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Parl panel says Wangchuk’s HIAL is doing exemplary work, seeks UGC recognition



■ EJ News - New Delhi+

The Himalayan Institute of Alternatives (HIAL), founded by Ladakh educator and activist Sonam Wangchuk, is doing “exemplary” work and should be granted recognition by the University Grants Commission, a Parliamentary panel has noted. In its report tabled in Parliament earlier this week, the committee headed by Congress MP Digvijaya Singh expressed its concern over pending recognition of HIAL by UGC.

Single regulator to replace UGC, AICTE & NCTE



■ EJ News - New Delhi

A Bill to establish a unified regulator for Higher education is expected to be tabled in Parliament next week after receiving approval from the Union Cabinet on Friday, according to the official family of the development. The legislation seeks to overhaul the existing oversight structure by creating a single body that would guide universities and other institutions as they move

Previously greater independence and self-governance. Previously titled the Higher Education Commission of India Bill, the proposal has been renamed the Viksit Bharat Shiksha Adhikshan Bill. The measure flows from the National Education Policy, which called for replacing the University Grants Commission, the All India Council for Technical Education and

the National Council for Teacher Education with one overarching authority. An official said the Bill proposes the creation of a Higher Education Commission of India that would enable institutions “to become independent and self-governing institutions and to promote excellence through a robust and transparent system of accreditation and autonomy.” The official added that the government is preparing to introduce the legislation in Parliament in the coming week. At present, the UGC regulates non-technical higher education, the AICTE oversees technical programs and the NCTE supervises teacher education. Under the proposed structure, medical and law colleges will remain outside the jurisdiction of the new regulator. Officials said the Commission is expected to be responsible for three key functions that include regulation, accreditation and the setting of professional standards across the higher education landscape. Funding, which has often been discussed as a potential

■ Legislation renamed Viksit Bharat Shiksha Adhikshan Bill »Proposal stems from National Education Policy framework
» New regulator to replace UGC, AICTE and NCTE
» Medical and law colleges kept outside its scope
» Funding powers not assigned to the new regulator

fourth area of oversight, will not fall within the new regulator’s mandate for now. According to officials, financial autonomy is proposed to remain with the administrative ministry rather than being brought under the Commission’s purview.

Parliament panel slams NTA for repeated exam errors and seeks ban on blacklisted firms

■ EJ News - New Delhi

A parliamentary committee has urged a stronger shift toward pen-and paper entrance examinations, arguing that several long-running models such as the CBSE board tests and UPSC examinations have maintained leak proof records for years. The recommendation comes amid concerns over the National Testing Agency’s performance, which the panel said had “not inspired much confidence” over the past year.

The committee, chaired by Congress MP Digvijaya Singh, reviewed the NTA’s conduct of competitive exams in 2024 and noted significant disruptions. Of the 14 examinations held that year, at least five encountered serious problems. According to the report, three major tests, UGC NET, CSIR NET and NEET PG, had to be postponed. NEET UG recorded instances of paper leaks and the CUET (UG and PG) results were delayed. The report added that in JEE Main 2025, conducted in January, 12 questions were withdrawn following errors detected in the final answer key.

Such developments, the Standing Committee on Education, Women, Children, Youth and Sports observed, have affected the confidence of students. “The committee therefore recom-



mends that NTA need to quickly get their act together so that such instances, which otherwise are fully avoidable, do not occur in future,” the report stated.

The committee also discussed the security considerations involved in conducting exams. It was informed that pen-and-paper formats are vulnerable to leaks, while computer-based tests can be hacked without easy detection. Despite these challenges, the committee backed a larger reliance on pen-and-paper examinations and advised the NTA to study well-functioning models like the CBSE and UPSC systems and adopt similar safeguards.

For computer-based tests, the panel recommended strict limitations on where they may be conducted. It said such exams should take place only at government or government-controlled centres
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When teachers stop assessing, learners stop succeeding

A failing assessment culture is undermining rural education and the nation will pay the price

Across many rural communities, thousands of learners continue to suffer academically not because they lack potential, but because they are victims of poor assessment practices in the classroom. Assessment is meant to serve as a compass that guides both teachers and learners through the curriculum. Instead, in several rural schools, it has become a missing link that derails young people from the hopes of a successful future.

Assessment is one of the most important components of teaching. Daily informal assessments help teachers understand what learners already know, what they struggle with, and how best to support them. Formal assessments—such as tests and examinations—measure whether learning has taken place at the end of a term or year. Without both, the curriculum loses its backbone.

Yet, in some rural schools, learners can go through an entire term without experiencing meaningful informal assessment. This denies them the opportunity to improve, weakens their academic foundation, and destroys the confidence they need to progress to the next grade. The classroom is where success begins, and where failure is often manufactured.

Teachers carry a profound responsibility. When they neglect assessment, whether through lack of commitment or poor training, the conse-

This is not because children in rural areas lack intelligence, but because the system around them fails to nurture it.

Part of the challenge lies in the

and weaker assessment practices. A teacher trained for the Foundation Phase cannot be expected to perform effectively in the Senior Phase—and vice versa.



quences spill far beyond school walls. Communities across rural South Africa see the effects daily—young people loitering in the streets, dropping out of school, losing hope, and eventually joining the growing ranks of the unemployed.

appointment of teachers. In some schools, recruitment is influenced not by merit, experience, or qualifications, but by personal favour or family ties. As a result, educators are sometimes placed in phases they were never trained to teach, leading to poor content delivery

When the wrong people teach the wrong grades, the entire education chain is disrupted. Learners in the Foundation Phase enter the Intermediate Phase without strong literacy and numeracy skills. This weakness continues into the Senior and FET phases,



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where learners struggle through subjects that require strong foundational knowledge. What emerges is not just poor academic performance, but a ripple effect that harms the socio-economic prospects of entire communities.

Another contributing factor is a loss of interest among some teachers, particularly those close to retirement. While many veteran educators remain dedicated and continue to inspire excellence, others are simply waiting for their final pay cheque. Learners sit in classrooms with teachers who no longer prepare lessons, who no longer innovate, and who no longer believe in the transformative power of education.

In contrast, committed teachers—those who embrace new methods, integrate technology, and design fair and inclusive assessments—are proof that teach-

ing is still a noble profession capable of shaping a nation. These educators show that with proper preparation and passion, learners in rural areas can thrive just as well as those in affluent schools. If rural schools are to produce a generation of critical thinkers and skilled future workers, assessment practices must improve. Teachers must honour their teaching periods, plan lesson activities, and assess learners consistently throughout the year. Schools need fair and transparent recruitment processes that prioritise qualifications and expertise. Learners must be valued in their classrooms and given the opportunities to measure and grow their abilities.

A strong assessment system does more than produce good marks—it builds confidence, shapes character and opens the door to future opportunities. Rural children deserve nothing less than quality teaching that prepares them to compete and succeed in a global society.

Until these issues are addressed, the cycle of poor performance will continue, and South Africa will keep losing the potential of countless young minds whose only mistake was being educated in the wrong environment.

The Flight of a Career: From Take-Off to Touchdown

Every journey tells a story. Some happen on runways, others in classrooms. When we step onto an aircraft, we are not just traveling between two geographical points; we are experiencing a sequence that mirrors life itself—especially the journey of a student shaping their fu-

ture and career. As the boarding call echoes and you step into the cabin, the experience takes a personal turn. This is the moment every student begins their college life—stepping into a new environment, meeting new people, navigating early uncertainties, and finding a seat in

ward. This moment perfectly captures the transition from academics to a professional career. The first job, the first project, the first recognition—each pushes the individual higher, fuelled by ambition and purpose. The climb is steep, the energy intense, and the learning rapid.

After the climb, the aircraft settles



ture and career.

Booking a flight begins with choice—selecting the airline, route, and timing. This, much like the college selection process, is guided by aspirations, possibilities, and dreams. Exploring institutions, filling out applications, and finally securing admission is akin to booking that long-anticipated ticket to one's future. It's a moment filled with hope and expectation.

the larger journey of learning. The engines hum to life, and the plane taxis to the runway—just as a student spends the formative years of study gathering knowledge, skills, and experience, building the momentum that will eventually lift them into the skies of their profession.

Then comes take-off—that exhilarating rush when the nose of the aircraft points sky-

into its cruising altitude. The view stabilizes, the ride smoothens, and a quiet rhythm takes over. In one's career, this phase often signifies stability—the period when experience matures, confidence deepens, and one's role becomes established. Work feels purposeful; growth becomes steady rather than wild.

Eventually, every flight must begin its descent. Not every landing marks an end—sometimes, it's just a transition. In the professional



Pankaj Belwarier
Director Communicatio
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world, this could mean completing a successful tenure, moving to a new organization, or reinventing oneself for a new chapter. Just as the aircraft touches down gracefully to embark on its next route, careers too thrive on the art of renewal—embracing each landing as preparation for another take-off.

Each journey—academic or professional—carries its take-offs and landings. What matters most is not just the destination, but the grace with which we navigate the skies, handle turbulence, and keep faith in the power of flight—our own.

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The Art of Teaching in the Modern Era

Teaching is naturally associated with intelligence, free thinking, and making the right decisions. The teaching profession is connected to my daily life.

Teaching children is good, but what to teach and how to teach is more important. I provide support and advice to students in their learning process. To better serve children and their families,

I often come up with my own lessons, exercises, and projects, deal with my own feelings and emotions, always care about professional development, and share my practical experience with others.

Modern students are proficient



Lela Mikeladze
Educationist
- Georgia



in digital technologies and have the skills to search for information. This in itself is a great challenge for a teacher. Managing a specific situation is a great talent and art for a creative teacher. There is probably no educator in the world who would fulfill all the necessary responsibilities perfectly. Each has their own strengths and weaknesses.

I would tell teachers around the world that they play a huge role in properly raising and educating the next generation.

I am involved in the project

together with the students and I make presentations on behalf of Georgia in order to share practical experience.

At international meetings, we received the best evaluation from colleagues from different countries.

I conduct conversations with students about the goals and objectives of sustainable development. During integration between subjects, I focus on global issues of the world. I create electronic learning resources in the

>> **Contd. p.4..**

IIM Mumbai launches 4-year UG program in Digital Science & Business Management



EJ - Mumbai

IIM Mumbai has announced their undergraduate programme. The institute will offer four-year Bachelor's programme in Digital Science and Business Management that is designed to equip India's youth with advanced digital and managerial capabilities essential for the future of work, as per a statement.

The curriculum, as per IIM-M, blends emerging technologies like Artificial Intelligence, Machine Learning, Data Science, Internet of Things (IoT), and Robotics with core management domains including Operations, Marketing, Finance, and Manufacturing. Designed in full alignment with

the National Education Policy (NEP), the programme offers flexibility through multiple entry and exit options, making it both inclusive and future-oriented.

The four-year old programme is conceptualised with knowledge partners such as C4i4 and several industry collaborators. IIM Mumbai is also engaging with Accenture Strategy to incorporate internship-based learning and real-life industry applications, ensuring students gain hands-on exposure to contemporary digital business challenges.

The institute further shared that discussions are underway with

IMT France to explore international collaboration, offering students global perspectives and opportunities for academic enrichment.

To support this flagship undergraduate programme, IIM Mumbai has received approval from the the Minister of State (MoS) for Civil Aviation and Minister of State for Cooperation, Murlidhar Mohol, for establishing a small campus in Pune. The Pune Municipal Corporation has agreed to provide an existing building, which will be refurbished to operational standards. This facility will serve as an "extension of IIM Mumbai, offering a conducive environment for delivering the UG programme's academic activities."

This year, IIM Bangalore announced the opening of admissions for its new four-year, full-time residential BSc (Hons) programmes in Data Science and Economics. The admission process is closed. IIM Bangalore Undergraduate Admissions Test (IIMB UGAT) will be held on December 13, followed by in-person interviews in January 2026. The institute's final admission offers will be made by February 28, 2026.

Rajasthan faces academic turmoil as five university vice-chancellors are ousted amid protests

EJ News - Jaipur

A major controversy has erupted in Rajasthan after the removal or forced resignation of five university vice-chancellors under the tenure of Governor Haribhau Bagde, who serves as Chancellor of state universities. The actions follow multiple inquiries into alleged financial irregularities, administrative misuse and con-

tentious public remarks, but the departures have also been linked to sustained pressure from the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP). Senior officials in the state's higher education sector said most of the ousters came after persistent protests by the ABVP. While administrative inquiries cited financial mismanagement

and misuse of power, the vice-chancellors and several political observers claimed that the removals were driven by organised campaigns by the ABVP and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS). Four vice-chancellors were removed by the Governor, while another resigned under similar pressure.

Those removed in recent

ICAI CA Exams 2026: Foundation, Inter, & Final May schedule out



EJ - New Delhi

The Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI) has announced the schedule for the CA Foundation, Intermediate, and Final examinations to be held in May 2026. The notification also mentioned that ICAI CA exams will be conducted only if a sufficient number of candidates register.

Candidates can apply for the examinations through ICAI's self-service portal at eservices.icai.org, with the application window open from March 3 to 16, 2026, and a late-fee option available until March 19, 2026. The correction window will remain open from March 20 to 22, 2026.

As per the notification, the CA Final exams will be held for Group 1 on May 2, 4, and 6, 2026, and for Group 2 on May 8,

10, and 12, 2026, while the CA Intermediate exams are scheduled for Group 1 on May 3, 5, and 7, 2026, and Group 2 on May 9, 11, and 13, 2026. The CA Foundation exams will take place on May 14, 16, 18, and 20, 2026. Exam timings vary by paper: Foundation Papers 1 and 2 will be held from 2 pm to 5 pm, Papers 3 and 4 from 2 pm to 4 pm, Intermediate and Final Papers 1 to 5 from 2 pm to 5 pm, and Final Paper 6 from 2 pm to 6 pm.

All candidates, except those appearing for Foundation Papers 3 and 4, will receive a 15 minute advance reading time from 1:45 pm to 2 pm, and applicants across all levels may choose to write their papers in either English or Hindi.

The examination fees for the ICAI CA courses are structured

differently based on the level of the course (Intermediate, Final, or Foundation) and the location of the examination centre.

For the Intermediate Course Examination, candidates appearing at Indian Centres have to pay Rs 1500 for a Single Group/Unit (All except Unit 2) and Rs 2700 for both Groups.

For Overseas Centres (excluding Thimphu, Bhutan, and Kathmandu, Nepal), the fee is US\$325 for a Single Group/Unit and US\$500 for Both Groups/Unit 2. Candidates taking the exam at the Thimphu (Bhutan) & Kathmandu (Nepal) Centres are charged Rs 2200 for a Single Group/Unit and Rs 3400 for Both Groups/Unit 2.

The Final Course Examination fees for Indian Centres are Rs 1800 for a Single Group and Rs 3300 for Both Groups. For Overseas Centres (excluding Thimphu & Kathmandu), the fee is US\$325 for a Single Group and US\$550 for Both Groups. At the Thimphu (Bhutan) & Kathmandu (Nepal) Centres, the fees are Rs 2200 for a Single Group and Rs 4000 for Both Groups.

Finally, the Foundation Course Examination has a fixed fee regardless of the number of groups. For Indian Centres, the fee is Rs 1500. For Overseas Centres (excluding Thimphu & Kathmandu), it is US\$325. For the Thimphu (Bhutan) & Kathmandu (Nepal) Centres, the fee is Rs 2200.



months include the vice-chancel-

lors of Swami Keshwanand Rajasthan Agricultural University, Bikaner; Agricultural University, Jodhpur; Shri Karan Narendra Agricultural University, Jobner (Jaipur); and Brij University. The vice-chancellor of Mohanlal Sukhadia University (MLSU) in Udaipur stepped down after intense protests.

The developments have sparked

criticism from academics and opposition leaders, who say political pressure is undermining institutional autonomy and weakening higher education governance in the state.

At Maharaja Surajmal Brij University in Bharatpur, Ramesh Chandra was removed as VC by the Governor following an inquiry into alleged arbitrary decisions and financial loss to the

>> Contd. p.4..





Indian Readers	Global Readers	Figures in Million's
Qtr. Ended Dec. 2024	Qtr. Ended March 2025	Groth %
5.39	5.64	+4.7%
3.26	3.71	+13.9%

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Top Australian university to set up campus in India



■ **EJ** - New Delhi

In a major boost to bilateral cooperation in education, research and skilling, India and Australia announced a fresh set of collaborative initiatives at the third Australia-India Education and Skills Council (AIESC) meeting held in New Delhi.

The Ministry of Education said that under the SPARC (Scheme for Promotion of Academic and Research Collaboration) programme, Rs 9.84 crore has been sanctioned for 10 new joint research projects with top Australian universities in areas including advanced computing, energy, sustainability and climate, healthcare and MedTech, and space and defence.

One of the key highlights was the Letter of Intent handed to the University of New South Wales (UNSW) ranked 20th globally to establish a campus in India under the UGC's 2023 regulations for foreign higher educational institutions. UNSW will become the seventh Australian university to set up operations in India. Earlier this year, LoIs were issued to La Trobe University, Victoria University, Western Sydney University and the University of Western Australia.

The meeting was attended by Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan, Minister of State for Education Sukanta Majumdar,

Australian Education Minister Jason Clare, Skills & Training Minister Andrew Giles, and Assistant Minister for International Education Julian Hill, among senior officials and MPs from both sides.

The two countries exchanged MoUs covering agritech innovation, marine sciences, teacher training and professional development, disaster resilience, global job readiness, mining, and priority skill development sectors. Collaboration in Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) and teacher training will also be strengthened through CBSE, NCTE and Australian counterparts.

The AIESC reviewed ongoing cooperation in school education, higher education, research and skilling, and reaffirmed plans to deepen institutional linkages, widen mobility pathways and enhance regulatory coordination. Pradhan said the meeting "served as a great opportunity to build upon progress since the inaugural AIESC, break new ground in the Australia-India education and skills partnership, and open wider avenues for India's youth." He emphasised cooperation in AI, advanced materials, semiconductors, MedTech, energy, sustainability, technology adoption, sports education and innovative skilling models.

A major agenda point was in-

tegrating sports curriculum into school and higher education. Pradhan said this marks "the beginning of a wide-ranging partnership in sports," and suggested joint hackathons at school and university levels.

Australian Education Minister Jason Clare described the collaboration as "a win-win," adding, "There is no such partnership with any other country in the field of education and skill development. This shows deep trust between India and Australia."

Minister for Skills & Training Andrew Giles said expanding Australia's footprint in India was "another significant step forward," while Assistant Minister Julian Hill said UNSW's India campus underlined "the strength of the Australia-India education relationship."

Achievements under the Mutual Recognition of Qualifications 2023 and the dedicated Skills Mapping Framework, Minister of State Jayant Chaudhary said sectors such as agriculture have already created mobility pathways using recognised qualifications, and urged replication across emerging domains. He also stressed the importance of youth-focused cooperation, especially with major sporting events coming up in both countries.

Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan also held bilateral meetings with his Australian counterparts to review cooperation "from pre-school to PhD," including research, innovation and faculty exchanges. He underscored India's priority of fostering critical thinking in students and preparing an AI-ready generation.

The release said the fourth AIESC meeting will be held in Australia, with both sides agreeing to set clear timelines for delivering more tangible outcomes.

India Ranks Third Globally in Most Vibrant AI Hub After US and China



■ **EJ** - New Delhi

India has risen to third place in Stanford University's 2025 Global AI Vibrancy rankings, marking a leap in its artificial intelligence capabilities across research, talent, and infrastructure. The report, released in November, shows India climbing four spots in a year — overtaking the United Kingdom as well as Asian tech leaders like South Korea, Singapore, and Japan.

India's rise from seventh place in 2023 to third this year underscores its accelerating momentum in the global AI race, mentions the report, noting that both India and the UK have launched major initiatives aimed at strengthening their foothold in the rapidly evolving AI ecosystem.

As mentioned on the official website, the Global AI Vibrancy Tool aims to offer a data driven

assessment of each nation's position in the AI landscape.

Stanford University's 2025 Global AI Index, released in November, has unveiled the latest rankings based on the 2024 Global AI Vibrancy assessment where India has emerged as the world's third most dynamic AI ecosystem. The country now stands just behind the US and China, outperforming major economies despite the massive multi billion dollar investments being made by global leaders.

The report highlights how governments worldwide are scaling up AI investments: Canada has committed \$2.4 billion, China has launched a \$47.5 billion semiconductor fund, France has pledged 109 billion euros, India has announced \$1.25 billion, and Saudi Arabia's Project Transcendence represents a sweeping \$100 billion push.

AI vibrancy in the index is measured across seven pillars — research and development, responsible AI, economy, talent, policy and governance, public opinion, and infrastructure. India's rise is driven by stronger research output, including increased patent filings and scientific publications. The report also underscores the importance of responsible AI practices, which help build public trust and reduce potential harm, as well as economic indicators such as investment flows and AI related job creation.

India has also advanced in the talent pillar, supported by a growing number of AI focused education and training programmes, mentions the report, adding that the public sentiment toward AI and the availability of technological infrastructure further shape the country's overall performance. However, the report notes that India slipped five positions in the policy and governance category, signalling an area that may require renewed focus.

In the 2024 Global Vibrancy Index, India secured a score of 21.59, placing it just behind the global frontrunners. South Korea (17.24) and the UK (16.64) followed in the rankings.

IIT Ropar's AI-Data Engineering sees biggest rise in student choices for 2025



■ **EJ** - Ropar

IIT Ropar has recorded a significant rise in student preference across almost all of its undergraduate programmes in 2025, according to the Joint Implementation Committee (JIC) choice-count data released this year. At the top of the preference chart is Computer Science and Engineering (CSE), which saw a strong 14.55 per cent year-on-year increase. The programme drew 18,702 choices in 2025, up from 16,326 last year, reflecting the continued dominance of computing disciplines across IITs amid accelerating demand in AI, full-stack development, cybersecurity, and next-generation software roles.

One of the biggest highlights this year is Artificial Intelligence and Data Engineering, which has

Rajasthan faces...

institution. Chandra, however, maintained that not a single allegation was proven and claimed the removal was orchestrated by the ABVP and the RSS prant pracharak. He said the ABVP had been protesting for 1.5 years before his ouster.

In Mohanlal Sukhadia University, Prof. Sunita Mishra faced massive protests after she reportedly called Mughal emperor Aurangzeb a "great administrator" in September 2025. ABVP activists vandalised the university administrative block during the agitation, and demands for her resignation were echoed by the BJP and Kamal Sena before she eventually stepped down.

The turmoil comes at a time when Rajasthan's state-funded universities are battling a deep financial crisis. In a virtual meeting with Chief Secretary V. Srinivas last Saturday, vice-chancellors outlined their distressing financial situation, with some institutions struggling to meet even basic operational requirements. Jai Narain Vyas University in Jodhpur has reportedly taken loans to pay salaries, while two Udaipur-based universities — Maharana Pratap University of Agriculture and Technology (MPUAT) and Mohanlal Sukhadia University — are contemplating selling portions of their land to remain functional.

Rajasthan has 29 state-funded universities, including 17 under the higher education department and six under the agriculture department. At the meeting, VCs warned that without immediate government support, several institutions "may soon be forced to shut down."

Those present told the media that universities were unable to cover basic expenses. "More than 60% of teaching and non-teaching posts are vacant, retired employees are awaiting arrears, and institutions cannot afford routine maintenance," one vice-chancellor said.

emerged as one of IIT Ropar's fastest-growing programmes. The course registered a remarkable 17.27 per cent rise, increasing from 13,764 choices in 2024 to 16,141 in 2025. The surge underscores the expanding interest in data-driven engineering, machine intelligence, applied ML, and analytics-based careers.

Mathematics and Computing continues its upward trajectory as well, recording a 15.35 per cent increase — from 11,493 choices to 13,257. The programme attracts students looking for math-

Parliament panel...

and never at private facilities.

The panel also raised concerns over vendors involved in paper setting, administration and evaluation. It noted that several firms blacklisted by one organization or state have continued to obtain contracts elsewhere. "The committee is of the view that such blacklisted firms must not be engaged for any entrance test by the NTA or the state governments," it said, urging the creation of a nationwide list of such entities to prevent future contracts and improve clarity.

The report further recorded that the NTA collected about Rs 3,512.98 crore over six years and spent Rs 3,064.77 crore, leaving a surplus of Rs 448 crore. The committee recommended that this corpus be directed toward strengthening the agency's internal testing capabilities or enhancing its oversight of external vendors.

Sonam Wangchuk..

granting recognition to HIAL. Moreover, the committee encourages the UGC and the department to closely study the HIAL model and consider how it can be replicated elsewhere through Centres of Innovation in Education or other interventions," the report said.

Wangchuk was detained under the stringent NSA on September 26, two days after violent protests demanding statehood and Sixth Schedule status for Ladakh left four people dead and 90 injured in the Union Territory.

The Ladakh administration had cancelled the land allotment to HIAL, and the Union Home Ministry had cancelled its Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA) registration, citing alleged violations.

The Art of..

direction of sustainable development goals and objectives.

I share my practical experience with my colleagues and I am always ready for professional development. If we take a closer look at the existing resources, we may find that we can successfully adapt many roles in the educational process and make the time spent with our students more creative.

ematically intensive pathways that feed directly into algorithm design, financial modelling, data science, and theoretical computer science.

Among the core engineering branches, Electrical Engineering surged by 11.49 per cent, rising from 13,402 to 14,943 choices. Mechanical Engineering also exhibited steady growth, increasing by 11.35 per cent, from 11,811 to 13,151, while Civil Engineering witnessed one of the sharpest rises among traditional branches at 12.94 per cent, moving from 9,693 to 10,947 choices. The continued strength of these branches reflects stability in core-engineering job markets and renewed interest in infrastructure, manufacturing, automotive technologies, and sustainability-centric industries.

Chemical Engineering rose by 11.03 per cent, with choices increasing from 9,716 last year to 10,788 in 2025, reaffirming its relevance in process engineering, energy systems, and industrial research roles. Engg.

Under-16s social...

At a time when civics education has been found to be seriously inadequate, this could have major implications for our democracy. Engaging with political debates and understanding how the political system operates are important characteristics of what is often known as political knowledge.

To build the political knowledge of young people, and to ensure they become "active and informed members of the community" for the whole of their lives, Australian governments have invested in civics and citizenship programs in schools.

The Australian federated system, however, poses a challenge to these aspirations. Each state and territory, for example, can have different approaches to teaching young people about civics and citizenship.

The class time that is devoted to the subject also varies, as do teaching methods across, and within, jurisdictions.

Since 2004, national testing has been undertaken every three years to identify the proportion of young people achieving a reasonable level of proficiency in civics and citizenship.

The latest round shows record low results. Nationally at the Year 6 level, just 43% of students achieved the proficient standard. This is the first time in the test's history the rate has been less than 50% for this year level. Even more bleak is the result at the Year 10 level. Just 28% of students nationally achieve the proficient standard.

Furthermore, unless students enroll in a specialist elective unit such as legal studies, they may never engage with content about democracy, or their rights and responsibilities as citizens in class again.

By the time young people finish Year 12, they are either able to vote or on the cusp of being able to vote.

It should be a matter of enormous concern that their civics education is so poor. The social media ban may well make this worse.

While governments may pursue ambitions to build the political knowledge of young people, the responsibility to design and deliver civics and citizenship classes is with teachers.

Hill lauds 178k Indian students in Australia but flags fraud and agent concerns



■ EJ - Agency

“Australia welcomes high-quality Indian students. People make a financial investment in the country, and increasingly, we see students who want to pursue education in every part of Australia, at every institution. At the moment, 178,000 Indian students are studying in Australia,” stated Hill.

“We welcome those students into a safe, multicultural community the most successful multicultural nation. We aim to provide an international experience where students study alongside Australians and students from around the world.”

Despite Australia introducing tighter rules including a 270,000 cap (rising to 295,000 in 2026), higher English and financial requirements, and the new Genuine Student test in recent years, it remains a top choice for Indian students with numbers up over 31% from 135,300 in 2024.

While the rise has been noteworthy, Indian students have also faced high visa refusal rates amid concerns over document fraud, prompting organisations like AAERI to introduce a new verification tool “to ensure document authenticity and protect the integrity of the admission process”.

Last month, the controversial Integrity Bill cleared the Australian Senate, updating the definition of education agents and adding transparency around commissions measures Hill says “strengthen integrity and address long-standing loopholes”, though some stakeholders have called it a “pre-packaged political deal”.

Amid increased government scrutiny of the sector, Hill talked about the complexities of the study abroad process for students, while noting the important role a “good agent” can play in guiding them.

“There’s an enormous information asymmetry between young people as consumers trying to figure out not just which institutions might be best for them or which country to go to, but also understanding legal norms, the

visa system, and the realities of living in another country all of that is incredibly complex,” said Hill.

“The role of good agents is crucial. Some who claim to be agents are only interested in making money and don’t give proper advice, but the good agents play an important role in helping students who genuinely want to study.”

Though recent reports claimed Australian universities have banned Indian students from states such as Punjab, Haryana, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, and Jammu and Kashmir over fake documents and high dropouts, universities said that these restrictions, first introduced in 2023, were lifted within months.

However, Hill, speaking at an AAERI luncheon in Amritsar, noted that some regions still see “an increase in fake or unverifiable documents, directly contributing to higher rejection rates”.

Moreover, Hill underscored the “significant challenge” of high volumes of onshore student transfers, noting that many students move to lower-cost providers after arriving in Australia, with about half of these cases involving students from India.

“Nearly half of these transferring students are from India, affecting academic outcomes, institutional accountability, and sector-wide integrity,” Hill said.

Though many in Australia have argued that an onshore commission ban to curb “course hopping” will backfire, with some aiming to circumvent the rules, AAERI maintains it will help stop “unethical onshore poaching by certain agents and institutions, ultimately protecting students, genuine agents, and sector integrity”.

The agent body also praised Hill’s presence at its India events, saying that despite significant travel constraints, it “showed his strong commitment to the agent community and genuine interest in hearing their concerns firsthand”.

Hill’s visit to India was part of a broader high-level Australian delegation trip that included education minister Jason Clare, skills and training minister Andrew Giles, university vice-chancellors,

Hill, Australia’s assistant minister for international education, told an AAERI reception in Hyderabad that over 178,000 Indians are now studying in Australia, with Indian-origin people among the fastest-growing skilled migrant groups – making up nearly 4% of the population.

regulators, and sector leaders such as Universities Australia CEO Luke Sheehy.

The delegation focused on expanding India-Australia collaboration in education, skills, and research through sector roundtables and meetings with Indian institutions and officials, including education minister Dharmendra Pradhan.

It also included the third Australia-India Education and Skills Council (AIESC) meeting, where University of New South Wales (UNSW) received a Letter of Intent (LoI) to establish a campus in Bengaluru — becoming the seventh Australian university set to do so in India.

Several MoUs were exchanged between Indian and Australian universities, governments, and skilling bodies, including 10 new joint research projects between higher education institutions in both countries.

Telangana signed an agreement with Victoria-based Deakin University to establish a Centre of Excellence in Artificial Intelligence, with further regional collaborations also in the pipeline, according to Hill.

“We have research and education partnerships, and it’s a serious long-term relationship that we want to build.

“Southern India is particularly important it’s a growing economy with excellent research institutions and families who are deeply focused on education.”

The release of the “Shared Pathways to Research Futures” document the Australia-India research collaboration framework 2026–2030, developed by the Australia-India Institute was another key outcome of the recent visit.

“The ROI is important. Many partnerships in India aim to ensure that our graduates in Australia are not just knowledgeable, but also equipped for the workforce and the challenges they will face,” stated Hill.

“We are also looking at two-way student mobility, as well as partnerships between businesses, institutions, and government.”

under-16s.

While the nation’s social media ban is hoped to safe guard young people from the dangers of the online world, it also has the potential to inhibit the development of their political knowledge.

>> Contd. p.4..

Can India’s MBBS dream get easier with Russia’s new education agency



■ EJ - Agency

The Russian Education Agency, a joint initiative of Synergy Corporation and Innopraktika. India announced the opening of its branch in Delhi to deepen cultural and educational ties between India and Russia and support Indian students seeking admission to Russian universities.

According to the agency, the New Delhi office will function as a dedicated support centre for Indian applicants, offering guidance on choosing academic programmes and universities, completing admission formalities, securing visas, and handling other required documentation.

The initiative is expected to streamline the process for Indian students aspiring to pursue higher education in Russia.

“Many of the Indian students who graduated from Russian universities have become true ambassadors of friendship between our countries and cultures,” said Vadim Lobov, the president of Synergy Corporation.

He noted that Russian universities carry forward the legacy of the Soviet higher education system, which earned wide respect in India. “We are now going to help the next generation receive a quality education in Russia,” he

The agency currently works with several leading Russian universities and plans to expand its presence in India with new branches proposed in Mumbai and Chennai in 2026. It expects to facilitate the enrolment of more than 10,000 Indian students in Russian universities.

added.

The agency currently works with several leading Russian universities and plans to expand its presence in India with new branches proposed in Mumbai and Chennai in 2026. It expects to facilitate the enrolment of more than 10,000 Indian students in Russian universities next year.

As part of its cultural outreach, the agency will promote the Russian language and introduce themed educational activities in Indian schools. The first set of interactive lessons titled “Bridge of Friendship: Russia and India” was conducted in Delhi schools on the day of the branch launch, drawing participation from over 1,000 high school students.

“For us, it’s not just about providing international applicants

with information on Russian universities — they can easily find that online,” said Natalia Popova, the First Deputy CEO of Innopraktika.

“Our real goal is to help them get accepted, guide them through document preparation, and support their cultural adaptation,” she said.

The agency said a growing interest in Russian culture and language reflects the strengthening humanitarian relationship between the two countries.

It added that Russian institutions continue to be valued in India, particularly in fields such as healthcare, information technology and engineering, with graduates contributing significantly to India’s economic and scientific advancement.

Under-16s social media ban will damage youth’s political education

■ EJ - Melbourne

Australians aged under 16 will not be able to hold an account on many social media platforms. In anticipation of the ban, some social media companies have already begun disabling accounts they believe are held by





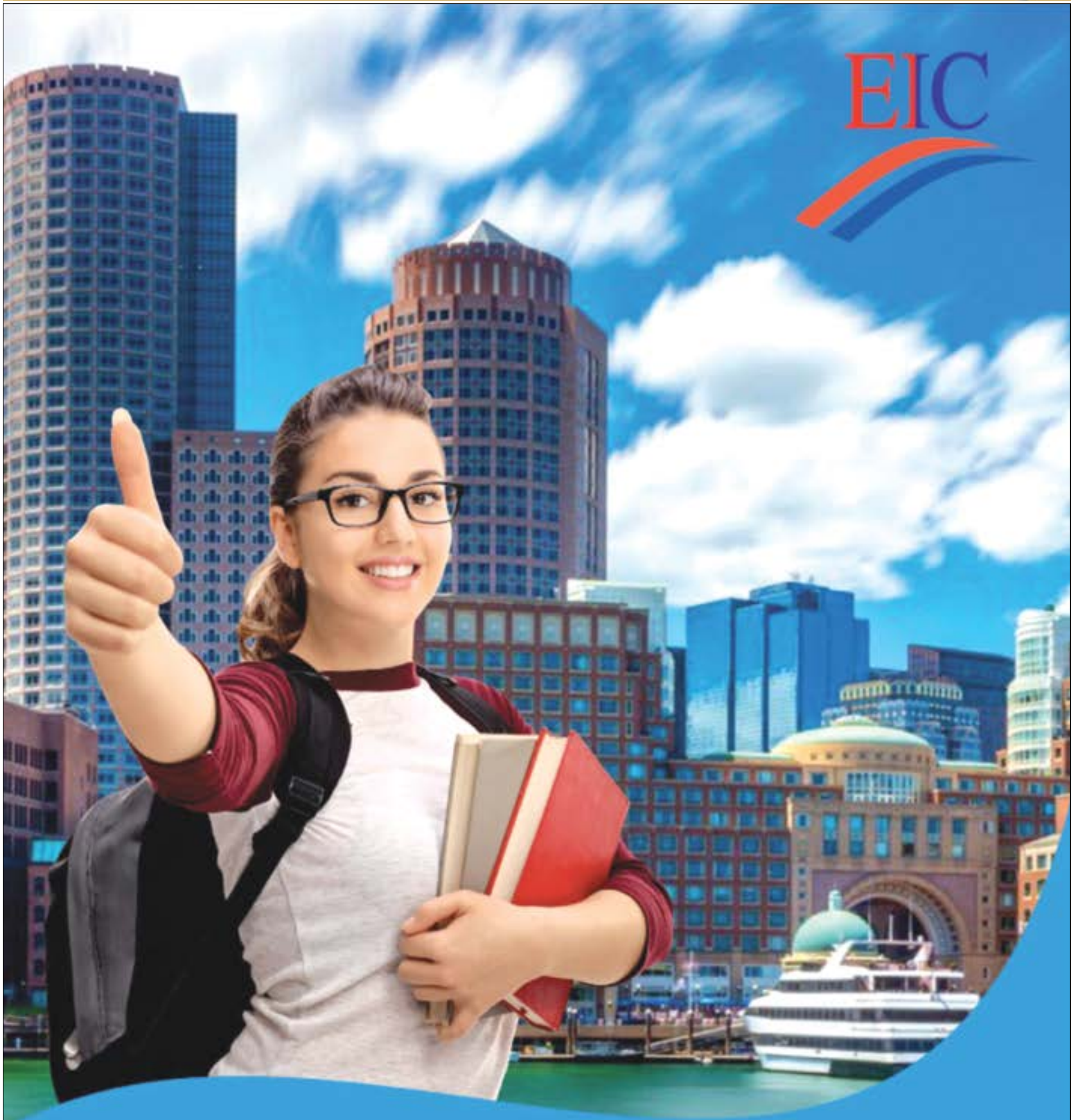
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