

Centre mulls changes in UGC Act

Rajnish Sharma
New Delhi, December 26

IN A move that will influence the country's education system at the graduation and post-graduation levels, the Centre is planning to change the UGC Act, 1956, by introducing some important amendments. Sources in the Union HRD ministry said an exercise had been initiated in consultation with the University Grants Commission on how that Act could be made more stringent to ensure that only quality universities came up in the country.

Sources said the ministry, along with the UGC, had prepared a blueprint of the changes to be introduced in the Act, which would be placed for

AT A GLANCE

- The HRD Ministry and UGC have prepared a blueprint of the changes in the Act, to be discussed by the Cabinet soon
- The ministry has suggested UGC be renamed 'University Development Commission' since the agency can have a greater role in monitoring the functioning of a university
- The UDC will be given more powers to supervise the role of private and deemed varsities

discussion before the Cabinet soon. Since the amendments, the sources added, were important, the Cabinet was expected to have a detailed dis-

cussion on the issue.

The HRD ministry has suggested that the UGC should be renamed as the University Development Commission since the agency can have a greater role in the monitoring of the functioning of a university rather than merely limited to the role of disbursing funds and grants. The UDC will be given more powers to supervise the role of private and deemed universities, as well.

The existing UGC Act, senior officials claim, has several loopholes that have primarily led to the mushrooming of fake universities across the country. The latest example being that of Chhattisgarh, where more than 50 private universities have cropped up in less than a year. Some of

these have been operating out of one or two-room premises. The ministry has already sought a CBI inquiry into what they describe as a "university racket" in Chhattisgarh.

Apart from stringent norms for private and deemed universities, the amended UGC Act will also have guidelines for foreign universities. "We're still examining the details of what role or function the foreign universities can play in India. Once this is worked out, the amendments will be given the final touches. In the fast-changing education scenario in the country, it is imperative to amend the Act", a senior ministry official said. Sources said the UGC, too, was strongly in favour of amending the Act.

UGC cracks down on pvt varsities

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, Dec. 14. – Taking a serious note of mushrooming of private universities in several states, especially Chhattisgarh, without necessary infrastructure and faculty, the University Grants Commission has now asked such universities to comply with its newly-framed regulations within three months.

The UGC has made this clear that any failure to do so will render invalid their degrees/diplomas besides invoking penalty against them.

The UGC sent its "Establishment of and maintenance of standards in private universities regulations, 2003" several days ago to all state education secretaries, asking them to ensure strict adherence to them by private universities. These rules are meant to regulate establishment and operation of private universities in order to ensure quality of education and check commercialisation of higher education in the interest of student community.

The members of Parliamentary Consultative Committee of the HRD ministry, at its meeting here a few days ago, expressed concern over establishment of spurious private universities in large numbers in various parts of the country.

In light of huge financial resources needed for quality education and research at the higher level, HRD minister Dr MM Joshi told the meeting that "the only alternative option" is to use the tools of modern information and communication technology for the purpose.

A dual education mode is being introduced at the undergraduate level, Dr Joshi said, keeping in mind the requirements of the globalised economy. The objective of the dual education mode is to provide employment opportunities to the rising number of educated youths. Under this programme, the UGC is asking universities and colleges to introduce "utility-oriented courses" along with the traditional ones. This will enable students to have vocational degrees along with their undergraduate certificates in a span of four years, said Dr Joshi.

Joshi gives new meaning to what is plagiarism

By Rajesh Ramchandran
TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: For human resources development minister Murlī Manohar Joshi, the authors of school textbooks—who lifted chunks of matter from foreign textbooks and previously published Indian works—are not guilty of plagiarism.

Mr Joshi defended the authors of the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) school textbooks, who lifted sentences straight out of a history book published in the US, by saying that similarity of sentence construction does not amount to plagiarism because the authors have only referred to the same set of facts.

But Mr Joshi admitted that the authors should have acknowledged their source of information.

The minister was replying to a question in the Rajya Sabha on Friday from Eduardo Faleiro, of the Congress, who asked whether the Central Board of Secondary Education is expected to recommend NCERT textbooks for teaching till these are evaluated. The chair disallowed a supplementary question from Vayalar Ravi, of the Congress, who wanted to know whether M.G.S. Narayanan, chairman of the Indian Council of Historical Research (ICHR), was dismissed over the

textbook controversy and what were the charges of irregularities against him.

The question led to a heated debate with Left members clashing with the minister who referred to mistakes in textbooks published by the West Bengal government.

Quoting from the NCERT textbooks and a book published in the US, Mr Faleiro sought the withdrawal of the NCERT books. Mr Joshi replied that historical facts like Ram is the son of Dashrath, when repeated by other

authors, could not be called plagiarism. This charge could come into effect only in the case of creative writing.

Referring to Mr Faleiro's charges, Mr Joshi said it was a narrow interpretation of plagiarism and explained that if somebody used Ra-

bindranath Tagore's verses as his own, then it could be called plagiarism.

The minister made it clear that there was no question of any book being withdrawn or the ICHR chairman being restored to his post.

Janeshwar Mishra, of the Samajwadi Party, said there was an instance of a Premchand novel being withdrawn being replaced with a book written by the relative of an Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh worker. But Mr Joshi said the Premchand novel was still in the curriculum.

Fact and friction

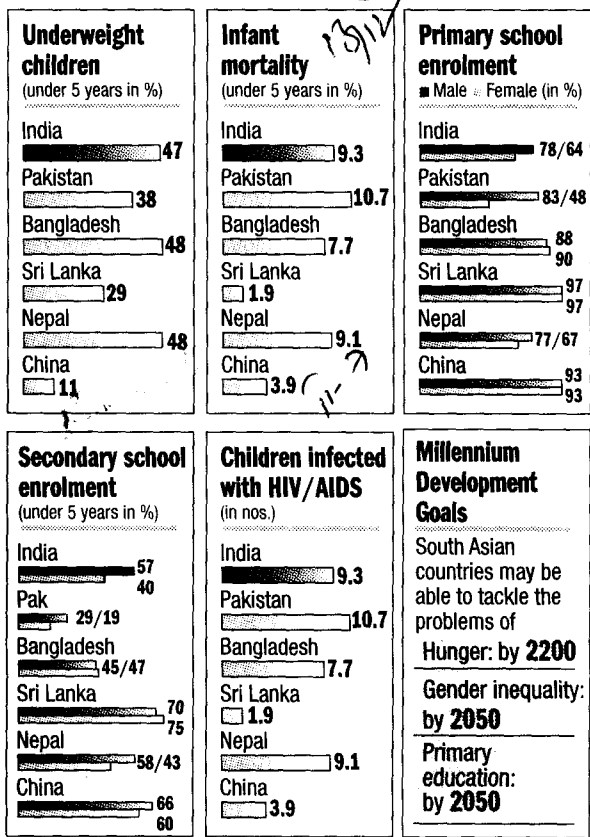


M.M. Joshi

The HRD minister said that historical facts, when repeated by other authors, could not be called plagiarism

UNICEF report

A lot of catching up to do



Source: Human Development Report 2003 (UNICEF)

CBSE to abolish numbers game, opts for grades

Sridhar Kumaraswami
New Delhi, December 10

CLASS IX and X students of the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) will soon get grades instead of marks in examinations. And if Human Resources Minister M.M. Joshi has his way, the central board will have to do away with exams till class VIII. Taken together, this means no CBSE student will ever be evaluated by numbers till he reaches class XI.

The board hopes to replace marks with grades in class IX from next year's annual examinations, and in class X starting with the board examination of 2005. The grade system, the CBSE believes, will relieve students of the tension and stress caused by the "numbers craze" that poisons the current education system.

The grading will be subject-wise and on a nine-point scale; but the board is yet to decide whether it will be absolute or relative (the percentile system). "The decision will be taken very soon," CBSE chairman Ashok Ganguly told *Hindustan Times*. The board is also considering whether to retain the pass/fail system or replace it with another criterion for promotion to class XI.

Joshi has no doubt which system is better. The HRD minister told the Rajya Sabha on Wednesday that he is strongly against the practice of "failing a student". Then, rather intriguingly, he added that the government will not allow India to become a "country of failures".

Joshi said the CBSE, on his advice, was working out a system where no exams are held till class VIII. What exams do is put the child under pressure rather than test his intelligence. "I have held several discussions with the CBSE," the minister told the Upper House. "I am told the CBSE has already instructed schools under its jurisdiction to do away with exams till class III."

The board, however, will retain the system of awarding marks in class XI and XII for now, Ganguly said. Class XII exams "involve complex issues such as the criteria for college admissions", he said.

Educational psychologist Manjari Gopal, however, cautioned against too much optimism. The grading system by itself eases the students' strain, she conceded, but "if the new system merely converts numerical scores into grades, it may not make much difference. What is needed is continuous assessment throughout the year."

Taming the teachers

The West Bengal government's move to discipline teachers is nothing but a desperate attempt to put a leash on the 'monster' it created, writes SANDIP BANDYOPADHYAY

THE code of conduct for school teachers which the West Bengal government proposed in June (and, in effect got, when the Assembly passed the West Bengal Board of Secondary Education (Second Amendment) Bill 2003, on Tuesday) is, in a sense, an official move to "discipline" errant and truant school teachers. In other words, it is linked with the policy that the government has been following over the past two decades or more — tame the teachers.

There is no denying that the Left Front government has raised the economic status of the school teachers by fattening their pay-packets periodically. But whether it has enhanced the teachers' social image or self-esteem is another question, because along with increasing their salaries, the government also set about a process of taming the teacher. The process, simply, is to teach them the lesson that they must remain loyal to the ruling front, work for the "party" (particularly in the rural areas) and must ditto the dictum mouthed by the teachers' organisation (ABTA) that is in unquestionably loyal to the ruling party. And it is a fact that this process has been able to domesticate a large section of the teaching community in West Bengal.

Of course, there have been some voices of dissent raised by disobedient or impertinent teachers and the government has never failed to punish them as the need arose. Recall the picture published in a section of the press on 28 March 2002 — primary school-teachers being lathi-charged by the police in Kolkata; or the more ghastly incident — the murder of a headmaster Kamalesh Sarkar at the hands of his "Leftist" colleagues in Jalpaiguri in

January 1994. So the code of conduct had already been there, not only on paper but in practice and sometimes any breach of this code was dealt with in violent forms.

In spite of this, the government is tightening its grip over the school teachers by introducing a fresh move because, as is well known, a section of the loyal teachers have gone out of control. They play truant, neglect or evade the duties they are paid for, and take to the get-rich-quick route by setting up coaching shops. In the village areas, the teachers spend more time on manipulating the

panchayats to their ends and looking after their agricultural fields when they are supposed to tend the "gardens of children". This practice has led to the near-collapse of the school system in the state and has embarrassed the government, particularly after the publication of Prof. Amartya Sen's PRATICHI.

The government has meanwhile issued a circular prohibiting the school teachers from giving private tuition and debarred the rural primary school teachers from fielding themselves as candidates in the last panchayat elections. The latest

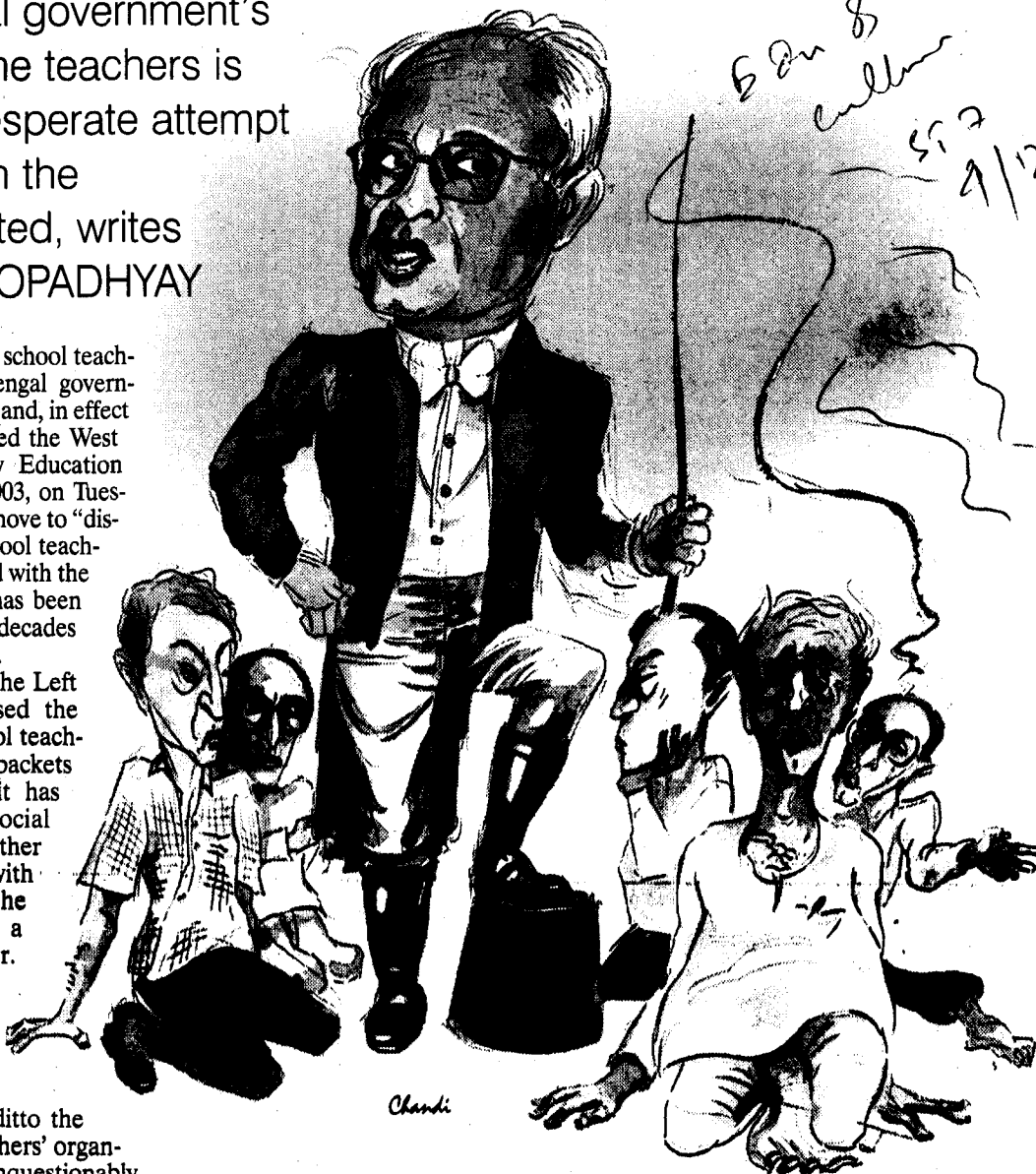
moves by the government are part of a desperate attempt to discipline the monster they created and which is now out of control, but at the same time to deepen its hold on teachers including those in non-state or state-funded schools.

The government has egg on its face because of the dismal educational scenario, particularly at the primary level, as borne out by several official and unofficial studies. For example, a study carried out jointly by the SCERT (the state government's outfit) and the Indian Statistical Institute in 1995 revealed that only 20 per cent of the primary school students had achieved the "minimum expected score". An unofficial study conducted by Mr Paromesh Acharya (who was a member of the Ashok Mitra Commission) in 2001 found that 82 per cent of the guardians were not satisfied with the rural primary schools and the teachers' performances. And now that the government is taking funds from foreign sources for the improvement of primary education, it has finally coughed up the truth that the rate of drop out at the primary level is as high as 37 per cent. Interestingly, till the mid-1990s, the Left Front government has been proudly claiming that it has set "an unprecedented example" in the field of education in the country. Only very recently, the chief minister has begun to admit that their are some "lapses" in primary education.

Meanwhile, the government has tried to save the situation by setting up Sishu Siksha Kendras (SSK) in the rural areas. Though the PRATICHI report has somewhat praised the SSKs, one has reason to apprehend that that this will turn out to be another eye wash and, in effect, would deceive the common people once again. In the SSKs, teachers are being employed on a "contract basis" for a monthly salary of Rs 1,000. But what about the relatively well-paid permanent teachers? How could they neglect their duties for a such a long time with impunity? Is it not because of the leverage that they gained in lieu of their loyalty to the ruling party or front?

Another claim that the government bandies about is that it starts first in the country in terms of its expenditure on education. The physical condition of the primary schools is a visible proof of where the money has gone, or not.

(The author is a freelance writer)



State moves closer to disciplining private schools

Statesman News Service

KOLKATA, Dec. 2. — The Left Front government today got the power to make teachers and non-teaching staff of schools run by private bodies and the Ramakrishna Mission follow its rules on conduct and discipline. Amid protests from some Opposition MLAs, the Assembly today passed the West Bengal Board of Secondary Education (Second Amendment) Bill, 2003.

The Bill seeks to amend the West Bengal Board of Secondary Education Act of 1963 and add a clause to sub-section (2) of Section 27 to make regulations "relating to the conduct and discipline in respect of teachers and non-teaching staff of recognised institutions under the Board".

Introducing the Bill, school education minister Mr Kanti Biswas said: "Other states have introduced regulations for private schools. But our government doesn't want to step in be-

cause the teachers may feel insulted. So, the power has been given to the secondary education board."

Protesting against the Bill, Mr Saugata Roy and Mr Sovandeb Chattopadhyay (both from Trinamul) said the move was aimed at establishing political control on private schools.

Arguing that the board was a non-political body, Mr Biswas said: "When the board reviews a school's performance or settles a dispute, it doesn't consider whether the school

takes government aid. Secondary and primary teachers, like college and university teachers, must have a professional code of conduct." He alleged that many schools didn't follow the School Service Commission's directives on recruitment of teachers.

The Assembly also passed the West Bengal School Service Commission (Amendment) Bill, 2003, which calls for dividing the state into seven regions to be controlled by seven Regional School Service Commissions.

Marxists & the book ban: 'Jinnah line' when it's *Satanic Verses*, common man's interest when it's *Dwikhandita*

Chronicle of hypocrisy retold

SOUGATA MUKHOPADHYAY
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

KOLKATA, Nov. 29. — Fifteen years ago, when the Rajiv Gandhi government had banned Salman Rushdie's *Satanic Verses* because it felt that "sections of the book will offend the religious sentiments of some section of the people", the CPI-M and its allies cried themselves hoarse. Mr Ashok Mitra, economist and former Bengal finance minister, had then accused the Centre of "pursuing the path of Mohammed Ali Jinnah".

Fifteen years later, a government run by those very parties has proscribed Tashima Naareen's *Dwikhandita*, for much the same rea-

sons the CPI-M had then so vehemently protested against. Ironically, Mr Mitra — who had criticised the ban on Rushdie's book in the strongest of terms — is defending the state government's decision with the strongest of conviction.

On 5 October, 1988, the Centre had banned the import and sale of *Satanic Verses* after objections from Muslim fundamentalists (India was the first country to ban the book). Two days later, when asked by **The Statesman** to comment on the order, Mr Mitra had called the move "absolutely scandalous". "India is the truest follower of Mohammed Ali Jinnah. The government thinks the electorate consists of communal



minds," Mr Mitra had said.

Today, he justified the Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee government's decision, saying: "I've read the book and it does contain objectionable comments on Islam. At a time when separatist forces are looking

for opportunities to stoke destabilisation, such material could be the perfect weapon in their hands."

But why did he oppose the ban on Rushdie's novel? "That was in a different context. Besides, *Satanic Verses* wasn't published from this country and was not written in Bengali. There was no chance that commoners could be influenced by it." The implication: while it's okay for Mr Mitra and the chief minister to read the book (both admit to having done so), it's out-of-bounds for the "common man".

The CPI-M's double standards, however, are not limited to the Rushdie case. Recall the massive, party-organised protests in the city in 1996 when MF Hussain

was attacked by Hindu chauvinists in Maharashtra for depicting Saraswati in the nude. And the ovation Deepa Mehta received from party leaders in 2000 after the lumpen Right — as opposed to the lumpen Left — forced her to abandon the filming of *Water* in Varanasi on the grounds that it hurt Hindu sentiments? A report in CPI-M organ *Ganashakti* had stated that Mehta met the then chief minister, Mr Jyoti Basu, and his deputy, Mr Buddhadeb Bhat tacharjee, and was assured "of al protection and security if she chose to film *Water* in the state".

The Marxists seem oblivious to the fact that they are swimming in the waters of hypocrisy.

Taslima shocked at ban on book

29/11 HT
HT Correspondent & PTI
Kolkata, November 28

AS THE government on Friday officially banned Taslima Nasreen's *Dwikhandita* and ordered immediate seizure of the book, the controversial writer expressed "shock and dismay" over the decision and said it was an example of the state government's double standards. Quoting some controversial passages, the government order said the book would promote "enmity, hatred and ill feelings" between religious groups and therefore was liable for punishment under Section 153A.

Asked on the ban, Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee said: "I will not explain why I have taken the decision." To questions if he had read the book, the Chief Minister said he had read it several times and even made "20 to 25 people who matter" go through it before he took the decision.

Reacting to the ban, Taslima — now in New York — said she has ideologically been an "anti-fundamentalist" writer and would continue to be so, ban or no ban. "That I am anti-Islamic is not a revelation. In all my columns and books, I have made no secret of it."

She said the state government, which had opposed the Centre's ban on Salman Rushdie's *Satanic Verses*, had shown



Taslima Nasreen

Swipe at 'double standards'

double standards in banning her book. "When Rushdie's book was banned for anti-Islamic content, the same government made a strong case against it."

Saying *Aamar Meyebela* was far more anti-Islamic in content but had not created even a ripple in the state, she asked: "Why is this mild book irking the state government this time?"

She said many people had told her that Kolkata and Dhaka were ideologically similar. "But I had refused to believe them since for me, West Bengal represented the citadel of democracy. Now I know they were right."

Taslima said she had completed her fourth book in the autobiographical series and would release it at the next Book Fair. Kolkata-based People's Book Society (PBS) will publish it.

See also Kolkata Live

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

29 NOV 2003

Rerun of CAT on Feb. 15, no fees

DEVADEEPPUROHIT

Ahmedabad, Nov. 26: After two days of deliberation, the Indian institutes of management today announced that the cancelled common admission test (CAT) will be held on February 15.

"Announcements regarding other details will follow," said Bakul Dholakia, the director of IIM Ahmedabad.

At his side at the news conference were all his colleagues at the five other IIMs — Prakash Apte (Bangalore), Shekhar Chaudhuri (Calcutta), A. Devi Singh (Lucknow), A.H. Kalro (Kozhikode) and S.S. Sudharssanam (Indore).

They regretted the "inconvenience caused to candidates, their families and others concerned" following the cancellation of the examination held on November 23 after an alleged leak of the question paper.

Students will not have to pay anything for the retest — each CAT form costs Rs 1,000.

The proposal to hold a retest on February 15 was forwarded to the six directors by the CAT Group, which conducts the examination. The standard cycle time of CAT is 14 months and holding it in two-and-a-half months will be a real "managerial challenge", said the heads of the country's premier business schools.

Turning down the human resource development ministry's suggestion to scrap the interviews that follow the written test, the IIMs said they would stick to their time-tested process. "The question of doing away with group discussions and interviews doesn't arise at all."

"We have discussed extensively the secrecy and security of our system in the past three days to prevent a repeat of what happened last Sunday. Besides, we will incorporate the CBI's suggestions to make our system more foolproof," they chorused.

They declined to reveal where the question papers will be printed this time. The Mumbai-based Institute of Banking Personnel Services press, which is printing CAT question papers since 1986, has been named by the CBI as a possible source of the question paper leak.

Besides the CBI inquiry, the ministry is conducting a probe. "The incident hasn't strained our relationship with the ministry," said Devi Singh.

Describing the alleged leak as an "unfortunate development", the six directors stressed that it would hardly have any impact on the credibility of the IIMs.

■ See Page 8

Now, NCERT authors copy each other, too

By Shivani Singh
TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: Copying an American book on contemporary world history and historian R.C. Majumdar's magisterial series on Indian history are passe. The National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) authors have copied them all. And as their "original" sources are gradually drying, NCERT authors seem to have no choice but to lift chunks from works of their own colleagues.

Five pages of the class VII history textbook, 'India and the World', and the class XII's 'Contemporary World History' are identical. The authors of the two books are different. Since the first edition of class XII textbook came out three months after the class VII book, suspicion falls on the authors of 'Contemporary World History'.

The authors of 'Contemporary World History' are facing charges of plagiarism. Portions of this book have been copied from 'World Civilisation, their History and Culture', a 1955 American publication.

To cover the post-Renaissance period, the authors "stole" paras of the text from their own NCERT publication. Half a page on the life and achievements of Isaac Newton is the same in both books. Again, pages 159 and 160 of the textbook 'India and the World' have been re-produced verbatim in 'Contemporary World History'. These two pages discuss explorations and discoveries of the new

world and new routes to India.

There is also an identical account in the two books on the advent of Europeans in India. 'India and the World' has it on pages 160 and 161 while 'Contemporary World History' has it on pages 28 and 29.

However, the patriotic fervour of NCERT authors comes out more in the class VII book. The book says: "Europeans were not interested in culture interchange as the culture of India was too superior for them to imbibe."

Edited by Nalini Pant, 'India and the World' is a joint effort of four authors—Sima Yadav,

Basabi Khan Banerjee, Sanjay Dubey and Themichon Woleng. 'Contemporary World History' is written by Mohammed Anwar-ul Haque, Himanshu S. Patnaik and Pratyusa K. Mandal.

Defending his authors, NCERT chairman J.S. Rajput said there were many differences in the form, style and

content of the paragraphs that were sought to be matched and "some stray similarities that have crept in were unavoidable as they describe the same historical event".

But criticising NCERT for so brazenly supporting plagiarism, historian Arjun Dev said: "Instead of penalising the authors who have been lifting texts from other books, NCERT has gone on to support such exercises. These are, in fact, harming the students. By reproducing paras of the class VII book in the class XII book, NCERT seems to be saying, what is good for a junior class student is good enough for a class XII student."

Copycats galore

- The authors of 'Contemporary World History' are facing charges of plagiarism
- There is an identical account on the advent of Europeans in India
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CAT papers out of the bag, exams cancelled

HT Correspondents
New Delhi, November 23

Backdoor to B-school

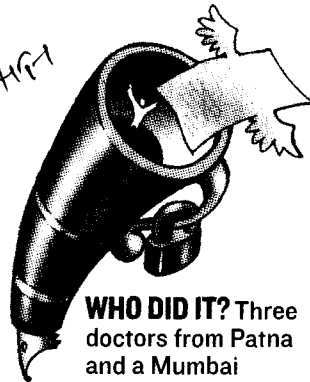
THE COMBINED Admission Test (CAT) was cancelled after being held on Sunday as the CBI bust a nationwide question paper racket, arresting four persons in Delhi and five in Pune. A fresh examination is likely within 60 days.

In Kolkata, IIM authorities said the exam was conducted smoothly. "We have no information about any question paper leak in Kolkata. The exam at all the centres was held smoothly," said IIM Calcutta director Shekhar Chowdhury.

The news of the cancellation — ordered by Union Human Resources Development Minister Murli Manohar Joshi — came as a shock to city candidates. They were particularly dismayed as the paper, they said, was comparatively easy this time.

Among those arrested in Delhi are three Patna doctors. The kingpin has been identified as Mumbai businessman Ranjit Singh alias Ranjit Don. Originally from Patna, Don has been running a pharmaceutical company, Randons, in Mumbai.

The CBI raided a hotel on the Delhi-Gurgaon Road late on Saturday and recovered



WHO DID IT? Three doctors from Patna and a Mumbai businessman, Ranjit Singh

HOW? Students paid in lakhs and were kept locked in hotel rooms the night before the exam

CAT question papers and answer scripts. Seven persons — the four accused and three students — were detained.

On Sunday morning, CBI sleuths raided 8 out of the 26 CAT examination centres in Delhi and compared the seized question papers with the ones being circulated. Sources said all 150 questions matched, following which the four were formally arrested. The role of the three students

is still being ascertained.

The gang ran the racket in the guise of an organised coaching centre where students were given the question papers and the answers a day in advance. But they were not allowed to leave the hotel to prevent the question paper from being passed onto others.

The accused normally stayed at small hotels and guesthouses to avoid suspicion. Apart from CAT, the gang leaked CBSE pre-medical, Bank Probationary Officers and All India Post Graduate Medical exams among others.

The five persons, including a girl, arrested in Pune were selling the question paper for Rs 2-3 lakh. The police laid a trap near the Pune University by sending a decoy customer to lure the gang. While the four men were from Bihar, the girl was from Maharashtra.

Investigations reveal Ranjit operated through close associates in Kolkata, Mumbai, Patna, Chennai, Ahmedabad and other cities. Sources said the paper got leaked possibly from IBPS, a Mumbai-based agency entrusted with the printing and distribution of exam papers. The CBI has ruled out the involvement of any member of the IIM faculty.

See also Kolkata Live

5-1-b
23/11
CATastrophe
Strong Punishment Is The Best Deterrent

SUNDAY'S CAT-fiasco is a stinging indictment of the perilous state of higher education in the country. Leakage of papers, mass copying in examinations, swapping of answer sheets, string-pulling at the interview level — none of this is really new in the corridors of higher education. But through it all, the IITs and IIMs had stood apart. Indeed over the years, the IITs' Joint Entrance Examination (JEE) and the IIMs' Common Admission Test (CAT) had become a byword for integrity. Till May 1997 in the case of the IIT JEE and November 2003 in the case of CAT. Six years ago, the JEE question paper was leaked out; then too the exam was cancelled and a fresh exam held a few months later. But that one incident was enough to leave the close to fifty-year record of the JEE irreparably tarnished. Today the IIMs find themselves in the same unenviable position. Despite their best efforts at damage control, it will be a while before the events of last Sunday are forgotten and the CAT, the most prestigious of the management entrance tests, regains its pride of place as the acme test for young graduates from a host of disciplines across the country.

If the damage is to be contained, it is not enough to hold a re-test. The government must do more. The mad scramble for seats in the IITs and IIMs is the result of the enormous jump in economic and hence, social mobility, that seems to be almost assured once a student secures admission to one of these institutions. In the long term, the only solution is to establish/ accredit more quality institutions so that the divide between IIT/IIM graduates and others is not so disproportionate. In the short-term, however, the government must ensure that the CBI investigation is completed expeditiously, the guilty are brought to book and exemplary punishment is handed out so that there is a strong deterrent effect. There is no doubt that we need a more foolproof institutional mechanism to conduct such exams. It would be most unfortunate however if, as is feared, the government uses this as a pretext to interfere in the working of these institutions. In that case, Sunday's events would be nothing short of a CATastrophe and for many more than the 1,27,000 students who are its immediate victims.

(For a different view see TOI)

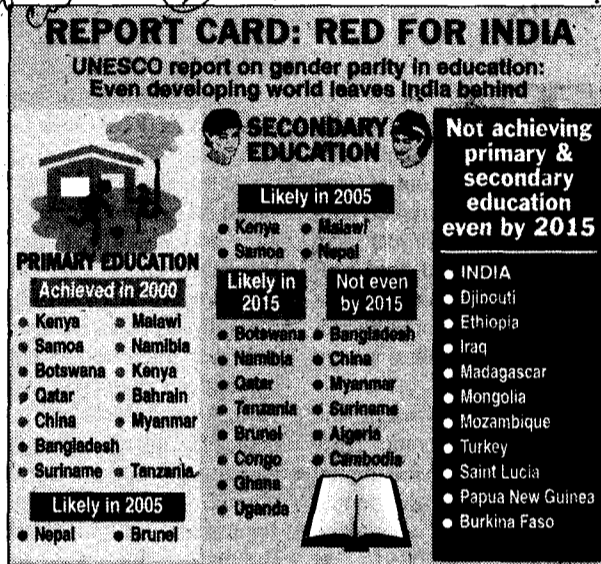
India fails UNESCO test

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 6

FOUR days before Union Human Resource Development Minister Murli Manohar Joshi hosts a UNESCO-sponsored three-day conference on "Education for All", UNESCO itself made adverse comments on the high percentage of girls staying out of school in India. According to the annual global report on education released in New Delhi today, India is unlikely to have "gender parity" in school enrolment either at the primary or secondary level even by 2015.

Director of UNESCO's EFA Global Monitoring Report Team Christopher Colclough said data collected till 2000 shows that "India is lagging behind Bangladesh" in ensuring gender parity in school enrolment. India is one of the many developing countries where nearly two-thirds of the children not attending schools are girls.

True, Joshi's Sarva Shiksha Abhiyaan (SSA) gathered momentum only after 2001 and his separate programme to ensure better enrolment of girls started only in September this year but Colclough would not



IE Graphics/B.K. SHARMA

release any "good progress" certificate to the Centre just now. Asked to comment on whether low-cost infrastructure like alternate schools would be able to provide quality education, Colclough said: "We would have to wait and see."

But, he did describe the steps now being taken as "positive". He pointed out that India is too diverse a country and the problems of ensuring free education for all or improving the ratio of girls going to school varies from region to region. Of the South Asian countries, he identified Bangladesh, which has taken measures to

correct gender disparities in primary education. He lauded the educational NGOs for bringing more girls to school in countries where fundamentalists are active, like Iran.

The report reveals how Bangladesh has travelled miles in achieving gender parity in education. For example, in the year 2000 itself, it had an equal number of boys and girls attending schools at the primary level — a feat, which India will not be able to accomplish even by 2005. Of course, Bangladesh's resources are not enough and according to UNESCO's predictions, it

may not be able to send an equal number of girls to secondary schools by 2015.

But India's situation is pathetic. The UNESCO report focuses on gender parity and concludes that its school enrolment figures may not have an equal number of boys and girls even by 2015 both at the primary and secondary levels.

Of the 128 countries surveyed by the EFA monitoring team, India comes in the last category of 12 countries described as "at risk of not achieving the goal by 2015" in respect of both primary and secondary education. For company, India has countries like Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Iraq and Papua New Guinea.

It is not that population is the stumbling block. China has achieved gender parity at the primary level though it may have to wait for many years before it can hope to accomplish the same at the secondary level.

India is a signatory to the Dakar Framework of Action which decided in 2000 that the countries would try to achieve the goal of gender parity in enrolment by 2005 and universal education for all by 2015. Joshi's SSA is aimed at achieving universal education by 2010.

STRESS ON MERIT FOR ADMISSION

SC caps quota for MD, MS courses

SC 1
6/11

600 & 60000

Our Legal Correspondent

NEW DELHI, Nov. 5. — The Supreme Court (coram, Khare, CJ, Lahoti, Agrawal, Sinha, Lakshmanan, JJ) today upheld the constitutional validity of the practice of colleges and universities of giving preference to their own MBBS students in admission to post-graduate courses, but said such reservation should “not exceed 50 per cent” of the total number of open (non-reserved) seats at the post-graduate level.

The Bench, however, clarified there would be no such institutional preference in super-speciality departments such as neuro-surgery and cardiology. “But even in regard to admissions to the PG course, we would direct that so far as super-specialities are concerned, there should be no reservation at all even on the basis of institutional preference and admissions should be granted purely on merit on an all-India basis,” the court said.

In a detailed order, the court said reservation by way of institutional preference is not ultra vires Article 14. “Article 14 forbids class legislation but does not forbid reasonable classification, which means (1) it must be based on reasonable and intelligible differentia; and (2) such differentia must be on a rational basis. It goes beyond any cavil of doubt that institutional preference is based on reasonable and identifiable classification.”

The court came out in support of a common entrance test for PG medical courses throughout the country. At present, each state fills up 75 per cent seats from among the meritorious in its own entrance test. The rest goes to the Central pool which is filled up by a common all-India entrance test conducted by AIIMS. “Now one common entrance test is held for admission against 25 per cent of all India quota and other tests are being held by the respective universities. Disparities in such tests should be done away with and merit judged on the basis of one test,” the court said. It suggested that institutional preference should be limited to 50 per cent and the rest left for open competition based purely on merit on an all-India basis and that admission to under-graduate professional and non-professional courses be similarly streamlined.

Fewer seats for Bengal students

KOLKATA, Nov. 5. — It's really going to set the cat among the pigeons at all eight teaching hospitals running post-graduate medical courses in West Bengal, especially given the imbroglio over MBBS seats at SSKM and Midnapore Medical College and the current healthcare crisis. The eight institutions will witness a larger influx of students from outside the state following the Supreme Court ruling.

Health secretary Mr Ashim Burman said the government, yet to get a copy of the order, would abide by it.

So far, as per an earlier directive of Supreme Court, 25 per cent of the PG seats are filled up by candidates selected through an all-India test. The rest are filled through a test conducted by the West Bengal University of Health Sciences. Only those with MBBS degree from universities in the state are eligible for it.

Presently, Medical College, NRS, RG Kar, Calcutta National Medical College, Bankura Sammilani Medical College, NBU Medical College and SSKM conduct PG courses. — SNS

Judge to pronounce sentence today in Safdar Hashmi murder case

GHAZIABAD (UTTAR PRADESH), NOV. 4. Fourteen years after he was killed by a group of political activists and their henchmen for staging a play against corruption, a local court has convicted 10 people for the murder of theatre activist and CPI (M) leader Safdar Hashmi.

The quantum of punishment will be announced tomorrow. The convicts could be given capital punishment or life imprisonment for the crime which had created a political stir in the country.

In his judgement delivered on Monday, Additional District Sessions Judge C D Rai held the accused guilty after examining about 24 witnesses during the long-drawn trial.

The convicted include Mukesh Sharma, Devi Saran Sharma, Jitendra, Ramautar, Vinod, Yunus, Bhagat Bahadur, Tahir and Ramesh. All of them were present in the court when the judgment was pronounced. Two of the 12 accused -- Sarjit and Lakhiram -- had died during the pendency of the trial.

Mr. Hashmi was beaten to death on January 1, 1989 while he and his associates were staging a street play "Halla Bol" during municipal elections in Jhandapur and Sahibabad in Ghaziabad district, neighbouring Delhi. He was campaigning in favour of one Ramanath Jha against whom Mukesh Sharma, one of the convicts,



was contesting.

Rambahadur, a labourer, was also killed when the culprits attacked the theatre group with sticks and sharp-edged weapons. His murder case was tried separately.

Mr. Hashmi was the head of Jan Natya Manch, a theatre group with Left leanings. Cutting across partylines and ideologies, political leaders and cultural activists had condemned the incident. — UNI, PTI

Our Staff Reporter writes from New Delhi:

Welcoming the conviction of 10 accused in the Safdar Hashmi murder case, the Left organisations along with artistes and social activists today said the verdict would strengthen their resolve to carry forward the work and promote the ideology of the noted theatre personality and the Communist Party of

India-Marxist (CPI-M) leader.

"Safdar Hashmi always defended the right to freedom of expression. He worked to strengthen and uphold the pluralistic and composite culture of India. We have been carrying forward the work initiated by him and this verdict will only give us strength to move forward in the right direction and fulfil Safdar Hashmi's dreams," said Rajen Prasad, the spokesperson of SAHMAT (Safdar Hashmi Memorial Trust).

Remembering Safdar Hashmi as a progressive cultural personality, the CPI (M) general secretary, Harkishen Singh Surjeet, in a statement issued here today said, "It is a welcome verdict, though belated".

The CPI(M) politburo member, Sitaram Yechury, said it was a long overdue judgment that confirmed what Safdar Hashmi fought for. "The judgment would have some impact on the criminalisation of politics which is a major cause of concern today in society. It is a victory of genuine well-intended politics."

Hoping that there would be no violence in society, Shabnam Hashmi, sister of Safdar Hashmi who had had long association with SAHMAT, said Safdar died when he was at the peak of his creativity and one feels sad to have lost him so early.

Free education for children may pinch people's pockets

By Shivani Singh
TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: The government's commitment to free and compulsory education for all children may weigh heavy on people's pockets. According to the free and compulsory education to children bill, 2003, the government will be allowed to charge a cess from people to provide free schooling.

The new bill gives power to the government, or the appropriate authority, to charge a cess on any item or transaction or activity for funding free education to all children in the age group of six to 14 years. The bill is likely to be tabled in Parliament in the forthcoming winter session.

To finance free education and carry out the provisions of the bill, if passed by Parliament, the government will also have to make special allocations in the budget. At least two teachers will have to be employed in all primary schools, one teacher will be required for upper primary. For every 40 children, there will be at least one teacher. And each teacher should have one classroom.

At present, about 30 per cent of the 6.2 lakh primary schools have only one teacher. Nearly 50 per cent schools have only two rooms, and only nine per cent

schools have toilets for girls.

The ministry of human resource development blames a reduction in funds for these conditions. In fact, the ministry is not hopeful that it would get a special allocation to meet the targets set in the new bill. It may have to resort to charging cess for funding free education for children.

The new bill gives power to the government, or the appropriate authority, to charge a cess on any item, transaction or activity for funding free education to all children in the age group of six to 14 years

Last year, when the government brought the 86th Constitutional Amendment, that made free and compulsory education in the age group 6 to 14, a fundamental right, it had promised to spend Rs 9,800 crore per annum for next ten years. The National Development Council asked the ministry to make do with Rs 6,000 crore. Sources said not even 15 per cent of this amount has been shelled out as yet.

"The new bill is basically to operationalise the goal set by

the constitutional amendment. If in the past one year, funds have not come, the situation is not likely to improve in future," said Sanjiv Kaura, national convener, National Alliance for Right to Education and Equity.

The HRD ministry has in fact shown its displeasure on reduction of funds for elementary education. In August, secretary S.C. Tripathi wrote to Planning Commission secretary N.K. Sinha pointing out to poor budgetary allocation for Sarva Siksha Abhiyan. This is the main project on elementary education.

"The Abhiyan has not been given the outlay that was projected. The annual budget allocations indicate that only 50 per cent of the outlay will be provided for the plan period. The objectives of the Abhiyan and literacy mission are therefore under the threat of becoming illusory," Mr Tripathi wrote.

Mr Kaura said elementary education did not seem to be on government's agenda. "It first passed a Constitutional Amendment. Then killed it by sanctioning only 15 per cent of the money required. The easiest way to understand the game is by trying to run your household at 15 per cent of your usual amount. Anyone will give up after the first month."

Free schooling for the poor

3/11/03
S-17
Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, Oct. 30. — Ten months after Parliament passed the 86th Constitutional Amendment making free and compulsory elementary education a fundamental right of all children aged 6-14 years, a draft Bill has proposed that every private school in the country be required to set aside up to 20 per cent of its enrolments for poor students who must be taught free.

The human resource development ministry aims to get the Bill cleared by Parliament in time to apply the Act from the April 2004 academic session.

Local authorities will be given the discretion to fix the quota for private schools. State directors of education will have the power to penalise private schools which do not fill the quota.

The draft Bill — The Free and Com-

pulsory Education for Children Bill, 2003 — also proposes to penalise parents who do not send their children to schools without any “reasonable excuse”. Teachers will also be hauled up for failing to ensure continued attendance of children enrolled in their schools.

The draft Bill is also aimed at child labourers. It states that “no person shall employ or engage a child in a manner which shall prevent the child from attending an approved school”. The local authorities could slap those violating this provision with a fine up to Rs 500 and, in case of continuing contravention, with an additional fine up to Rs 50 for each succeeding day during this period.

The draft Bill, however, seeks to protect government officials from litigations by providing that “no court shall take cognisance of an offence under this Act except on the complaint of the competent authority (or local authority)”.

Editorial

No escape now

*5-10
29/10*

Teaching English when it's too late

Why the Left Front insists on adopting a on-again-off-again approach to the teaching of English at the primary level in government schools is a question that begs an answer. Nor is it clear why there is a perpetual striving for a consensus that is unlikely to be achieved under any circumstances. Sunday's Left Front meeting was another fruitless exercise with the difference that most of the constituents and senior leaders like Jyoti Basu and ever chief minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee have realised the futility of setting up one commission after another only to preserve the status quo. The latest in the series was the school education committee headed by Ranjugopal Mukhopadhyay who did exactly what Alimuddin Street's education cell wanted him to do: he went ahead and recommended that English should be taught from class two as at present.

Since there are quite a few dissenting voices within the Left Front itself, the best that Biman Bose, the champion of rallies and disruptionist movements (to hell with the Marxist government's effort to turn over a new leaf on the industrial front), could do was to ask the school education minister (another opponent of English) to compile all the views expressed at the meeting and send them to the Left Front secretariat by 15 November. That was one way of putting off the issue and avoiding uncomfortable situations.

It would be naive to assume that Left Front chairman is unable otherwise to gauge the mood of the meeting. If at the end the Front allows English from class one, it will be made to look like a great policy decision — not an amendment of an error rooted in outdated dogma and which has left lakhs of students permanently handicapped.

It may seem too late to make amends now but the Front may yet try to set things right. This means creating conditions in schools by appointing the right teachers and making books available in adequate numbers. With so much damage done already, token measures will not do. Nor does it help to pretend that the policy on the mother tongue to the exclusion of English has not tarnished West Bengal's reputation in the academic world. Arrogance derived from power and a misplaced sense of dignity has kept Marxists away from the truth for too long. There is now no escape from the consequences of its own follies.

Once beaten, boy fights back to conquer system & English

SUNANDO SARKAR

Calcutta, Sept. 10: Defeating the might of a government determined not to expose the state's children to the English alphabet before Class V takes a lot of doing.

Sheikh Milan has done that, becoming the other side of the coin. Satyarup Banerjee (the Madhyamik 9th-boy who gave up studying in a city school

of his dreams) represents.

Milan, also from Bankura like Satyarup, initially looked like going Satyarup's way. After cracking the Joint Entrance Examination in 1999, he joined Jalpaiguri Government Engineering College. But the problems known to afflict students who start learning English from Class V struck him as well.

Trying to cope with the hiterto-alien English-medium lect-

ures for five months showed he needed something more than a thorough knowledge of maths and physics to become a civil engineer. He went back home to a village called Shashpur, four hours by bus from the district headquarters.

Here, however, the script stopped resembling that of Satyarup who left the Ramakrishna Mission-run institute at Narendrapur for a school in Bankura wh-

ere classes are held in Bengali.

Giving a dramatic twist to the usual tale of Bengal's students being tripped by the English barrier, Milan is now studying in the much more reputed Bengal Engineering College after making up the hard way for the state's two-decade-long foible.

The first thing Milan did on going back home was buy spoken-English guide-books. Those books, however, were not enough

to arm him for the world outside his village. So he took some spoken-English classes as well.

Milan would rather not talk about those days now. "I want to forget those five months and the ignominy of the forced silence (by my lack of communication skills) in classrooms."

Even the struggle that has helped him fight it out in the far more "hostile" environment — BE College, being much closer to

the city also demands more English-language skills in and outside classrooms — is not something he wants to talk about.

"I know I can inspire many others like me but the months I spent at home trying to make up for the rulers' foibles were not very pleasant," he explained.

After gaining the confidence necessary to face the world, Milan appeared for the JEE again. This time, he bettered his

earlier result and booked himself a place in the civil engineering class of BE College.

Milan is now preparing for his campus interviews; the season started a few days ago. But this round, he knows, demands far greater communication skills than he needs in class. So he and his friends at the BE College hostel facing similar problems have started another round of spoken-English classes.

Creation & Culture

THE TELEGRAPH

11 SEP 2003

Saraswati snub to Joshi

STAFF REPORTER

Calcutta, Sept. 6: The CPM and the BJP-led Centre today locked horns again over *Saraswati vandana* with Bengal higher education minister Satyasadhan Chakraborty boycotting the opening of a book fair by Murlidhar Joshi.

Chakraborty, one of the guests, walked off in a huff even before the Union human resources development minister had shown up after he spotted a *Saraswati* idol in a corner of the dais. He stayed barely a few minutes.

The minister's sudden departure from the Maidan function — organised jointly by the National Book Trust and the state government — sparked much drama. Some in the audience

kept asking after him and the organisers kept announcing that the "honourable" minister had left on urgent work and would be back soon.

Today's boycott looked like a rerun of a similar incident in Delhi two years ago. Chakraborty, Kanti Biswas and some education ministers from non-BJP states had then walked out of an all-India conference protesting the chanting of the *vandana*.

Joshi, who opened the nine-day fair, appeared unperturbed by the walkout. "He had been invited to the function. You had better ask him why he left," he told reporters.

Chakraborty later spoke to **The Telegraph** from his Salt Lake residence. "The moment I saw the *Saraswati* idol on the

stage, I decided not to attend the function. My government is not against *Saraswati puja*, but is opposed to worshipping idols at public functions, specially those organised by the government.

"I wonder how Mr Joshi, being an education minister himself, can tolerate such practices."

Sources in the higher education department said Chakraborty had reason to get annoyed. There was no reason to highlight any particular religion at a book opening, they said.

"I am sure there were many in the audience who were non-Hindus. What about their sentiments? As representatives of government, we ministers should honour the sentiments of all religious groups."

"In fact, what Joshi's govern-

ment is trying to do by worshipping *Saraswati* at government-organised functions is not what Hinduism stands for. They are misinterpreting religion for political gains," Chakraborty said.

Government sources said the minister, upset at the sight of the idol, first stopped over at the Bangla Academy in the Rajabindra Sadan complex. He then sent an official to gather details of the fair-opening and the reason why the idol was on the dais. Only then did he return home.

Joshi said people of other states "had learnt to worship the goddess of knowledge and wisdom" from Bengal. He praised the state for producing some of the best writers and poets, but rued the erosion of its rich heritage.

Artistes condemn saffron attack on Tanveer

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, Sept. 1. — Theatre personalities, including actress Nandita Das, accused the “saffron brigade” today of launching a series of attacks on eminent theatre personality, Habib Tanveer, for staging the play *Ponga Pandit* also known as *Jamadarin*.

Charging the same brigade with assaulting Safdar Hashmi 15 years ago, theatre personality MK Raina said the “saffron brigade” is trying to suppress the creativity of artistes by launching attacks on them and trying to give a “communal touch” to the episode. The event was organised by a voluntary organisation, SAHMAT.

Tanveer, who turns 80 today,

is in Madhya Pradesh with his group Naya Theatre performing two plays — *Jis Lahore Nai Dekhya Vo Janmaya Nai* and *Ponga Pandit*. Tanveer and his theatre group were attacked four times.

Ms Das said: “It is a pity that an eminent personality like Tanveer saab is attacked for staging plays which the so-called secularists term anti-secular. Do these people want that we artistes should give proof of our secularism?”

Another artiste, Ruma Ghosh, who has worked with Tanveer in *Baagh*, which was staged a few days after the Babri Masjid demolition, said attacks on Tanveer are “cultural vandalism”. “These are not new plays or even conceptual

ised by Tanveer. These plays are 70 years old... why is it only now that artistes are being attacked for performing these plays,” she said.

These artistes staged a play *Yeh Dil Mange More, Guruji* in which they accused the Vishwa Hindu Parishad and the Bajrang Dal of blindly following the Rashtriya Swayam Sevak in turning India into a “swadeshi rashtra”.

While defending Tanveer and other artistes, Ashok Kumar of SAHMAT said *Ponga Pandit* is an excellent example of rural creativity. “All these years no one objected to performing these plays. Artistes performing these plays have been attacked only after the Babri masjid demolition,” he said.

THE STATESMAN

2 SEP 2003

Politics preferred, education redundant

Editor & Column

Statesman News Service

SFA 19

KOLKATA, Sept. 1. — Union minister Mr Murlji Manohar Joshi yesterday insisted that West Bengal shared a "dubious distinction" with Bihar and Orissa with regard to dropout rates at schools and was generally less than complimentary about the state of education in Bengal. Today, the state school education minister's retort would put a hagiographer to shame. For the former all is rotten, and for the latter, even excreta smells of roses.

While the Union minister seemed to see not an iota of good in the state's education sector, the opinion of his state counterpart, summarised in an epistle dripping with sarcasm he wrote to Mr Joshi today, is to the contrary.

Claiming to be "hurt" at a section of state's intellectuals calling Mr Joshi "ignorant", Mr Biswas

of our students as second only to ... Goa and Mizoram."

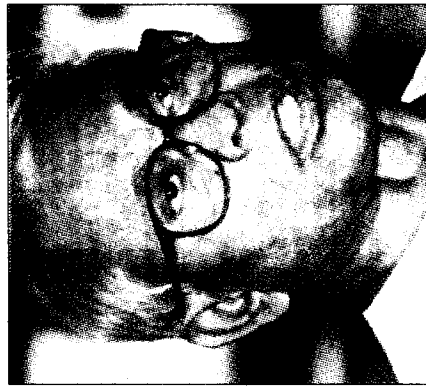
"The World Bank with which — unlike us — you are all sugar and honey, compiled a document on primary education in India which stated that our education standard bettered even that of Kerala," wrote Mr Biswas.

The unkindest cut was saved for the last: Mr Biswas contended that his central counterpart had said all that he had, in frustration — his own finance minister had, after all, put the squeeze on Mr Joshi! "It must be quite a shame knowing that while India comprises 16.8 per cent of the world population, the country is home to 34 per cent of world's illiterates. It is also a pity that India constitutes only 0.9 per cent of the total world public expenditure on education," wrote Mr Biswas.

But between such educated opponents, whither education?



Mr Murlji Manohar Joshi.



Mr Kanti Biswas and Mr Murlji Manohar Joshi.

letter starts off being solicitous — "How can I help you out of your vicious circle of misinformation?" In response to Mr Joshi's contention that the state's education system has reached its nadir, Mr Biswas "reminded" him that "Bengal was a recipient of Unesco's Noma

Prize in 1987 for its achievement in literacy drive". While Mr Joshi said yesterday that about 50 lakh potential students lie outside the purview of school education, Mr Biswas said: "It was the NCERT, an organisation under your ambit, that reported on the success rates

Medical council rejects Bengal seat plea

VVV

by V.V.V. G-6

A STAFF REPORTER

Calcutta, Aug. 24: The Medical Council of India has decided not to grant, for the time being, permission to Bengal to add 100 MBBS seats to SSKM Hospital and another 100 to the newly set-up Midnapore Medical College and Hospital, senior council officials said today from Delhi on condition of anonymity.

The decision, eagerly waited for by state health authorities, was taken at a meeting of the medical council in Delhi yesterday. "Because of the lack of infrastructure at the two hospitals, we

could not grant permission for the seats," said an official of the council. "If we receive a second application from the Bengal government, we will again hold inspections and consider it."

Health officials in Calcutta, however, maintained that they had not yet received any official intimation on this score from the Centre. They said another meeting of the medical council is slated for September 15 in Delhi.

Health secretary Asim Barman is expected to visit the capital during that time to impress upon the council and central health ministry officials to grant per-

mission for the 200 seats.

Officials, however, said that though the Centre reserves the right to overrule the council's decision, the state government is unlikely to press it. The state government will, instead, press for a re-inspection of SSKM and Midnapore Medical College and Hospital.

"We will decide on our next course of action after we receive the official letter (regarding the council's decision) from the Centre where we had applied for approval of the seats. The MCI is a recommending body and the final decision comes from the

Union government," said director of medical education C.R. Maity.

If the state government does not get the council's approval for at least 100 seats at the SSKM, it plans to introduce a pay-and-study scheme. Health minister Surjya Kanta Mishra had said in the Assembly last month that the government would not "disturb" the existing 905 medical seats meant for joint entrance examination candidates.

Mishra also said he would not budge from the statement he made at the Assembly and if the medical council approval does

not come through this year, the enhanced fee quota would not come into effect this academic session.

The Calcutta branch of the Indian Medical Association today threatened the government with a public interest litigation if it did not immediately fill up the 70 medical seats kept aside for students ready to pay a huge amount and study. Out of the 905 existing medical seats in the undergraduate level, the government has filled up only 835 seats.

"Since the MCI has already rejected the government's application for 200 additional seats,

they must immediately fill up the remaining 70 seats which are lying vacant. If the government does not do it, we will go for large-scale agitation," said R.D. Dubey, the former secretary of the association's Calcutta branch and present joint secretary (headquarters). The decision was taken after a daylong meeting.

The Guardian's Forum, comprising parents of students who fared well in the joint entrance exams but could not make it to the MBBS course this year, has announced that it will join the medical association in the

agitation.

TRIBE IN A DILEMMA

✓ 5-8 15/8 9 - 8th, culture & language issues
Fears Over Future Of Santhali Language

By J FELIX RAJ

There are over one hundred or so different tribes spread over India. The Santhals are one of the oldest and the largest tribes with an estimated population of around 10 million. They reside mostly in the remote villages of West Bengal, Jharkhand, Assam, Tripura, Bihar, and Orissa in India and outside India there are about eight lakhs in Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh and Mauritius. The Santhals in India, Nepal, Bhutan and Bangladesh have been using the Extended Latin or the Roman Script since 1867 for writing Santhali.

Roman script

Christian missionaries started writing the Santhali language first. Their contribution to the Santhali language has been in terms of preparing the Santhali grammar and the Santhali dictionaries in Roman script. In the post-Independence period, some urbanised Santhals, influenced by fundamentalist groups, have claimed that the Roman script was a foreign script and to use it to write Santhali would be an insult to the Santhal community.

India does not have a common script or a common language for all. Each state has its own language with its own script. Santhals residing in different states of India are using the script of their respective state language to write Santhali, consequently losing their own linguistic identity given by the Roman script. For instance, many West Bengal Santhals have the Bengali script, in Orissa the Oriya script, Bihar and Jharkhand the Devangri script. All these scripts are state-sponsored, except in West Bengal where, while patronising the Bengali script Santhali, the government has also published a Roman script text-book for the Higher Secondary Education, viz, Higher Secondary Santhali Selections (prose and poetry) 1976.

Recently, the West Bengal government has started sponsoring the Ol Chiki script as well. The Ol Chiki script, a mixture of many scripts, is a recent development. A few Santhals have demanded that the West Bengal government should implement the Ol Chiki in the education curriculum of West Bengal as a means of self-affirmation and

The author is vice-principal, St Xavier's College, Kolkata

cultural identity for the Santhals. According to educated Santhals in Jharkhand and West Bengal, this demand is purely based on emotion and not on reality.

Their claim that the Ol Chiki is rich in Santhali literature is false and malicious. The West Bengal Government Committee on Santhali Language consisting

Roman script for more than 100 years. It has given the Santhals a separate and unique linguistic identity. Whatever development has so far been made in Santhali language and literature has been done through Roman script. Santhali dictionaries, grammar and other books have been written in large numbers in Roman



of eminent scholars, who reviewed the feasibility of the Ol Chiki script in May 2002, has said that if the Ol Chiki script is imposed on Santhals of West Bengal, many educated Santhals, literate in other scripts, will suddenly become illiterate in Santhali. The committee on Santhali language concluded that Ol Chiki is yet to attain a total acceptance by Santhals living in West Bengal.

Primary education

Dr RK Bhattacharya, director of the Anthropological Survey of India, has raised apprehensions about an adequate infrastructure, e.g., trained teachers in Ol Chiki script to shoulder the responsibility of a large primary student population, which is spread in many districts of West Bengal, besides non-availability of standard text book. "I have my doubts about how beneficial will be the introduction of Ol Chiki script in studying Santhali language in the context of contemporary time...". Professor Peter B Anderson of the University of Copenhagen has also commented that the Ol Chiki is not to be recommended at present as a medium for school education as there has not yet been any widespread adult literacy in Ol Chiki among the Santhals. Santhali is being written in

script. The International Phonetic Association, California, has recognised the Roman script as the only script, which is "perfect on all lines". In order to express the peculiar pronunciation and phonetics of Santhali language, the Roman script has been re-oriented.

When a student learns Santhali in the Roman script, he will have an advantage over English. Santhali that is spoken in Bhagalpur, Monghyr, the Santhal Parganas, Birbhum, Bankura, Hazaribagh and Manbhum by an overwhelming majority of the tribe is more polished and regarded as the standard one than the one spoken in the southern districts. It is said that the purest Santhali is spoken in the North, especially in the Santhal Parganas and Manbhum.

The Santhali Literary and Cultural Society in Kolkata has raised serious concerns regarding the use of Ol Chiki script. One of the basic purposes of literature is to unite and integrate the people of a particular linguistic group with other communities and not to disunite and segregate them. The Santhali Society's major concern is the contribution and job prospects of the Santhals of West Bengal if they are taught Santhali in the Ol Chiki script. They strongly feel that the Ol

Chiki script will never be able to attain a status in terms of utility and convenience in achieving the success of education and integrity of the Santhals, neither in West Bengal nor at the national and international level. They also feel that to insist on the Ol Chiki script for Santhali literature will be a disaster for the whole Santhal community, since it is still in its rudimentary form to become a medium of education and knowledge to all the Santhals in India and outside.

Linguistic integrity

A seminar on Santhali language was held in April 2003 in Murshidabad, West Bengal and the delegates had expressed grave concern over the future of the Santhali language. They had observed that such instances of the use of three or four different scripts for writing a single language, are not found anywhere in the world.

It is for this reason that Santhali language is not getting an opportunity for uniform development. They feel that the linguistic and cultural integrity of the Santhali language and Santhal people are being jeopardised. This has been the main stumbling block in the way of development of the Santhali language.

The SLCS has requested the West Bengal government to reconsider the decision on the use of Ol Chiki script to teach Santhali in schools and colleges. In the words of Dr Arun K Ghosh (Reader, department of Bengali, Burdwan University), "... when the question of script in cases of unwritten language arises, it should be dealt with logic and a sense of practicability. Our survey reveals that out of 20 lakhs Santhals in West Bengal, almost 75 per cent do not vote for Ol Chiki... As for the script most of them either do not have any knowledge about the script or do not accept it as a possible medium of instruction, particularly at the Madhyamik level and beyond... So from the standpoint of acceptability it does not reach even 50 per cent of the Santhal population in West Bengal...".

As Dr Ghosh had said, we should see whether the introduction of the script for appeasing a minority section of the people will push the people for whom the script is being introduced a century backward.

'STATES CAN FIX QUOTA FOR ADMISSION'

SC slaps ban on capitation fees

By J. Venkatesan

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NEW DELHI, AUG. 14. The Supreme Court today banned the collection of capitation fees by professional colleges and warned that charging fees over the approved fee structure in the guise of donation or any other form as also profiteering would not be permitted.

A five-Judge Constitution Bench headed by the Chief Justice, V.N. Khare, passed the order while interpreting the 11-Judge Bench judgment delivered by the apex court last year in the 'T.M.A. Pai case'.

The Bench, which included Justice S.N. Variava, Justice K.G. Balakrishnan and Justice Arijit Pasayat, also made it clear that the States could regulate admissions by fixing the percentage of seats through a common entrance test conducted by a State agency and the seats to be filled by the managements themselves.

For the current academic year, the Bench fixed the quota at 50:50 by the State and the management.

However, if admissions had already been completed based on any other percentage, such admissions shall not be disturbed.

The Bench took up for consideration four issues: whether educational institutions are entitled to fix their own fee structure; whether the minority and the non-minority educational institutions stand on the same footing and have the same rights; whether private unaided professional colleges (PUPCs) are entitled to fill in their seats to the extent of 100 per cent and whether the PUPCs are entitled

to admit students by evolving their own method of admission.

'No rigid fee structure'

The Bench said there could be no fixing of a rigid fee structure by the Government and each institution must have the freedom to fix its own fee structure, which shall be done keeping in mind the infrastructure and facilities available, investments made, salaries paid to the staff and future plans for expansion and/or betterment of the institution.

'Appoint a committee'

For determining the fee structure, the Bench directed the appointment of a committee in each State, headed by a retired judge of the High Court, with a chartered accountant, representatives of the Medical Council of India or the All-India Council for Technical Education depending upon the type of institution as members.

The secretary in-charge of technical or medical education shall be its member secretary.

The Bench said the fee fixed by the committee shall be binding for a period of three years. The college shall not charge any fee other than the approved fee structure.

If any institution was found charging capitation fees or profiteering, the college would face the prospect of losing its recognition/affiliation.

Also, no college shall collect fees for four years at one go from students apprehending that they would leave the institution. At the most, it could ask the student to give a bank guarantee or bond.

See also Page 14

THE HINDU

15 AUG 1978

Bodo language to be included in VIII Schedule

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, JULY 31. The Union Cabinet today decided to include Bodo language in the VIII Schedule of the Constitution. It would be the 19th language to be included in the Schedule.

Announcing the decision, the Government spokesperson said a Bill for the purpose would be brought before Parliament during the current session itself.

The Cabinet, which met here this evening, also decided to set up national and regional environment authorities and conse-

quently wind up the various authorities and committees that have been set up from time to time to deal with different subjects on environment and forestry.

The national authority would be headed by a serving or retired judge of the Supreme Court who would be assisted by a Vice-Chairman, two members and a Secretary.

The regional authorities would be set up in Bangalore (for the southern region), Bhopal (central region), Bhubaneswar (eastern region), Shillong

(north-eastern region) and Chandigarh (north-western region). The national and regional authorities would have a broad mandate, covering all aspects of environmental protection, conservation and forest management. The national authority would be vested with appellate jurisdiction to hear appeals against orders by the regional authorities. Chaired by the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, the Cabinet meeting also approved a Bill to give effect to the recent announcement of the Finance Minister, Jaswant

Singh, to allow NABARD (National Bank of Agriculture and Rural Development) to directly provide loans to district cooperative banks, with a view to reducing the interest rates on crop loans.

At present, NABARD provides loans to State-level cooperative credit system at an interest rate ranging from 5.5 to seven per cent and these in turn lend to the district units at a rate ranging from 6.25 per cent to 9.5 per cent and they then give loans to primary cooperative societies at a rate of 12 to 15 per cent.

CBSE textbook fuels Sikh ire at 'disrespect' to Guru Gobind

Santosh Singh in Bhopal

July 30. — An Indore-based Sikh organisation has raised serious objections to a chapter in the Central Board of Secondary Education's Class VI History textbook for "using disrespectful language against Guru Gobind Singh and publishing the Guru's sketch showing him brandishing a sword".

The Khalsa Academy has recently written to the Prime Minister, Union HRD minister,

and 300 Members of Parliament pointing out the "offensive portions", and urging the withdrawal of the chapter.

The academy, which claims support from several Sikh organisations in the country, has objected to the chapter *Baisakhi phir aa gavi* (Baisakhi has come, again). Specifically, the portion that reads: "...*samne manch par khada, kisi unmaan mein duba, aankhon se chingariya bikharta, nangi chamchamati talwar ghumata hua, taitis var-*

shiya yuva vyakti kah raha tha... mujhe sir chahiye.. mujhe sir chahiye... (A 33-year-old man in a crazed state stands on the podium, fire in his eyes and brandishing a naked, shining sword... saying I want (their) head, I want (their) head...")

Though the academy has objections to the language used in the entire chapter, "serious reservations" have also been expressed about the following lines: "...*bheed ke lehren par se urata hua wah Jat us talwar ko*

chume is tarah ja raha hai jaise bhange wale ki toli me koi boli bolne ja raha ho (riding the crest of the wave formed by the crowds, this Jat was kissing his sword as if in preparation for a bhanga.)"

Speaking to The Statesman, the Khalsa Academy secretary, Mr Ranvir Singh Hora, asked: "Does the Central government want children to read a gory and distorted Sikh history?" Portraying the Sikh Guru in "such a fashion" and publishing

an "imaginary sketch", suggested that the Central government was out to "subvert" history, he said.

Mr Hora alleged that the government's "nefarious designs to alter history" stood exposed as the same textbook used "respectable and appropriate language vis-a-vis Lord Rama and Lord Krishna". He added that the Delhi Sikh Gurudwara Management Committee had recently issued a circular to several schools asking them not to

teach from the textbook. About 15 Indore schools too had assured the academy that they would "ban" the controversial chapter.

The chapter — introduced in the CBSE's text in 2003 — is written by Mr Mahip Singh. According to a rough estimate, the textbook is studied by about 200,000 children all over the country. The Khalsa Academy was instrumental in getting a controversial Class XI textbook reference to Guru Teg Bahadur banned in 2002.

THE STATESMAN

3 1 JUL 2003

Police claim Adivasi union provoked incident during 12-hour bandh

6/27/77 9-9 26/7

Seven students die in Assam firing

OUR CORRESPONDENT

Guwahati, July 26: Seven student activists were today killed in police firing in Assam's Darrang district following mob violence during a 12-hour bandh called by an Adivasi organisation.

Inspector-general of police (law and order) S.B. Kakoti said the firing was provoked by the mob, which pelted the police personnel with stones and refused to disperse. Nine persons were injured in the incident,

which occurred near Paneri tea estate.

Kakoti said the police team was trying to prevent members of the All-Adivasi Students' Association of Assam from forcibly closing down shops at Kachuvil, near the tea estate.

"They directed their anger at the police team on being asked to disperse. The police personnel had no option but to open fire."

The police reached the spot after shopkeepers raised an alarm. As they began rounding

up the protesters, a few of them rushed to the Paneri tea estate and sought help from the Adivasi garden labourers. A mob gathered in the area within minutes and started pelting stones, prompting the police to open fire.

Deputy inspector-general (northern range) Pradeep Kumar said over phone from Tezpur that three persons died on the spot, while four died of their injuries on way to hospital. Six of the injured were shifted to the Gauhati Medical

College and Hospital.

There was trouble in Dibrugarh district, too, with members of the same organisation attacking newspaper vans and blocking roads to enforce the bandh.

In adjacent Tinsukia district, 16 Adivasi activists were arrested for pelting vehicles with stones. Life was paralysed by the bandh in the Adivasi-inhabited areas of both Upper Assam districts.

The Adivasi student organisation had called the 12-hour

statewide bandh to pressure the Assam government into granting Scheduled Tribe status to the community and scrapping the accord with the Bodo Liberation Tigers. The organisation threatened to start a rail roko programme if its demands were not fulfilled.

The Opposition is planning to raise the matter during the monsoon session of the Assembly, beginning on August 4. The firing on protesters could dominate the first day's proceedings, sources said.

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'Index of errors' in history textbooks

30/6 ✓

By Anita Joshua

NEW DELHI, JUNE 29. The Indian History Congress (IHC) feels that mere removal of linguistic and factual errors from the new history textbooks of the National Council of Education Research and Training (NCERT) would not convert them into acceptable learning tools for the students.

Six months after the IHC during its 63rd annual session in Amritsar decided to examine the history textbooks brought out over the past year, the committee appointed for the purpose has come out with a detailed 155-page "index of errors."

Approved by the IHC executive committee, it will soon be printed to serve as a "ready-reckoner for teachers and students."

Four books — Makkhan Lal's "India and the World" for Class VI and "Ancient India" for Class XI, Meenakshi Jain's "Medieval India" for Class XI, and Hari Om's "Contemporary India" for Class IX — were put under the IHC scanner, and it was noted that they "uniformly suffer from similar defects."

According to the report, "the language is poor with many

spelling and grammatical errors, infelicitous expressions and obscurities, which is a primary error that any school textbook must avoid."

While some errors were "mere products of ignorance," historians Irfan Habib, Suvira Jaiswal and Aditya Mukherjee — entrusted with the task of examining the books — were one in stating that many of the mistakes stem "from an anxiety to present history with a very strong chauvinistic and communal bias."

In the text on ancient India, the effort, as per the report, has been to project India as the original home of the Aryans and the "Vedic civilisation" as the sole fountainhead of the Indian civilisation with the Vedic age being credited for "all substantive scientific discoveries from zero and decimal placement of numerals to heliocentric astronomy"; the Hindu religion as superior to other religions; and the caste system as having only 'rigidities' and not inequities so much so that Dalits find no mention.

In the medieval text, the report found the focus to be on highlighting that "Muslims brought little new to India except oppression and temple-de-

struction." Further, the report states that "all dark corners are thoroughly presented in the narrative of medieval India while they are overlooked in that of ancient India," and the rise of a composite culture "ignored or downplayed."

As for the modern India textbook, "Muslim separatism is the great bugbear while Hindi communalism is not even mentioned and the Hindu Mahasabha leaders appear uniformly as great patriots." Further, the growth of modern values of democracy, gender equality, secularism, welfare state, ... is "neglected or passed over in silence."

Besides, "there is little or nothing on the Indian social reformers like Ram Mohan Roy, Keshav Chandra Sen, Jotiba Phule and even B. R. Ambedkar" and "the mainstream secular and democratic elements in the national movement were unimportant or mere obstacles to the growth of Cultural Nationalism."

"Harsh words are used for the moderates, there is a deliberate effort to either ignore or present in unfavourable light Jawaharlal Nehru and also the Left, especially the Communists"; the historians noted.

UGC blacklists 18 universities

NEW DELHI, June 16.—University Grant Commission has advised aspiring students to check the credentials of institutions and universities before seeking admission. There are 18 “self-styled” universities or *vishwavidyalayas* which are operating in contravention of the provisions of the UGC Act 1956.

They include: Maithali University (Darbhanga), Commerce University Ltd (Delhi), Delhi Vishwa Vidyapeeth (Model Town Delhi), UN University (Delhi) St John's University (Kerala), Raja Arabic University (Nagpur), Kesarwani Vidyapith (Jabalpur), DDB Sanskrit University (Tamil Nadu), Mahila Gram Vidya-peth (Allahabad), Varanaseya Sanskrit Vishwavidyalaya (Varanasi) Indian Education Council (Lucknow), Gandhi Hindi Vidyapith (Allahabad), University of Electro Complex Homeopathy (Kanpur). — SNS

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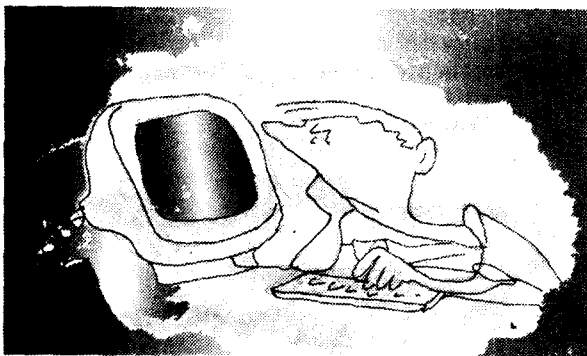
Campus web sights

51-7

16/6

At a time when Indian universities are losing a large number of the bright students to their foreign counterparts, it would be a big mistake not to use the Net to its full potential, writes **Souvik Mukherjee** after a random round-up of portals

The home page of Calcutta University (www.kolkata.org/cu) is repulsive, with a dull background and an equally drab picture of the university building. In fact, most of the pages are under construction. It would have been much more sensible to have completed the site before posting it on the Net. However



the effort of developing a detailed database of the alumni is commendable.

The website of Presidency College, Kolkata (www.education.vsnl.com/presidency) is equally bad. It is jarring on the eye. It is evident from the content that the enthusiasm with which it was started has slowly

begun to ebb. However it is not an official website. So the college authorities can be excused.

If we look at some of the institutes outside Kolkata the picture does improve. The website of NIFT (www.niftindia.com) is well laid out. The graphics are pretty decent and the navigability is much better.

Although some of the pages are still under construction yet the overall information is generally updated.

JNU also has a decently useful site (www.jnu.ac.in). The layout is good and the site is user-friendly. The information provided is pretty recent and it covers a wide range of topics — from libraries to careers. The site has a Hindi version and a video clip of the campus.

IIM, Ahmedabad's website (www.iimahd.ernet.in) is also loaded with information. The site has a special section dedicated entirely to the needs of foreign students. It also posts an electronic bi-monthly maga-

16 JUN 2003

Joshi & Biswas cross swords over education

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STAFF REPORTER

Calcutta, April 14: It was a war of words between two ministers looking after education, one in Bengal and the other in the country.

Union human resources development minister Murli Manohar Joshi, who arrived here yesterday, came down heavily on the communist government in the state for its "faulty" education policy in a string of functions he attended in the city over the past two days.

In retaliation, state school education minister Kanti Biswas held a hurried news conference at the state Information Centre in the evening — a rare event on a public holiday.

Biswas said: "I am extremely hurt in the manner in which Murli Manohar Joshi has been making baseless allegations against innocent students of my state. It is not expected from a senior Union minister who himself is a veteran teacher. All his (Joshi's) allegations are baseless and vindictive."

A visibly perturbed Biswas added that he would soon write the Centre complaining about

Joshi's "attempts to malign" the Left Front government. "My government will take up the matter seriously," he said.

At a function in a city college, Joshi had cited examples to explain the "deteriorating standard of education in West Bengal". The Union minister alleged that he had information that students in many state-funded schools had very poor knowledge of English as well as basic historical facts.

Making a scathing attack on Joshi for his remark, Biswas said: "Does Joshi have the courage to tell me what is the source of his information. I being the education minister of this state have every right to know the source."

To counter Joshi, Biswas pointed at "glaring mistakes" in the history and geography textbooks published by the Centre-controlled National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT).

Biswas claimed that a chapter on major religions of India in a Class VI history book published by the NCERT had no mention of Islam. "I am sure the students of my state have a far sound

knowledge on such basic facts than Joshi," he said.

He rubbished the Union minister's charge that the dropout rate among schoolchildren in the state was the highest. "A survey by the World Bank has confirmed that the standard of education in Bengal is far better than in any other state," said Biswas.

CPM convert held

A zilla parishad candidate who had switched allegiance from the CPM to the Trinamul Congress months ago was arrested in Canning in South 24-Parganas today on charges of a murder committed four years ago.

A police team picked up Manik Paik from his house at Tambuldah village early today. After daybreak, the news of the arrest spread and Trinamul workers gheraoed the police station demanding Paik's release.

The zilla parishad candidate had crossed over to Trinamul seven months ago. Party MLA Gobinda Naskar saw CPM hands behind the arrest of Paik, who wielded considerable influence in the area. Police said they were on the lookout for him since the 1999 murder.

Education minister wants Joshi's apology

Statesman News Service

KOLKATA, April 15. — The Union human resources development minister Dr Murl Manohar Joshi may have returned to the Capital after sparing no effort to come down heavily on the state's Left Front government during his three-day visit to this city.

But the state versus Centre debate on

education is far from having gone with him.

Not merely satiated with his public retort against Dr Joshi yesterday, the state school education minister Mr Kanti Biswas today said that he would demand the Union minister's "public apology" for his remarks made in "bad taste" against the likes of Rammohan Roy and Iswarchandra Vidyasagar.

Mr Biswas said that he would forward a copy of his letter to the chief minister, Mr Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee, who may in turn, take the matter up with Prime Minister Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee, if he deems fit.

While justifying "the dismal situation of education in West Bengal", Dr Joshi had referred to an example where a student apparently said in reply to a question from his

teacher that the World War I started as a result of a debate between Rammohan and Vidyasagar over widow remarriage.

Mr Biswas too had called an emergency press conference yesterday after Dr Joshi addressed reporters and supplied his bit of counter-argument against the later's allegations. "I would ask Dr Joshi to apologise for his comments made about the two

beacons of learning of national stature. I do not know from where he got the information for he never revealed the source. But I would ask him to refrain from making such comments in future," Mr Biswas said today.

Calling the Union minister's comments as "juvenile", Mr Biswas said: "There may have been a few howlers in the text books printed in

this state. But there are mistakes, and more serious ones, published by the NCERT which comes directly under his department."

"All my earlier letters of protest were not even acknowledged. This time I would make sure that my effort is made public to ensure that a pressure is created on the union government," the school education minister added.

16 APR 2003

THE STATESMAN

Joshi & Biswas cross swords over education

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THE TELEGRAPH

History Congress begins to review NCERT textbooks

By Mahendra Ved
TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: As the Indian History Congress (IHC) sets about scrutinising the NCERT history textbooks for schools in an even-handed manner, it wants the opposition-ruled states also to correct the mistakes in their books and punish those responsible for either committing them or retaining them for a long time.

Asked why West Bengal and Karnataka, which are protesting the "saffronisation" of the NCERT books, have themselves been issuing books with mistakes, Shireen Moosvi of the IHC said, "We would like to look at these books as well."

She told TNN, "The mistakes have persisted for long and this is sheer inefficiency. That is why we have called for punishment and want that these states must correct the mistakes in their own books."

But she drew a clear line: While the NCERT books contain ideological slants and factual errors, those in the opposition-ruled states did not suffer from these handicaps. In the latter case, the mistakes were more in the

process of translation of the text into English.

Following a decision taken at its 63rd session held at Amritsar recently, the IHC will set up two committees to review history textbooks available in English.

One for the opposition-ruled states that have already been approached to begin the correction process and the other for the NCERT books.

The IHC decision has already drawn flak from the NCERT which has called it a "drama".

The NCERT has taken exception to the IHC step on the ground that the historians in the IHC have been critical of the NCERT books and have gone public for "ideological" reasons.

The committee members will be requested to review the textbooks and submit their reports within one-and-a-half months to the IHC executive committee. Once approved by the executive committee, the review reports will be made public.

Ms Moosvi said the IHC was not being selective. It could basically look at the history books in English because of the limitations each language imposed and lack of resources.

7 JAN 2003

THE TIMES OF INDIA

Vajpayee defends 'rewriting' history

Statesman News Service

MUMBAI, Jan. 6. — The Prime Minister today blasted Opposition parties for criticising the government's policy of rewriting history. He said the policy was overdue. "It was time students got a right perspective of education."

"For years, they (the present Opposition) misinterpreted history. We are trying to put it in the right perspective. They are accusing us of saffronising it," Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee said. He was laying the foundation of Vivekananda Education Society's new complex being raised in memory of BJP leader Hashu Advani.

Stressing the need to project the country's history in its right perspective, the Prime Minister said: "The idea of rewriting history text books was not laced with any vested interests or malicious objectives, as was being alleged by the Opposition."



The Prime Minister called upon the private sector to invest in the field of education and said it was time for the "selfless and patriotic educators" to come forward to ensure that education was given its due place in the country.

Lamenting the lack of dedication and determi-

nation among educators, Mr Vajpayee said the government required the support and initiative of the private sector to implement the policy of "each one, teach one".

The Prime Minister regretted that the government's efforts to provide education to all have proved woefully inadequate for want of financial resources. "It's time that those filled with zeal, selfless-motivation and dedication come forward to cater to the changing demands in education."

Though education had become a fundamental right following an amendment in the Constitution, the nation's dream of ensuring 100 per cent literacy could come true through the support and joint partnership of private sector, the Prime Minister said. The temples of learning should not merely restrict themselves to producing degree holders but infuse students with culture and a strong value system.

'WHY OPPOSE CORRECT CHANGES IN HISTORY TEXTBOOKS?'

Opposition placing hurdles in Govt.'s path: PM

By Mahesh Vijapurkar

MUMBAI, JAN. 6. The Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, today took exception to the manner in which the Opposition put up hurdles when the Government was doing the correct thing and cited their criticism of changes in history textbooks as a case in point.

Whenever "we attempt to go in the right direction, we face difficulties". When some changes were made in the history textbooks to convey the correct picture about our past to the students, "we have been accused of distorting it. You distorted it for years," he told the Opposition.

Mr. Vajpayee was speaking after laying the foundation for a memorial complex for the late Hashu Advani, a former State Minister and one of the oldest BJP workers who helped set up a massive educational complex with voluntary effort. It has 24 institutions now from crèche to post-graduate colleges.

Mr. Vajpayee conceded that though the Government was in-

involved in furthering education and literacy, a lot more remained to be done by the voluntary sector. The Government could take pride on bringing down the illiteracy levels, but "each one, teach one" would bring remarkable results for the country.

He said that while the Government continued to do its bit, it was time the citizens themselves responded and worked

with commitment and a sense of purpose, because the administration alone could not be expected to do everything with its meagre resources. Education was one such area where despite the Government's active participation, people needed to get involved.

There were a whole lot of youngsters who wanted to benefit from the developments in science and technology but of-

ten lacked the means or access. "Even if some children voluntarily opt to work, the employer should pay attention to educate them enough at least to read and write one's own name," he said and hoped that the practice of affixing one's thumb impression would come to an end.

In the years since Independence, India should have been freed of the scourge of illiteracy but it did not happen.

In educational institutions, the focus should not be on admissions, degrees and certificates alone but on developing the person's personality to enable him or her to do things positive, Mr. Vajpayee said.

He applauded the Vivekanand Education Society for its commitment to carry on its work without the Government's help and dwelt at length on education and the constructive role such organisations can play. Why was it that Indians living overseas did better than Indians here, he asked. "Perhaps, there is something wrong with the air and the water."

See also Page 12

'By science, not by wishful thinking'

MUMBAI, JAN. 6. The age-old lullaby on the splendour of the moon was briefly recited by the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, to drive home the need for scientific temper.

Chandamama aayega, lekin vigyan se, kewal ichaon se nahin (the moon will descend but through science and not through wishes alone), Mr. Vajpayee said referring to the popular verse, a favourite among children. Mr. Vajpayee was speaking at a function after laying the foundation for an educational complex here today.

He said India had helped to produce the "best brains" but they had chosen to invest their intellect outside the country. — PTI

7 JAN 2003

History Congress panel to examine NCERT textbooks

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, DEC. 31. The Indian History Congress has decided to set up a committee to examine the new history textbooks brought out by the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT).

The Congress — which concluded its 63rd annual session in Amritsar on Monday — also urged the State Governments which have decided not to introduce the NCERT texts in their schools to review their own books and correct the errors.

Unanimous resolutions to this effect were passed at the three-day session which for the first time in a decade was organised without financial support from the Ministry of Human Resource Development.

The decision to review the textbooks was taken in view of the fears expressed in various quarters about the departure from the secular approach by the NCERT in the new history texts it has brought out for Classes VI, IX

and XI. Also, the resolution takes note of reports in the press that elementary requirements of impartiality when dealing with religious, linguistic and cultural traditions had been given the go-by.

The committee will be expected to submit its report within a month-and-a-half.

Should it be approved by the executive committee of the Congress, the report will be sent to the authorities concerned.

Meanwhile, welcoming the decision of various State Governments to reject the NCERT textbooks, the Congress appealed to these States to review their own texts and correct errors, if any.

"This will be a strong complementary step to their decision on the new NCERT textbooks." It has requested all other State Governments to follow suit.

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1 JAN 2003

Panel against English before class V

Statesman News Service

KOLKATA, Dec. 31. — It's back to square one. The school education committee under the chairmanship of Prof. Ranjugopal Mukhopadhyay commissioned by the state government has said English should not be taught to students before they reach Class V.

But the committee has refrained from making a formal proposal in this regard. Currently, English is taught from Class III following the recommendations of the Pabitra Sarkar Committee in 1999.

Among the committee's major proposals are "integrated approach" in teaching science and social science subjects till class VIII and enhancing the scope for vocational training at the higher secondary level with a separate board to administer this non-formal mode.

The 14-member committee, set up in September 2001 to suggest measures

to revamp school curricula, submitted its report to school education minister Mr Kanti Biswas today, the deadline.

"While framing the opinion about English, the only criteria that was relevant to us was the feasibility of a proper learning of the language. Students cannot learn a new language unless they have a firm grasp on their mother tongue. Learning English would require an added effort from students, especially those who choose non-formal modes of education," Prof. Mukhopadhyay said. "We have acknowledged the observations made by the Kothari and the Ashok Mitra Commissions."

"English must be taught and taught well. No matter which class it is introduced at, its success would depend upon the teaching process, syllabus and quality of text books. A research should be made on this," he added. The decision would have to be taken by the government after a

review is made in 2004 on the effect of its introduction in class III, he said.

"We have proposed the integration of the science disciplines till class VIII. In the social science subjects, we have suggested changing the name of History into History & Civics and that of Geography into Geography & Economics," the professor said. Emphasising on a decentralised survey on need-based courses, He said: "Stress should be laid on increasing vocational training courses after class X and options of upward mobility in the respective courses should be ensured at college level."

"On a request from the minorities commission, we have recommended extending teaching of third language from class VI to VIII in place of the existing two-year scheme and also suggested making Bengali/Nepali as compulsory third language for students who don't learn them as first or second language."