



International
Column'



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Martvili - Georgia
>> Contd. p.2..



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>> Contd. p.5..

Rahul backs injured students, warns action against responsible



■ **EJ - Ashu Tyagi**
Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi on Wednesday accused Delhi Police of assaulting student activists and Youth Congress workers detained during protests against alleged electoral irregularities, claiming that a Delhi University student from Kerala had lost hearing in one ear after being struck by personnel. Meeting injured protesters and addressing a press conference, Gandhi condemned the alleged mistreatment, urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi not to obstruct peaceful demonstrations

The world will need 50 million more teachers by 2030 , a huge challenge for global education



■ **EJ - Agency/ Ravi Arya**
The global education system is facing a major challenge as countries strive to provide quality education to every child. According to UNESCO, the world will need approximately 50 million additional teachers by 2030 to achieve universal access to education and meet growing educational demands. The shortage of teachers has emerged as a critical concern for governments, educational institutions and policymakers. While many countries are investing in modern classrooms, digital learning platforms and innovative teaching methods, the availability of qualified and trained teachers remains essential

The perspective of the Education Jagat
The global teacher shortage is a reminder that the future of education depends not only on buildings, infrastructure and digital facilities, but also on the people who educate the next generation. As the world moves towards the 2030 education targets, ensuring an adequate supply of qualified teachers must become a policy priority. Investing in teachers is ultimately an investment in students, society and the future of humanity. the availability of qualified and trained teachers remains essential

to ensuring meaningful learning outcomes. Teachers play a central role in shaping students' knowledge, skills, confidence and future opportunities. Without an adequate number of trained educators, even the most advanced educational infrastructure may fail to deliver the desired results. Overcrowded classrooms, increased workloads and limited individual attention can adversely affect students' academic performance. UNESCO's global education data highlights the urgent need for countries to strengthen teacher recruitment, professional training and retention strategies. Improving working conditions, offering appropriate professional development opportunities and ensuring respect for the teaching profession are equally important steps towards addressing the challenge. The issue is particularly significant for developing countries, where expanding access to education must go hand in hand with maintaining educational quality. Governments need to adopt long-term policies that encourage talented individuals to enter the teaching profession and provide existing teachers with the support necessary to perform effectively. >> Contd. p.4..

US suspends Cognizant, Infosys, TCS, Wipro, HCL from Green Card process



■ **EJ News - Agency**
The US government has suspended several major technology companies from the Permanent Labor Certification (PERM) programme, a key step in the employment-based green card process, amid allegations of abuse and fraud in US visa programmes. US Vice-President JD Vance announced the action alongside Labor Secretary Keith Sonderling, who said the companies affected include Cognizant, Infosys, Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), Wipro, HCL and Capgemini. Microsoft and Adobe were also suspended, with the Department of Labor citing multiple federal investigations. Sonderling said: "I am hereby suspending from the Permanent Labor Certification Program some of the largest IT outsourcing firms in the world — Cognizant, Infosys, Tata, Wipro, HCL, and Capgemini." The PERM programme is administered by the US Department of Labor. It generally requires an employer sponsoring a foreign worker for permanent residence to show that there are not sufficient qualified US workers available for the job and that employing the foreign worker will not adversely affect wages and working conditions. PERM is one of the main stages before an employer can proceed with an employment-based green card application. The action does not mean that employees of the affected companies automatically lose their H-1B visas or existing green >> Contd. p.4..



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and promised accountability for those responsible, from senior political leaders to police constables. The protests were organised by the National Students' Union of India (NSUI), the Congress's student wing, and the Indian Youth Congress against the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls. Demonstrators have also demanded the resignation of Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar. Athira, a Delhi University student from Kerala, alleged that police personnel repeatedly struck her face after she requested a female constable while being detained. Gandhi claimed the assault left her deaf in one ear. Another NSUI activist accused a woman constable of grabbing her neck, slapping her and scratching her face inside a police bus. She alleged that her earring became embedded in her ear during >> Contd. p.4..

Artificial Intelligence: Opportunities and Challenges

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is one of the most important and rapidly developing technologies in the modern world. It is already used in many areas of our daily lives, including education, healthcare, business, transportation and entertainment. AI helps people solve problems more quickly, analyze large amounts of information and make better decision.

One of the greatest advantages of AI is that it solves time and improves efficiency. For example, doctors use AI to help detect diseases earlier, teachers, use it to create learning materials and businesses use it to improve customer service. Students can also use AI to learn new subjects, practice languages and complete research more effectively. Educational systems is transforming traditional teaching and learning methods, promoting personalized instruction and increasing to quality education. Intelligent systems can analyze learners knowledge levels, learning pace, strength, weaknesses and interests, enabling them to provide tailored educational materials and adaptive learning activities. This personalized approach enhances both learning outcomes and student motivation.

Furthermore, AI simplifies many aspects of teachers' professional responsibilities. It can automatically assess tests and assignments, monitor students'



academic progress and regenerate instructional resources and perform various administrative workload and allow them to focus more on instructional planning, student support and meaningful classroom interaction. AI can automatically grade assignments and quizzes, provide immediate feedback.

Despite its numerous benefits, the use of AI in education presents several challenges. Researches highlights concerns related to data privacy, algorithmic bias, academic integrity and the potential overreliance of students on AI technologies. therefore, the successful implementation of AI requires ethical guidelines, teacher training, transparent policies and

responsible integration into educational practice.

Overall, current research suggests that artificial intelligence should not replace teachers, but rather serve as a powerful educational tool that supports high-quality instruction.

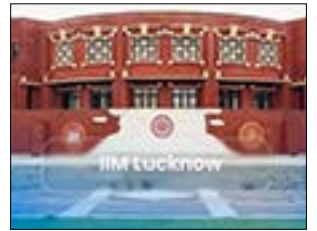
However, AI also brings several challenges. Some people worry that it may replace human jobs in future. There also concerns about privacy, data security, and the spread of false information created by AI. For these reasons, it is important to develop and use AI responsibly and ethically. If students use AI to complete tasks instead of developing their own ideas and solving problems independently, their critical-thinking and learning skills may be affected.

In conclusion, Artificial Intelligence represents both an unprecedented opportunity and a complex challenge. Its ability to drive innovation and improve quality of life is undeniable; long-term success depends on responsible development, ethical governance and collaboration among governments, researchers, businesses and society. By balancing technological progress with human values, AI can become a powerful force for sustainable and include global development. Its responsible and effective integration into education has the potential to improve teaching quality, innovation and create a more inclusive, efficient and learner-centered educational environment capable of meeting the demands of the twenty-first century. Artificial Intelligence plays an increasingly important role in supporting teachers by improving to quality and efficiency of education. AI-powered tools help educators automate administrative tasks, personalize learning experience and identify learning gaps. Moreover, AI provides valuable insights through data analysis, enabling teachers to make informed instructional decisions. Rather than replacing teachers, AI serves as a powerful assistant that enhances teaching practices and allows educators to focus more on creativity, critical thinking and meaningful interaction with students. AI should not be viewed simply as either beneficial or harmful. Its impact largely depends on how it is designed and used. The most effective approach it is to combine the capabilities of AI with human intelligence, critical thinking, creativity and the professional expertise of teachers.



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IIM Lucknow launches MBA in Family Business; first batch to begin in July 2027



EJ- Lucknow

The Indian Institute of Management (IIM) Lucknow has launched a Master of Business Administration (MBA) programme in Family Business for business owners and the next generation of family enterprise leaders.

The two-year MBA in Family Business is designed to help participants learn the management capabilities required to carry forward family legacies, explore leadership qualities and build enterprises.

With six family business labs, conducted across the six trimesters, the programme will guide participants through enterprise diagnosis, vision and strategy, succession, leadership transition, innovation and venture investing.

As per the announcement by IIM Lucknow, the last date to apply for the MBA in Family Business programme Phase 1 is December 31, 2026, while for Phase 2 it is April 2, 2027. The first batch is scheduled to begin in July 2027.

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Every Learner Needs Sunshine to Flourish!

(We must remember that being comfortable is not always the same as growing. A familiar environment may protect us from uncertainty, but it may also prevent us from discovering our strengths.)

The flowerpots I received as gifts after delivering a few expert talks recently taught me an unexpected lesson about life, personal growth and the importance of the right environment. What initially appeared to be a simple gesture of appreciation eventually became a powerful reminder of how our surroundings can influence our potential.

After reaching home, I carefully placed the flowerpots inside the rooms and tried to keep the plants alive by watering them regularly. Since the plants were fresh, they remained beautiful for a few days. I assumed that providing water and keeping them safe indoors would be enough. After all, what more could a plant possibly need?

However, slowly and gradually, the plants began to lose their freshness. Their leaves started looking dull, and the flowers showed signs of decay. Despite my attempts to care for them, their condition continued to deteriorate. Eventually, my children decided to shift the pots outside. One of them was placed near a window where it could receive sunlight and fresh air. And then, something wonderful happened!

The plants began to recover. Their leaves looked healthier, and new flowers started sprouting. The same plants that had struggled inside the rooms began showing signs of life when exposed to a more suitable environment. Watching this transformation, I found myself reflecting on



a simple but powerful thought: sometimes, what we need is not more care, but the right environment to grow. Perhaps the plants were not weak. Perhaps they were simply in the wrong place.

This small observation opened the doors to several bigger questions. How many individuals struggle not because they lack talent, intelligence or commitment, but because they remain confined to environments that limit their growth? How many students, professionals and aspiring entrepreneurs have the potential to

flourish but are never given enough freedom, exposure or opportunity? The answers, I believe, can be found in our everyday lives.

I have been living away from my home in Tral, Kashmir, for the last 16 years. This journey has given me opportunities to interact with people from different backgrounds, understand different perspectives, experience professional challenges and learn lessons that cannot always be acquired within the familiar boundaries of home.

Living away from home is not always easy. It brings its own share of struggles, loneliness, responsibilities, disappointments and uncertain-

ties. There are moments when we miss our families, familiar surroundings, language, local food and the comfort of being among people who understand us without requiring lengthy explanations. Sometimes, even a simple cup of tea with family feels more valuable than an expensive dinner elsewhere!

However, stepping outside our familiar surroundings also teaches us independence. We learn to make decisions, manage resources, solve problems, accept differences and deal with situations that do not always go according to plan.



Dr. Shahid Amin
Consultant, AIMA
Indore - India

Over the years, I have also observed friends who moved outside their hometowns and comfort zones. Many developed remarkable confidence, adaptability and resilience. They learned to face professional setbacks, celebrate achievements without becoming complacent and manage uncertainty with greater maturity.

Of course, geographical distance alone does not guarantee personal growth. A person can travel across continents and still refuse to learn anything new. Similarly, someone can remain in their hometown and continue to explore the world through ideas, relationships and experiences. The real difference lies not in how far we travel, but in how willing we are to move beyond what we already know.

When we remain confined to the same surroundings, the same people and the same routines, we may gradually begin to believe that the world is no bigger than what we already know. Stepping outside challenges these assumptions. It introduces us to different ways of thinking, working and

living. Every new experience has something to teach us. Some experiences bring success and confidence; others bring disappointment and humility. Both are valuable. Success teaches us what may work, while failure often teaches us what needs to change.

Just like plants, human beings need nourishment. But our nourishment comes not only from food and shelter; it also comes from experiences, challenges, relationships, freedom and opportunities to discover our potential. Sometimes, all we need is a change of surroundings, a new responsibility, a different conversation or the courage to try something unfamiliar.

We must remember that being comfortable is not always the same as growing. A familiar environment may protect us from uncertainty, but it may also prevent us from discovering our strengths. My flowerpots reminded me that growth cannot always be forced through additional effort. Sometimes, the answer is to change the conditions in which that effort is being made.

The same plant that struggled inside a room began to flourish when it received sunlight. Perhaps we, too, need to identify the environments that nourish us and have the courage to move away from those that restrict us. Give yourself permission to explore, learn, make mistakes and grow. Sometimes, the first step towards transformation is simply stepping outside. And this lesson has another important dimension—one that extends far beyond personal life and reaches directly into our workplaces, leadership practices and organisational cultures.

Registration begins for December 2026 UGC NET and joint CSIR-UGC NET Exams



EJ - New Delhi

Registrations have commenced for the University Grants Commission National Eligibility Test (UGC NET) and the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR)-UGC NET exams slated to take place in December 2026, the National Testing Agency (NTA) said.

The NTA also announced that the Biotechnology exam has been

merged with the Life Sciences exam of CSIR UGC NET exam in the upcoming exam.

The UGC-NET exam is slated to take place from December 14 to 19. In an official release, the NTA said the application process had commenced on October 8 and applications can be submitted up to 11.50 pm on October 28. "Eligible candidates aspiring for Junior

Research Fellowship, Assistant Professorship and PhD are advised to complete their applications before the last date," it said.

The CSIR-UGC NET exam is scheduled for December 19, 22 and 27. In another statement, the NTA said, the application window for it began on Wednesday (October 7) and will continue till November 5 (11.50 pm). This exam determines eligibility for JRF, Assistant Professor (lectureship) and Ph.D admissions in the fields of science and technology.

The NTA also said that the Biotechnology Eligibility Test (DBT-BET0 and CSIR-NET Life Sciences have been merged into a single examination from the December 2026 exam. The new discipline will be called the Life Sciences & Biotechnology (LS & BT). The revised syllabus was available in the CSIR information bulletin, it said.

Parliamentary panel proposes major NTA reforms, calls for question-setters to be isolated to prevent paper leaks



EJ News - New Delhi

The parliamentary panel tasked with strengthening the National Testing Agency (NTA), which conducts some of India's most important competitive examinations, has called for a parliamentary framework to ensure the agency's accountability, a shift to computer-based testing for medical entrance examinations, substantial investment in question banks and the isolation of question-setters until examinations conclude to prevent paper leaks.

The 382nd report of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Education, Women, Children, Youth and Sports, titled Reforms and Strengthening of the National Testing Agency, was presented to the Chairperson of the Rajya Sabha and forwarded to the Speaker of the Lok Sabha on October 9. Constituted on September 26, 2025, under the chairmanship of MP Mukul Wasnik, the committee comprises 31 Lok Sabha members and nine Rajya Sabha members, apart from five Secretariat officials.

The 44-page report describes the NTA as "the gateway for the higher education system in the

country", as it conducts major public examinations such as JEE-Mains, NEET-UG, UGC-NET and CUET. Around 1.2 crore students sit these examinations annually. The cancellation of NEET-UG 2026, despite various security measures introduced following the NEET-UG 2024 controversy, calls for greater procedural and institutional reforms, the report said.

Given the agency's significant responsibilities and the need to coordinate with multiple stakeholders, the committee said its organisational structure should reflect the scale of its duties.

"Its organising structure may be finalised such that the resources and accountability structures of the NTA are in correspondence with the responsibilities with which it has been entrusted. In doing so, the Department may introduce an appropriate parliamentary framework that ensures the NTA's accountability to Parliament," it recommended.

The report places considerable emphasis on the creation of question banks.

"Investment in question banks

is the most viable defence against paper leaks in the long run. The repeated use of the same question sets or the practice of having examiners set new question papers every year can pose a risk to the integrity of the examination process," the committee said.

It called for investment in a large, diverse and continuously updated question bank from which examination papers could be prepared without question-setters knowing the final questions in advance.

Under the computer-based testing (CBT) model, question papers would not need to be printed and transported to examination centres. "Accordingly, the final question papers should be set very close to the examination, with questions drawn from the question bank using digital tools and vetted only by experts," it recommended.

The committee also stressed the need for "strict quarantine and sequestering of the final paper-vetters until the conclusion of the examination". Experts from reputed educational institutions, including the IITs, IIMs and AIIMS, should be engaged to develop question banks and undertake translation work.

"The NTA must also develop a system to check the track record of these experts to establish their integrity and rule out any conflict of interest (e.g. owners or faculty members of private coaching centres, family members sitting the examination, etc.) before re-

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4 Greater Manchester Universities offer £10,000 scholarships to Indian students



EJ - New Delhi

Four universities in Greater Manchester will offer GREAT Scholarships 2027 to Indian students planning to pursue one-year taught postgraduate courses in the UK. The scholarships provide a minimum of £10,000 towards tuition fees for the 2027-28 academic year, with courses scheduled to begin in autumn 2027.

The participating institutions are Manchester Metropolitan University, the Royal Northern College of Music, the University of Manchester and the University of Salford. The scholarships are part of the GREAT Scholarships programme, jointly funded by the UK government's GREAT Britain Campaign, the British Council and participating higher education institutions.

The awards are intended for Indian students who want to pursue postgraduate education in the UK across a range of disciplines. Subject areas covered by the wider

scholarship programme include finance, marketing, business, psychology, science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), design and humanities, as well as arts, music and dance. The courses available will vary by university.

Each scholarship provides at least £10,000 towards the tuition fees of an eligible one-year taught postgraduate course. The award is a contribution towards tuition fees and should not be treated as a full scholarship covering all study and living expenses. Students will need to check the course fee at their chosen university and make arrangements for any remaining tuition costs, accommodation, travel and other expenses.

To apply, candidates must have received an offer of admission from one of the participating universities and meet the entry requirements for their selected course. Students should check

the individual university's scholarship and admissions pages for details of eligible programmes, application deadlines, selection criteria and any additional conditions. The announcement does not specify a common application deadline or a single application process for all four institutions.

The scholarships are for the 2027-28 academic year and are intended to support students enrolling in postgraduate taught programmes from autumn 2027. A taught postgraduate degree generally involves structured coursework and assessments, unlike a research degree centred primarily on an independent research project.

The four participating universities offer options across different academic and professional fields. Manchester Metropolitan University and the University of Salford offer programmes across areas including business, management and other applied disciplines. The University of Manchester offers postgraduate study across a broad range of academic fields, while the Royal Northern College of Music specialises in music education and performance.

Receiving a scholarship offer will depend on meeting the requirements set by the relevant university and the GREAT Scholarships programme.

NTA to begin JEE Main registration soon; Exam scheduled for January 2027



EJ - New Delhi

The National Testing Agency (NTA) will begin the registration process for the Joint Entrance Examination - Main (JEE Main) shortly. It recently released the examination schedule for nine national-level exams that the agency will conduct in the first quarter of 2027, including JEE Main and the Common University Entrance Test - Postgraduate (CUET PG).

JEE Main ranks determine admissions to BTech, BArch and BPlanning programmes at premier institutes such as the National Institutes of Technology (NITs), Indian Institutes of Information Technology (IIITs) and Government-Funded Techni-

cal Institutes (GFTIs). The exam is held in two sessions — one in January and another in the first week of April each year.

In a public notice, the NTA specified that JEE Main will be held on six days in January — January 22, 23, 24, 28, 29 and 30. January 31 will be reserved as a buffer day.

IIT Delhi will conduct the JEE

(Advanced) exam next year, which determines admissions to the Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs).

The NTA also announced that the CUET PG exam will be held over 17 days in March 2027, on March 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 24 and 25. The buffer days will be March 30 and 31.

The dates announced for the other exams to be held in January are as follows: Army Cadets College on January 4; SHRESHTA (NETS), a residential education programme for students in high schools in targeted areas, on January 10; and the NIFT Entrance Examination, also on January 10. In February, the NTA will conduct the Common Management Admission Test (CMAT) on February 7 and the National Initia-

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73% of Tele-MANAS users are aged 18-45; exam stress, workplace, and relationship issues top concerns



■ EJ - New Delhi

A whopping 73.2% of young and working-age people aged 18-45 have availed Tele-Manas services, a central government mental health helpline, said Union Health Ministry officials.

The range of concerns reported by callers on the national toll-free helpline 14416, Tele-MANAS, is mostly related to emotional distress, exam-related stress, workplace and relationship issues, anxiety, and sleep disturbances, they added.

Officials said these calls demonstrate the importance of accessible mental health support in everyday life.

Since its launch on October 10, 2022, on the occasion of World Mental Health Day, Tele MANAS has received 47,75,644 calls and operates 53 cells across all 36 states and Union Territories as of October 2026.

"This extensive reach reflects the growing importance of accessible, technology-enabled mental health services in addressing diverse mental health needs across the country," officials added.

An analysis of 13,35,275 recorded caller profiles shows that women account for 43.78% or

5,84,587 callers, while men account for 54.18% or 7,23,427.

"The substantial participation of women highlights the role of telephone-based counselling in providing a convenient and supportive avenue for seeking mental healthcare," they added.

Officials said the service is particularly significant for people residing in rural, remote and underserved areas, where access to specialised mental healthcare facilities may be limited.

"By offering a confidential and supportive platform, Tele-MANAS is also helping address hesitation associated with seeking mental health assistance and encouraging individuals to reach out early," they added.

Beyond initial counselling, the programme connects people with specialised mental health professionals and appropriate referral services when needed, helping ensure continuity of care through linkages with the wider public healthcare system.

"The increasing utilisation of Tele-MANAS highlights the importance of having a readily accessible platform where individuals can seek support without fear of stigma or discrimination,"

they added.

Tele-MANAS provides free, confidential, round-the-clock mental health counselling and support, enabling people to seek professional assistance easily, regardless of their geographical location or socioeconomic background.

It is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and offers multilingual support, making it easier for people to seek help at a time and place convenient to them.

"Through Tele-MANAS, the Union Health and Family Welfare Ministry is reinforcing a simple but important message: mental health support need not be distant, difficult or inaccessible. Help is available, and reaching out can begin with a phone call," the officials further said.

Mental health services have also been integrated into the Comprehensive Primary Health Care package offered through over 1.83 lakh Ayushman Arogya Mandirs across the country.

Through these facilities, primary healthcare teams screen for and early-identify mental health concerns, provide psychosocial support and follow-up care, and facilitate referrals to higher healthcare facilities when necessary.

This year's World Mental Health Day global theme is 'Lived experiences heard: real voices, real change,' which underscores the importance of listening to individuals with lived experience of mental health conditions and ensuring their voices help shape responsive mental health policies and services.

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), more than a billion people live with a mental health condition globally.

IISER and University of Melbourne partner to offer dual degrees



■ EJ - New Delhi

The Indian Institute of Science Education and Research (IISER), Tirupati, and the University of Melbourne in Australia have entered into a partnership which ensures a dual bachelor's degree in Science for a student from both institutions.

The first two years of the four-year Bachelor of Science Integrated (Honours) course needs to be completed by an Indian student at IISER, while the remaining two years have to be completed at the University of Melbourne.

Announcing details on the new dual degree at the Melbourne Global Centre in Delhi, Pro Vice-Chancellor (Global) Professor Frank Vetere said the new de-

The world...

Technology and artificial intelligence may support classroom learning, but they cannot fully replace the human guidance, mentorship and emotional understanding that teachers provide. A balanced approach combining technological advancement with strong teacher support is therefore essential.

US suspends...

Instead, it affects the companies' ability to use the PERM process for employment-based permanent residency. It could therefore delay green card applications for foreign workers whose employers have not yet completed the labor-certification stage.

Notably, the announcement is part of a wider crackdown by the Donald Trump administration on employment-based immigration. Vance accused companies of using H-1B workers to replace American employees and said the programme had become "rife with fraud".

The Vice President specifically criticised Microsoft, saying: "The message to Microsoft is you've got to hire American workers."

He alleged that Microsoft had laid off about 6,000 American workers while receiving thousands of H-1B approvals and filing PERM applications.

Indian technology companies are particularly affected because Indian nationals account for a large share of H-1B workers, while firms such as TCS, Infosys, Wipro, HCL and Cognizant have historically been significant users of the US employment-visa system.

The Labor Department's action is part of ongoing federal investigations into alleged misuse of employment-visa programmes.

The companies named in the announcement have not been publicly found guilty of visa fraud as a result of this action; the allegations remain subject to investigation.

gree would create unique opportunities for emerging scientists to gain international experience while developing the skills needed to address complex global challenges.

"Together, the University of Melbourne and IISER Tirupati are fostering a new generation of globally connected scientists equipped to contribute solutions to challenges that transcend national boundaries. India is home to a vibrant and rapidly growing scientific community," the professor said.

Such partnerships will create valuable opportunities for both institutions to learn from one another, share expertise and strengthen research and education links between our countries, he added.

Students can choose from a diverse range of majors including Biotechnology, Chemistry, Ecosystem Science, Environmental Science, Food Science, Genetics, Physics and Plant Science.

IISER Tirupati Director, Professor Santanu Bhattacharya, said this initiative advances the country's mission to exchange knowledge, values, and innovation internationally. "It presents

Rahul backs...

assault. Other protesters claimed they were beaten, kicked in their private parts and transported to distant locations without their phones or money.

Some detainees also alleged that police personnel formatted their mobile phones to erase evidence of the alleged violence. These claims could not be independently verified, and a Delhi Police response was not immediately available.

Gandhi later met injured students at Sonia Gandhi's 10, Jan path residence, assuring them of the Congress's support. He urged protesters to preserve photographs and videos documenting alleged misconduct.

"This is one voice, that of India, and you are standing before this protest and voice," Gandhi said, appealing to the prime minister not to stand against the demonstrators.

During the interaction, a student played Mahatma Gandhi's favourite hymn, Vaishnava Jana To, on the flute. He said, "nafrat ka jawab pyar se diya jaega", meaning hatred would be answered with love.

NTA to...

tive for Technical Teachers Training (NITTT) Part 1 on February 26 and 27.

Apart from CUET PG, NITTT Part 2 will be held on March 5 and 7.

"The dates are tentative and may undergo changes owing to administrative, academic, statutory, logistical or other unforeseen circumstances," the NTA said.

students with an exceptional opportunity to engage in research-led learning across two diverse academic settings, enabling them to establish international networks that will define their future scientific endeavours," Bhattacharya observed.

Professor Moira O'Bryan, Dean of Science, University of Melbourne, said the initiative represents an important investment in the future of science education and strengthens ties between Australia and India. "Students will gain the benefits of an international education grounded in academic excellence and research-led learning."

An official release said graduates will also be well positioned to pursue postgraduate study, with opportunities to progress to a master's degree and potentially complete their qualification in a shorter timeframe through advanced standing. "Students enrolled in the degree automatically join the Science Global Scholars Program. The program is designed to strengthen research collaboration, support talent mobility and create new opportunities for innovation and scientific exchange," it said.

It added that the expanded partnership extends beyond education. The University of Melbourne and IISER Tirupati will in November jointly host, Frontiers of Science for Global Advances – a series of public events across India that will bring leading researchers, students, educators and members of the public together.

Parliamentary...

cruiting them," it added.

The panel reiterated its recommendation to shift NEET-UG to a computer-based test format, which would require substantial investment in government-owned CBT infrastructure, particularly in Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities and rural areas.

It said the recommendation of the High-Level Committee of Experts to establish 1,000 secure government CBT centres should be implemented according to a clear, phased timeline. The NTA should also financially support the establishment of medium-sized IT laboratories in schools and colleges, with at least one centre in every district, the committee recommended.

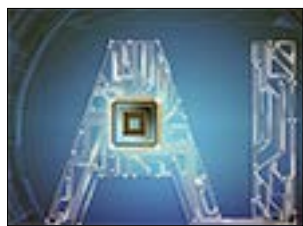
The panel also called for an increase in staffing at the NTA, noting that the agency had filled only 41 per cent of its sanctioned posts, with 23 officers occupying 39 sanctioned positions.

Expressing concern over the growth of the private coaching industry around competitive examinations, the committee said it contributed to severe socioeconomic inequalities. Students from wealthier families can afford coaching fees ranging from Rs 2 lakh to Rs 5 lakh, while those from less affluent backgrounds often cannot, it noted.

The panel also made two recommendations on examination procedures. Students who arrive a few minutes late at examination centres should be allowed to sit the examination after signing an undertaking recording their late arrival, but without being granted additional time.

It also recommended allowing invigilators a 15-minute window before or after the examination to complete the necessary formalities.

AICTE steps up AI skilling initiatives to make students industry-ready



■ EJ - New Delhi

To ensure that students graduating from technical and professional colleges and their faculty are equipped with the Artificial Intelligence skills needed to meet industry requirements, the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) has been accelerating relevant changes across Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs) in the country.

AICTE has the authority to approve courses in nearly 14,000 technical, professional and management institutes, both government and private, across the country.

In an interaction with this newspaper, a senior AICTE official said the council, in collaboration with the Consortium for Technical Education (CTE) in Coimbatore, had taken a major leap towards making students market-ready.

The MoU was signed on September 12 last year. Since then,

the TECHNOVATE Skilling Series has successfully conducted more than 16 hands-on training programmes, benefiting over 850 students and faculty members from Rajasthan and other north-western states.

"Industry 4.0 involves skilling, innovation and talent development among students and faculty members of HEIs through the TECHNOVATE hub initiative at the AICTE Indovation (India plus innovation) Centre in Jaipur," he said.

"These programmes focus on emerging technologies, including Artificial Intelligence (AI), cybersecurity, robotics and Industry 4.0 applications, fostering practical skills, technological competencies and innovation-oriented talent," the academican said.

Recently, AICTE signed MoUs with JNTU Hyderabad and Panjab University, Chandigarh, to establish and operate Indovation Centres on their respective university campuses, fostering closer academia-industry collaboration and the development of regional innovation ecosystems. Building on this success, AICTE and CTE are working towards establishing dedicated skilling labs focusing on AI, cybersecurity,

rity, drones and other emerging technologies at the Jaipur Indovation Centre. "This collaborative initiative aims to develop a sustainable regional hub for emerging technology skilling, experiential learning, innovation and entrepreneurship, enhancing the industry readiness and employability of students and faculty members across HEIs," he said.

AICTE had earlier declared 2025 as the 'Year of Artificial Intelligence', the official specified. Its executive committee had approved the setting up of an AI Factory/Experience Centre at its headquarters to offer an immersive, hands-on experience for students.

"Collaboration with AI-driven companies for real-world exposure and an updated curriculum for Textile Engineering, Electrical Engineering, BBA and BCA have been put in place," the academican said.

AICTE presently has 11 Indovation Centres operating across different cities in India to promote innovation, entrepreneurship, start-up development and technology transfer in higher education institutions (HEIs), thereby strengthening regional innovation ecosystems.

Are We Teaching Students to Learn or Just to Stay Connected?

The Impact of Screen Time, Smartphones, and Digital Distraction on Modern Learning
By an English Language Teacher

Walk into almost any modern classroom and you may notice something unusual. Students are physically present, books are open, a teacher is speaking — yet some students are mentally somewhere else, checking a notification, scrolling through a social media feed, or switching between several digital tasks.

This raises an important question: Are we teaching students to learn, or are we teaching them to stay connected?

Technology has transformed education in remarkable ways. Students can access information instantly, communicate across borders, watch educational videos, practise languages with interactive tools and explore subjects that were once difficult to reach. Digital technology is not the enemy of education.

The real challenge is distraction.

According to the OECD, nearly one in three students reports being distracted by digital devices



in class. At the same time, research shows that moderate and purposeful use of technology can support learning. The problem, therefore, is not simply the presence of screens, but how, when and why they are used.

The Cost of Constant Switching

Learning requires attention. Deep reading, writing, problem-solving and learning a new language all demand mental effort and sustained concentration.

A student who constantly switches between a lesson, messages,

videos and social media is not necessarily multitasking effectively. Instead, attention is repeatedly being interrupted. Even when a phone is not being actively used, the expectation of a notification can compete for attention.

For language learners, this can be particularly important. Building vocabulary, understanding a complex text or producing meaningful written and spoken English requires students to stay with a task long enough for

new knowledge to become part of long-term learning.

Are Schools Going Backwards?

Interestingly, the educational world is beginning to question the idea that more technology automatically means better education.

In 2026, UNESCO reported that 114 education systems — 58% of countries worldwide — had national restrictions or bans on mobile phones in schools. The movement reflects growing concerns about distraction, student well-being and the impact of constant



Eliko Akobia
Educationist
Martvili - Georgia

connectivity.

Some schools are also returning to practices that may appear old-fashioned: printed books, handwriting, face-to-face discussion and device-free periods.

But this is not necessarily a rejection of technology. It may be a move towards balance.

The goal should not be to create technology-free classrooms. The goal should be to create classrooms in which technology serves learning rather than interrupts it.

From Screen Time to Meaningful Time

Perhaps the most important question is not:

“How much screen time do students have?”

but:

“What are students doing with that screen time?”

Creating a presentation, re-

searching a topic, collaborating on a project or practising a language can be meaningful digital learning. Endless scrolling, constant notifications and passive consumption are very different experiences.

Students therefore need something more valuable than simple restrictions: digital self-control. Schools can teach students when to put the phone away, how to manage notifications, how to recognise digital distraction and how to protect periods of deep concentration.

The Teacher Still Matters

Technology can provide information, but it cannot replace the human relationship at the heart of education.

A teacher notices hesitation in a student’s voice. A teacher recognises confusion, encourages curiosity, asks a better question and creates a classroom community. These are not simply technical functions.

Perhaps the future of education is not more technology or less technology.

Perhaps it is **better technology, used with better judgment.**

Students do not need to disconnect from the digital world completely. They need to learn how to live in it without allowing it to control their attention.

And that may be one of the most important lessons schools can teach today:

The ability to focus may become one of the most valuable skills of the digital age.

Indian-Origin students in Canada face uncertainty as government probes private colleges over OSAP funding irregularities

■ EJ - Agency

Students at private career colleges say they’re devastated and their studies are in limbo after the Ontario government paused Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP) payments to anyone enrolled in those institutions while an audit probes potential misuse of the financial aid program within those schools. Colleges and Universities Minister Nolan Quinn announced the pause Tuesday. He also said the province asked provincial police to get involved after a preliminary audit identified “serious concerns” about the integrity of the OSAP system in the private postsecondary sector.

Private career colleges typically offer vocational training for a fee in fields like business and health. The programs can range from dental assistants to skilled trades.

Many students impacted have already started school with their OSAP applications approved.

That includes Hope Beaulieu, a student at North Bay’s CTS Canadian Career College campus who is studying office administration online.

Beaulieu said OSAP funding “was the ticket” to being able to afford her full tuition and buy school materials like textbooks.

Without it, she says she can’t afford to continue her studies, and she worries for her classmates and the future of the program.

“It’s not nothing to re-arrange our lives and take this step,” she said, referring to making the choice to go back to school. “It’s been a shock.”

In an emailed statement Wednesday, Bianca Giacoboni,

spokesperson for the Ministry of Colleges and Universities, said the ministry has seen evidence of systemic issues with OSAP in “recent weeks” within the private college sector.

“At this time, we do not have assurances from the audit team that the issues are not more widespread. That is why we have taken a system-wide approach and paused OSAP funding while the investigations continue,” she said.

The ministry launched targeted inspections of career colleges last year in response to growing concerns around OSAP usage. In August it had accounting firm KPMG begin an audit.

Grace Chan, owner and founder of Sutherland-Chan School of Massage Therapy, says her school has been compliant with OSAP guidelines for decades.

She said it’s unfair to penalize all private career colleges because of a few schools that are currently being investigated for mismanagement, and that the move is frustrating.

“[The] uncertainty, it’s not fair to the students. They planned this career, to come into school, and then this happened,” she said.

Chan says the majority of students who attend her college fund their studies with OSAP. It will be challenging to figure out operations if those students can’t continue their studies, she said, while a select number of students paying out of pocket can still keep going to class.

“It’s a lot to think about and a lot to plan for the sake of the students, but also for the school and how we’re going to manage it,” she said.

“We are just letting [students] continue going to school, we’re



Ontario has paused all OSAP payments for career college students while the audit on alleged misuse of the financial aid program is ongoing. But as CBC’s Lorenda Reddekopp explains, students worry their education is in limbo.

not going to stop because of that ... we are going to continue and start thinking about payment plans for them.”

Chan said she’s hoping that the province can help fast-track audits for schools that have been compliant for decades in order to avoid possibly shuttering programming or operations.

Kiera Hill, a student at Sutherland-Chan who is more than halfway through her studies, called the pause “pretty devastating.”

Hill said that she’s going to try to support herself as best she can to continue with the program, but it may be difficult because it’s unclear if the program will be around long enough for her to finish her studies.

“Everything is up in the air,”

she said.

Career Colleges Ontario, the association representing career colleges, is urging the provincial government to reinstate OSAP loans for students who were already approved for funds and are actively attending in-person classes.

“The integrity of the student assistance system must be protected, but students who enrolled in good faith and are attending legitimate programs must be protected too,” it said.



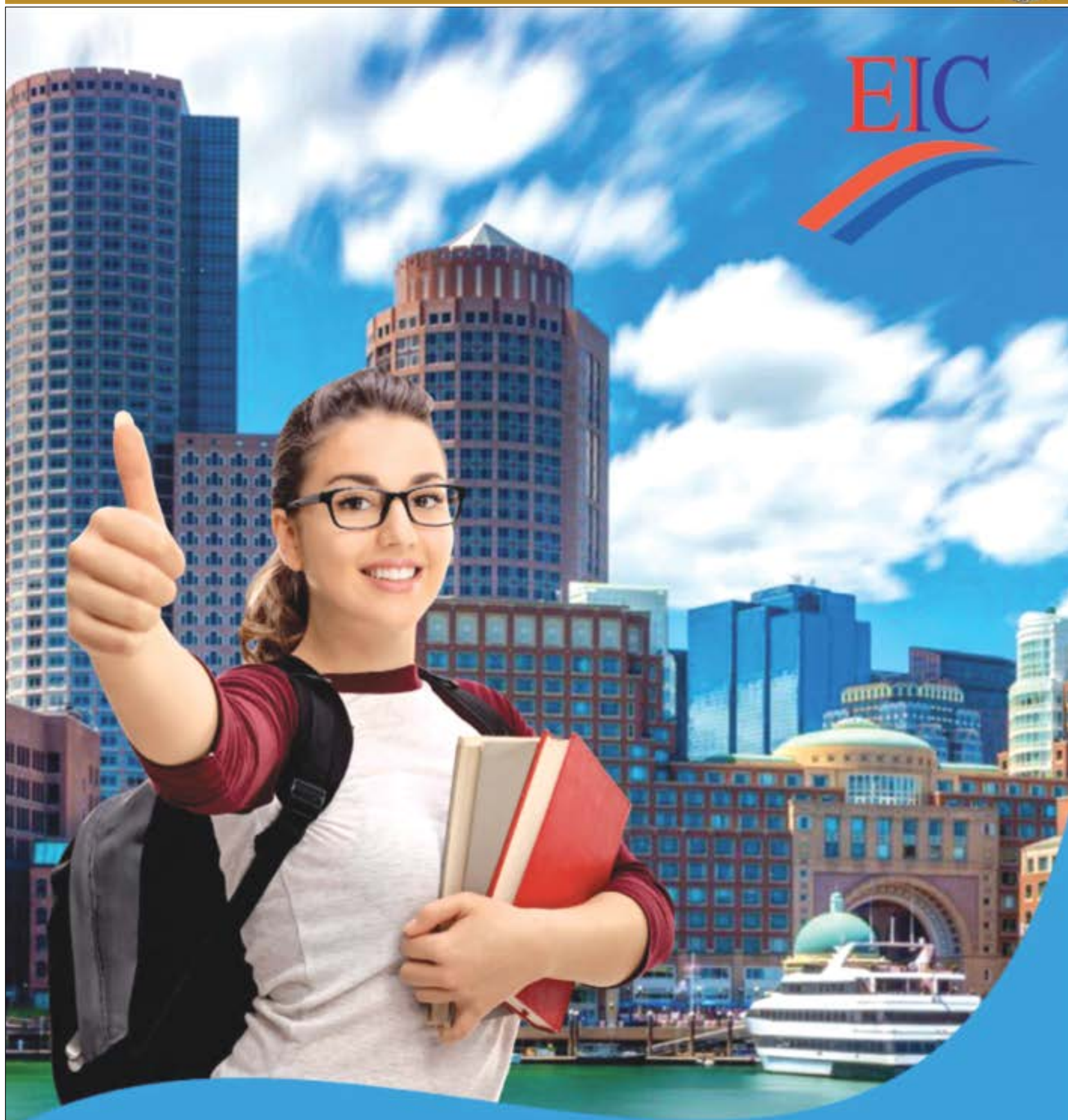
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