्होंने स्वतंत्र रूप से अक्षर और संख्याएं लिखीं। रामचंद्र की शैक्षिक यात्रा जो गरीबी के कारण रुक गई थी, अब साक्षरता कार्यक्रम 'उल्लास' से फिर शुरू हो गई है। ऐसे अनेक उदाहरण बताते हैं कि साक्षरता एक गतिशील प्रक्रिया है, जिसकी परिणति आजीवन सीखने में होती है।

प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी ने कहा है कि वर्तमान दशक भारत के विकास पथ में एक महत्वपूर्ण अवर्ध है, विशेष रूप से 2047 तक 'विकसित भारत' बनने की आकांक्षाओं को साकार करने में। 'विकसित भारत' की एक अनिवार्यता

है कि देश का हर नागरिक साक्षर हो और प्रगति में हिस्सेदार बने। इसके लिए जरूरी था निरक्षरता से निपटने के लिए हमारे दृष्टिकोण का पुनर्मूल्यांकन। यह पुनर्मूल्यांकन 'उल्लास-नव भारत साक्षरता कार्यक्रम' की शुरुआत में परिणत हुआ।

अब महज हस्ताक्षर करना ही साक्षरता नहीं होगा। 'उल्लास' केवल बुनियादी साक्षरता और संख्यात्मक ज्ञान प्रदान करने की पारंपरिक धारणा से परे है। अब तक की योजनाओं में प्रौढ़ शिक्षण देने के लिए वेतन का प्रावधान था। 'उल्लास' के मूलभूत सिद्धांतों में से एक स्वैच्छिक शिक्षण प्रदान करने का नया दृष्टिकोण है। यह भारत में साक्षरता प्राप्त करने के लिए सबसे प्रभावी साधन के रूप में सामने आया है, क्योंकि यह राष्ट्र के प्रत्येक सदस्य को इस प्रयास में संलग्न करता है। इस प्रकार हम अगली जनगणना तक 100% साक्षरता प्राप्त करने के लक्ष्य की ओर आगे बढ़ रहे हैं।

दूसरा नया प्रयोग है उल्लास में डिजिटल और ऑनलाइन पठन-पाठन। 'उल्लास' नाम का एक ऐप बनाया गया है ताकि शिक्षार्थी और स्वयंसेवी अपनी सुविधा के अनुसार कहीं भी और कभी भी पढ़ और पढ़ा सकें। वॉयस ओवर, ऑडियो बुक्स जैसी विशेषताओं के साथ डिजाइन किए गए यूजर फ्रेंडली मोबाइल ऐप से शिक्षार्थी और स्वयंसेवक NCERT के



कॉमन रूम

दीक्षा पोर्टल पर ऑनलाइन उपलब्ध शिक्षण सामग्री तक आसानी से पहुंच सकते हैं, जो 22 भाषाओं में उपलब्ध है। इस पर अब तक 6 महीने में देश भर में 1 करोड़ 9 लाख से अधिक शिक्षार्थियों और 32 लाख से अधिक स्वयंसेवियों ने रजिस्ट्रेशन कराया है।

शिक्षार्थियों का मूल्यांकन करने के लिए वर्ष में दो बार परीक्षा होती है। कार्यान्वयन के एक वर्ष के बाद इस राष्ट्रव्यापी प्रयास के परिणाम मार्च 2023 में आए, जब 11 राज्यों/केंद्र शासित प्रदेशों में 23 लाख नए शिक्षार्थियों ने पहली बार परीक्षा दी। दूसरी मूल्यांकन परीक्षा 24 सितंबर 2023 को हुई, जिसमें राज्यों से 17 लाख नव-शिक्षार्थियों ने भाग लिया।

इसी प्रतिबद्धता का एक उदाहरण है राष्ट्रीय अध्यापक शिक्षा परिषद का अपने क्षेत्रीय कार्यालयों को दिया गया निर्देश, जिसमें कहा गया है कि सभी अध्यापक, शिक्षक के रूप में कम से कम 8-10 शिक्षार्थियों को पढ़ाएंगे जो कि कोर्स का हिस्सा होगा। इसके अलावा UGC और AICTE ने भी सभी कॉलेजों को स्वयंसेवक शिक्षकों के लिए क्रेडिट देने का निर्देश दिया है। कौशल शिक्षा और उद्यमशीलता मंत्रालय और शिक्षा मंत्रालय ने भी निर्देश जारी किया है कि वे नव-साक्षर जिन्होंने सफलतापूर्वक मूल्यांकन परीक्षा पूरी की है, उन्हें उनके पुनः कुशल और कौशल उन्नयन के लिए व्यावसायिक कौशल विकास के साथ सहजता से जोड़ा जाएगा।

6-7 फरवरी को नैशनल बाल भवन, नई दिल्ली में 'उल्लास मेला' आयोजित किया गया। इस मौके पर स्वयंसेवियों तथा नवसाक्षरों ने मंच साझा करते हुए बताया कि किस प्रकार उल्लास नवभारत साक्षरता कार्यक्रम उनके जीवन में एक बड़ा परिवर्तन लाया है। उल्लास मेले में राज्यों के उत्कृष्ट प्रयासों, सांस्कृतिक प्रदर्शन और विकास को भी प्रदर्शित किया गया। इन विकासों से उल्लास का महत्व रेखांकित होता है जो समाज के विभिन्न क्षेत्रों में साक्षरता को बढ़ावा देता है।

(संजय कुमार शिक्षा मंत्रालय में सचिव हैं और

अर्चना शर्मा अवस्थी संयुक्त सचिव हैं)

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