



Samira Amrahova
Educationist
Azerbaijan
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Natia Bolghashvili
Educationist
Sighnaghi - Georgia
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NTA plans to go global; it plans to learn from BRICS countries and China's Gaokao



■ EJ - New Delhi

The National Testing Agency (NTA) is looking to expand its testing framework beyond India, with plans to eventually work with other countries and learn from examination systems across BRICS nations. The agency is also exploring how its testing system could become a "digital public good" that can be adopted by other countries, NTA DG Abhishek Singh said.

"Right now we are trying to consolidate our own testing framework. So first is to improve the systems and strengthen the processes within India so that we are able to conduct examinations without any error in a completely fair manner," Singh told ANI on the sidelines of the 2026 BRICS Summit held in New Delhi

on September 12 and 13. He said the eventual aim was to create something that could be adopted by other countries, including BRICS nations.

Singh said NTA's immediate focus is on strengthening its domestic examination systems before moving towards international and cross-border testing. "Cross-border examinations are the next step," he said, adding that the agency first wants to ensure that Indian examinations can be conducted in a fair and transparent manner without malpractice or errors.

The agency also sees scope for BRICS countries to collaborate on examination security and question-paper technology. Singh pointed to China's Gaokao, the country's national college entrance examination used for university admissions, as an example of a large-scale examination system from which lessons can be drawn. The Gaokao is

conducted across China on a massive scale and is known for the extensive security and logistical arrangements around the examination.

"Every examination will require generation of question papers. So there are areas in which we can discuss with each other, collaborate and share knowledge," Singh said.

NTA's plans for strengthening its own examination system also include moving more of its tests to computer-based testing (CBT), with NEET-UG set to be the next major examination to make the transition.

Unlike most major examinations conducted by NTA, NEET-UG is still conducted in pen-and-paper mode. Singh said the agency is now working towards changing that. "All our examinations are CBT except the NEET examination. On NEET also, we will be moving to CBT very soon," he said.

The Nandan Nilekani-led high-powered task force is examining the transition. A move to CBT would involve more than simply replacing answer sheets with computers. NTA would need to expand the number of secure testing centres, ensure adequate computing capacity, establish

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Education system failing Young Generation: Rahul



■ EJ - New Delhi

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on said India's education system was failing the very generation it was meant to lift and asked students, parents and teachers to tell him why they have lost hope in it.

The Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha said fixing the education system begins with listening to those who experience its failures every day.

"India's education system is failing the very generation it was meant to lift. Paper leaks. Crushing fees. Decaying infrastructure. Millions of young Indians work honestly, and the system still lets them down," Gandhi said on X.

"Fixing it begins with listening to those who experience its failures every day. Students, parents, teachers, tell me: why have you lost hope in the education system?" he said.

Gandhi asked students, parents

The Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha says fixing the education system begins with listening to those who experience its failures every day

and teachers to share their experiences, evidence and ideas on an online link he shared.

"Together, we will bring hope back," Gandhi added.

The Congress leader's remarks came ahead of the fifth edition of his 'Chhatron ki Goonj' initiative, which will be held in Madhya Pradesh's Indore on September 19. He has asserted that hearing the voice of every student in the country is essential to changing the system.

Gandhi has held four 'Chhatron ki Goonj' events in Kota, Dehradun, Prayagraj and Pune. The last one in Pune on August 22 was for girl students.

Meanwhile, after being denied permission to use the Indore stadium, the Congress on Friday paid over Rs 10 lakh to lease alternative venue in the city for Gandhi's upcoming 'Chhatron Ki Goonj' programme.

Consider exempting Class 6 this year from 3-language policy: Supreme Court to CBSE



■ EJ - New Delhi

The Supreme Court asked the CBSE to consider exempting Class 6 students from its three language policy for the ongoing academic year, and deferred further hearing on challenges to September 17. A bench led by CJI Surya Kant, with Justices Joy malya Bagchi and V Mohana, told Solicitor General (SG) Tushar Mehta.

SG Mehta requested the court to defer the hearing on the pleas as Additional Solicitor General Aishwarya Bhati was not available. He nonetheless assured that the officials concerned would consider the bench's suggestion.

The Supreme Court on asked the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) to consider exempting Class 6

students from its three language policy for this academic year.

A three-judge bench led by Chief Justice of India (CJI) Surya Kant, while deferring the hearing on a batch of pleas challenging the CBSE's three-language policy to September 17, asked the Board to look into the possibility of accommodating the students of Class 6 in the ongoing academic session.

"Consider Class 6 for this year... If they can be given some accommodation," the bench, also comprising Justices Joymalya Bagchi and V Mohana, told Solicitor General (SG) Tushar Mehta.

SG Mehta requested the court to defer the hearing on the pleas as Additional Solicitor General Aishwarya Bhati was not available. He nonetheless assured that the officials concerned would consider the bench's suggestion.

"All of us would sit together and revert to your lordship," the top law officer said.

The senior counsel for one of the petitioners said the matter should not be delayed due to more adjournments as students have to ultimately take an examination and it was causing anxiety among their parents.

The apex court was hearing a batch of pleas challenging the CBSE's policy mandating the study of three languages, including two native Indian languages, for Class 9 students from July 1.

On August 20, the Supreme Court had stressed the need to find a solution to issues arising out of the CBSE policy mandating the study of three languages by Class 9 students, observing that children should not come under any kind of pressure.

It had said there was nothing wrong in introducing the policy but the only concern raised by the petitioners was about the manner in which it was being introduced. The bench had noted that one of the aspects that was required to be considered was how to build adequate human resource infrastructure with regard to the language options available.

"If you have chosen Class 6 as the starting point, you may consider giving a reprieve to Class

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Beyond the Right Answer: Rethinking the Role of the Teacher in Student-Centered Learning

Over the years of my teaching career, I have become increasingly convinced that the success of a lesson should not be measured by how much a teacher speaks, but by how much students think, question, engage, and articulate their own ideas. This perspective has profoundly influenced my approach to teaching, particularly in Azerbaijani language and literature classes, where learning extends far beyond the acquisition of linguistic rules or the interpretation of literary texts.

Language and literature education plays a significant role in developing students' cognitive, communicative, and social competencies. These subjects provide learners with opportunities to listen attentively, think critically, formulate and justify opinions, engage in meaningful dialogue, and respect perspectives different from their own. Therefore, the classroom should not merely be a space where knowledge is transmitted from teacher to student; it should function as an environment in which students actively construct meaning and take responsibility for their own learning.

In my classroom practice, I focus not only on whether a student's answer is correct, but also on the reasoning process that leads to that answer. I believe that the process of thinking is often as important as the final response. Providing students with sufficient thinking time after asking a question and encouraging them to explain and justify their ideas can significantly increase their engagement and participation. For instance, when working with a text, I do not limit the discussion to the question, "What is the



main idea of the text?" I also ask students to identify the specific part of the text that supports their interpretation and to explain why they reached that conclusion. This approach shifts the focus from recalling a predetermined answer to constructing an evidence-based response.

Such practices contribute to the development of critical thinking and learner autonomy. The student is no longer simply a recipient of information but becomes an active participant in the learning process.

When a Student's Question Becomes the Lesson's Most Valuable Outcome. One experience from my classroom particularly illustrates the value of inquiry-based learning. While teaching the topic "Ancient Greek Words" to a fifth-grade class, I introduced words such as "theater," "democracy,"

"grammar," and "telephone." Rather than simply explaining their origins, I asked students to investigate their meanings and consider how these words are used in contemporary life.

The students worked in groups, conducted discussions, and explored the words from different perspectives. During the lesson, one student asked a particularly thought-provoking question: "If these words originated in Ancient Greek, why do we still use them today?"

For me, this question represented one of the most meaningful outcomes of the lesson. The student was no longer merely receiving and reproducing information presented by the teacher. Instead, the newly acquired knowledge had stimulated curiosity and generated another question. This experience reinforced an important principle of my teaching philosophy: meaningful learning begins when stu-

dents become curious enough to ask questions of their own. Rather than providing immediate answers, teachers can create opportunities for students to investigate, explore, make connections, and arrive at conclusions independently.

Another important challenge in education is the fear of making mistakes. When students are overly concerned about giving an incorrect answer, they may become reluctant to participate, ask questions, or express their ideas. For this reason, I try to create a classroom atmosphere in which mistakes are viewed not as failures, but as opportunities for reflection and learning.

When a student gives an incorrect or incomplete answer, I do not immediately reject it. Instead, I may ask: "What made you think that way?" or "How can you support your idea?" Such questions encourage students to



Samira Amrahova
Educationist
Azerbaijan

examine their own reasoning and reconsider their assumptions.

The objective of education is not to create learners who never make mistakes. Rather, it is to help them understand their mistakes, learn from them, and develop the confidence to try again. In this sense, mistakes can become an integral part of the learning process.

Reflective practice has also become an essential component of my professional development. My pedagogical journal is not simply a record of completed activities; it is a tool for critically examining my teaching practice.

After each lesson, I ask myself several questions: Did my students achieve the intended learning outcomes? Who actively participated, and who remained silent? Which instructional strategy was most effective? Which students needed additional support? What should I modify in my next lesson?

These questions help me understand that teaching is not a linear process in which the teacher simply delivers a lesson according to a predetermined plan. It is a dynamic process that requires observation, adaptation, and con-

tinuous professional learning.

Interestingly, activities that do not produce the expected results can sometimes provide the most valuable professional insights. They encourage teachers to reconsider their assumptions, identify areas for improvement, and adapt their approaches to the actual needs of learners.

Years of teaching have taught me that there is no universal formula for an effective lesson. An instructional strategy that works well in one classroom may produce very different results in another. Every group of learners has its own characteristics, experiences, interests, strengths, and needs.

Therefore, effective teaching begins with knowing the learner. It requires listening to students, recognizing their individual voices, and selecting instructional approaches that respond to their needs. In this context, the teacher's role is not simply that of a knowledge provider but also that of a facilitator, observer, reflective practitioner, and lifelong learner.

For me, teaching is a process that begins anew every day. Every lesson brings a new question, and every student brings a different perspective to that question.

Ultimately, I believe that a teacher's greatest achievement is not simply enabling students to know the correct answer. It is helping them develop the capacity to think independently, ask meaningful questions, justify their ideas, listen to others, and remain curious about the world around them.

Sometimes, the most valuable outcome of a lesson is not the answer provided by the teacher, but the new question asked by a student. That question may be the beginning of deeper inquiry—and, perhaps, the beginning of genuine learning.

From Digital to Future Smart Universities

Universities and higher education institutions are moving through a significant transformation, from conventional models to digital platforms and now towards smart and AI-enabled ecosystems. The pandemic accelerated digital transformation by making online classes, digital libraries, and learning management systems essential components of education. However, digitalization alone is no longer sufficient. The next step is to create universities that can use technology intelligently to enhance learning, improve decision-making, strengthen governance, and promote sustainability.

The evolution can be viewed as a journey from traditional universities to digital universities and finally to smart universities. Traditional institutions relied largely on physical classrooms, paper-based records, and fixed curricula. Digital universities introduced online learning, cloud platforms, digital resources, and virtual collaboration. Smart universities go further by integrating Artificial Intelligence (AI), the Internet of Things (IoT), Machine Learning, Big Data analytics, Blockchain, and predictive technologies into the institutional ecosystem.

Changing student expectations and global competition are major drivers of this transformation.



Digital-native learners increasingly expect flexible, personalized, and accessible learning experiences. At the same time, institutions need to improve efficiency, remain competitive, and respond rapidly to changing industry and societal requirements.

Smart infrastructure can create connected and intelligent learning environments. AI tutors, virtual assistants, adaptive learning systems, smart laboratories, and AI-supported curriculum design can enhance teaching and learning. IoT can enable smart attendance, energy monitoring, asset manage-

ment, campus safety, and intelligent infrastructure. Big Data analytics can provide insights into student engagement, academic performance, institutional resources, and emerging skill requirements.

One of the most important contributions of smart universities will be the transition from one-size-fits-all education to personalized learning. Learning analytics can identify learning gaps and enable timely academic interventions. Skill-gap analysis can support personalized mentoring, career guidance, and curriculum development. When used responsibly, student data can help institutions create flexible pathways for continuous and life-

long learning.

The transformation should also extend beyond classrooms. AI-enabled admissions, automated examination systems, smart timetabling, faculty workload analytics, research management, and predictive resource planning can create more efficient and responsive institutions. Such systems can reduce administrative burdens, improve governance, and potentially strengthen student enrolment, engagement, and retention.

Smart universities can also contribute to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDG 4 (Quality Edu-



Dr. Anjum Nazir Qureshi
Asst. Professor
RCERT
Chandrapur - India

cation), SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure), SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities), SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), and SDG 13 (Climate Action). Smart energy systems, paperless administration, intelligent resource management, and inclusive digital learning can support both educational and environmental sustainability.

However, technology alone cannot make a university smart. Faculty members must be prepared through continuous professional development in AI, digital pedagogy, data literacy, and emerging technologies. Equally important are data privacy, cybersecurity, algorithmic fairness, digital well-being, and responsible AI use.

The future university must therefore be technologically intelligent and socially responsible. A truly smart university will not

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IIM Indore extends last date for CAT 2026 application

■ **EJ News - New Delhi**

The Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs) have extended the Common Admission Test (CAT) 2026 registration deadline to September 22, 2026, according to the release. Candidates who have not applied for the exam yet can now complete the CAT 2026 application process up to 5 pm on September 22.

The CAT 2026 registration was started by IIM Indore on August 3 at 10 am, with the last date announced earlier as September 15. The deadline has now been extended to provide a last chance for candidates to complete the application.

This year, the CAT 2026 will be conducted by IIM Indore on Sunday, November 29, in three sessions. The exam will be carried out in around 170 cities. The authority has announced that candidates can select five preferred test cities while registering and that it will make efforts to allot a centre among the preferred choices.

However, in case of high demand in any region, the authorities may allot a test centre close to one of the preferred cities. Candidates will not be allowed to change once a test centre is allotted.

Candidates can apply for the exam online through its official website, iimcat.ac.in.

CBSE begins preparations for next year's Class X and XII board exams



EJ - New Delhi

The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) has begun the pre-examination process for next year's Class 10 and 12 Board examinations. The board has also invited bids to engage an agency to scan flying slips and finalise the data generated from them.

The flying slips carry the details of candidates, including their name, identification number and roll number. The selected agency will scan these flying slips using Intelligent Character Recognition (ICR), Optical Character Recognition (OCR), and Optical Mark Recognition (OMR) scanners to generate raw data files, which will subsequently be collated and matched with the corresponding data, said an official.

A CBSE official said the exercise is part of the Board's pre-examination activities and is aimed at digitising the large volume of candidate-related data.

"The examination-related activities are done in three phases — pre-examination, the actual examination period and post-examination activities. The flying-slip scanning exercise falls under the first category...under this, the board finalise the list of candidates' details and asks the schools to submit the details online. Earlier, it was done manually by the schools, but now all these exercises are done online for the last couple of years," said the official.

Once that is done, the schools are asked to take out a copy of it and call the parents and children to verify the entire information. After checking everything, they resub-

mit the entire thing online, said the official.

"They are finalising all the data and details of the candidates who are going to appear in next year's examination. I think for this purpose also they have asked that the flying slips be taken out by the vendor and put into complete details in the system so that they can look at it...The pre-examination details have to be digitalised and that is needed also. We cannot do it manually because now the number of candidates has become so large. All the pre-examination activities must be digitalised. There is no point in doing it manually. It will take time and will be cumbersome," the official added.

Further, around 18 lakh students are in Class 12, and another 25 to 26 lakh are appearing in the Class 10 examination. "All such activities being done manually is an impossible task. There is every chance of errors. Since the last two-three years, the pre-examination process has been digitised totally..." the official added.

As per details, the work involves scanning of flying slips and finalisation of data at the locations of respective Regional Offices at Ajmer, Prayagraj, Ahmedabad, Bengaluru, Bhopal, Bhubaneswar, Chennai, Ludhiana, Dehradun, Delhi (East), Delhi (West), Gurugram, Guwahati, Hyderabad, Kolkata, Lucknow, Noida, Panchkula, Patna, Pune, Raipur, Ranchi, Thiruvananthapuram, Vijayawada.

Officials said the selected agency will scan the flying slips containing OMR- and ICR-based information, collate and match the data, generate reports, and perform error removal from the data.

"The work, including input data preparation, processing and printing, will have to be done by the computing agency...List of Candidates (Admission Master) and Flying Slips having Centre Number, Roll Number, Subject Code, Candidate's Name and Identification Number as Bar Code," the tender document read.

The agency once selected will be given a two year term contract, and it will have to scan the flying slips through an image scanner (ICR/OCR) or OMR scanner, with the scanned number printed on each flying slip, and to create a raw data file, punch/verify/check and merge the flying slips which have been rejected in scanning.

Besides, officials said, the process will involve correcting any errors in the scanned centre number, roll number, subject code, candidate's name and identification number. An edit list of invalid or duplicate roll numbers, candidates' names, identification numbers, centre numbers and subject codes will also be generated and checked. The data file will be updated with the necessary corrections until all errors are removed.

Further, it will check and compare the data of scanned flying slips with the admission master provided by CBSE, report errors, and update till errors are removed.

"Data of candidates captured from the flying slips, duly matched with list of candidates in the proformas supplied by the Board on CD as per requirement of the board. Any variation in the particulars of the candidates in database and in the documents shall be treated as errors and shall be the responsibility of the agency," the document read.

Officials said the scanning work is generally carried out two to three times a year — once during the Board's year-end examinations, which are now conducted twice and are generally held

'We are overburdened, underpaid': MBBS, BDS interns' protests uncover wide stipend gap across states



EJ - New Delhi

Medical interns across several states have protested over low stipends and long working hours in recent weeks, prompting governments in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Uttarakhand to announce hikes. The protests have also highlighted sharp variations in the stipends paid to interns undertaking broadly similar clinical responsibilities.

In Jammu and Kashmir, MBBS and BDS interns launched an indefinite protest on August 31, demanding that their monthly stipend be increased from Rs 12,300 to Rs 30,000. They also flagged duties extending up to 36 hours. The interns later suspended the strike after the government assured them it would revise the stipend within a month.

Madhya Pradesh interns, who demanded an increase from Rs 14,337 to Rs 30,000, secured a 50 per cent hike after protests in Bhopal, including a water-cannon action by the police. Their monthly stipend has now been raised to Rs 21,500.

The decision, approved by the state Cabinet on August 25, is expected to benefit around 3,928 interns in government medical colleges, state-run medical institutions and medical universities.

Bihar had earlier increased the monthly stipend for MBBS interns in government medical colleges from Rs 20,000 to Rs 27,000. The revised amount was also extended to Foreign Medical Graduate interns, while similar revisions were announced for dental and other medical streams. On Friday, the Bihar government also raised the stipend for postgraduate medical students from Rs 82,000 to Rs 92,800 for first-year students, while the second-year stipend was increased from Rs 90,200 to Rs 1,02,000.

Uttarakhand has also agreed to raise the stipend for MBBS interns following protests. Interns, who were receiving Rs 17,000 a month, had demanded Rs 30,000. The government has agreed to increase it to Rs 25,000, following which the interns called off their strike.

Dr Amisha Sachdeva, an MBBS

intern in Uttarakhand, said the revised amount was a relief, although it fell short of the original demand. "We were not expecting that they would do it, but Rs 25,000 is good enough. We would not strike for Rs 30,000 now," she said.

Sachdeva, 25, said managing basic expenses on Rs 17,000 a month was difficult and that she had to seek Rs 5,000-6,000 from her parents this month.

"Food is expensive, and in the hospital, you don't have fixed lunch or dinner times. You just eat whatever you can find, which costs more than regular mess fees," she said.

The basic mess at her college costs around Rs 40,000-45,000 a year, excluding milk and fruits, while the hostel fee is around Rs 5,000 a year, she said. The revised stipend will be received in full, with the hostel fee paid separately.

Sachdeva said the financial strain is particularly difficult for students from rural and economically weaker backgrounds. "Some are expected to take the financial burden; however, the stipend we get is not sufficient to support a family," she said.

The stipend hike has come amid demanding duty schedules. Uttarakhand interns have morning, evening and night duties, Sachdeva said, while interns in Uttar Pradesh do not have night duties. "Every doctor I talk to mentions how heavily burdened they are," she said, adding that the workload also involves considerable emotional labour.

The financial pressure also extends to postgraduate preparation. Sachdeva said MBBS graduates preparing for NEET-PG may spend Rs 30,000 to Rs 60,000 a year on coaching.

"If you take a drop year to prepare, your family still has to sup-

port you. You can't save enough from this stipend to sustain yourself during a drop year," she said. The disparity extends beyond undergraduate internships. Postgraduate medical students in Uttarakhand receive around Rs 62,000 a month, according to doctors from the state, with the amount remaining unchanged for around a decade.

The state has recently witnessed protests by postgraduate students, senior residents and MBBS interns over stipend-related issues. Dr Rajdeep Singh, a postgraduate medical student at Government Medical College, Haldwani, said the state had revised the MBBS intern stipend twice in the last five years, while PG stipends had not seen a similar revision for around 10 years.

"My internship stipend had been Rs 7,500 before it was increased to Rs 17,000 following a strike. We work 36-hour shifts and are paid not enough to sustain ourselves," he said.

Singh said several students in his batch had taken loans to fund their MBBS education and were concerned about repaying them while pursuing postgraduate education and starting their careers.

The issue, however, is not limited to the amount paid. Doctors and medical student bodies have also raised concerns over the working hours and workload expected from interns and postgraduate trainees.

In several government hospitals, interns and PG residents work extended shifts covering OPDs, wards, emergency departments, labour rooms, operation theatres and other clinical services. Doctors have pointed to 24- to 36-hour duties, particularly in hospitals facing staff shortages.

Dr Vishwanath, an intern at Pushpagiri Medical College and former Kerala state convener of the Indian Medical Association Students' Network, said interns can spend four to five hours of a 10- to 12-hour shift on clerical work, including insurance forms and discharge summaries.

He said understaffing can also result in interns being assigned tasks normally handled by nurses or attendants. Long working hours, he said, leave interns with less time for clinical learning and preparation for postgraduate entrance examinations.

Dr Singh also flagged the amount of paperwork undertaken

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New Zealand announces new work visa route for international students

EJ - Agency

New Zealand will introduce a new six-month work visa for eligible international graduates from November 16, 2026, allowing them to work in the country while looking for employment and exploring longer-term work options.

Immigration New Zealand (INZ), in an announcement dated September 10, said the new Short-Term Graduate Work Visa will provide open work rights to eligible graduates who do not qual-



ify for the existing Post-Study

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Satya Niketan: The Bitter Truth of Struggle in a City of Dreams

■ EJ - Ravi Arya

In India, education has always been regarded as one of the most important ladders of social change. A poor family in a village or small town educates its child with the hope that one day he or she will find a job, improve the family's economic condition and live a better life. Thousands of young people carry the same dream when they move to big cities. Some prepare for engineering, others aspire to enter medical colleges, while many consider government jobs the safest path to their future. But while the road to these dreams may appear bright, the ground beneath it is often difficult and unsafe.

Satya Niketan in South Delhi is one face of this reality. A recent incident has not merely exposed the poor condition of one particular place; it has brought to light the entire environment in which young people from across the country struggle for their future. The question is not only how the incident happened. The real question is why such circumstances arose in the first place—circumstances in which young people who came in search of education and a better future were forced to live in unsafe buildings and cramped rooms.

Settlements like Satya Niketan are different from ordinary residential colonies. An entire economy develops around the needs of students. Small rooms, paying guest accommodations, guesthouses, tiffin centres, tea stalls, photocopy shops, coaching institutes and other facilities continue to operate. Students arrive; some leave after clearing an examination, some return home after failing, while others remain there for several years. Students keep changing, but the system that earns money from them remains. This is where the root of the problem appears to lie.

When the demand for accommodation in an area is extremely high and safe alternatives are limited, helplessness itself becomes a force in the market. Even a small room is rented out at a high price. Buildings without adequate fire-safety arrangements are also rented out. Additional floors are constructed beyond permissible limits. Life continues amid narrow staircases and tangled electrical wires. Students know that there is a risk, but what other option do they have? Their objective is simple—to complete their studies, clear the examination and change their lives.

NTA eyes global...

reliable connectivity and build safeguards against question-paper leaks, impersonation and other forms of malpractice.

NTA already conducts several large examinations through CBT, including the Joint Entrance Examination (JEE), UGC-NET, Common University Entrance Test (CUET) and NIFT examinations. "CBT is the future, so all our examinations will be CBT in the days to come," Singh said.

The proposed shift also comes amid broader discussions on examination reform following concerns over the security and conduct of high-stakes tests. NEET-UG is one of India's largest entrance examinations, determining admission to undergraduate medical courses across the country, making the security and reliability of its testing process



People gather at the site after a five-story building collapses in the Satya Niketan area

This compulsion raises the biggest question: Have we created a safe and dignified educational environment for our young people? If there are not enough hostels, if safe accommodation is beyond the financial reach of students, and if the number of young people coming to cities for education continues to rise, where are they supposed to go?

There are many such areas in our cities where the entire life of young people who come in search of education becomes confined between a single room and a coaching centre. Films portray college life as being full of friendship, sports, cultural programmes and memorable experiences. But the lives of millions of young people preparing for competitive examinations are completely different. They have books, notes, test series and a date for the next examination. Beyond that, much of life is left behind.

Study from morning till night. Then comes the anxiety about the next test. How many marks will I score? How high will the cut-off go? Will I get selected this time, or will I have to prepare for another year? If the money given by the family is running out, how will the expenses be managed? Such questions gradually add stress to the pressure of studies.

The biggest irony is that competition is continuously increasing, while opportunities are not growing at the same pace. Millions of young people compete for a few thousand, or sometimes a limited number of, seats. The number of unsuccessful candidates is enormous, but the system has

not been able to create sufficient alternative pathways for these young people.

This vacuum gives rise to a large, and sometimes questionable, business ecosystem. Coaching, rented rooms, paying guest accommodation, food, books, test series and other services require money at every step. Families spend their savings. Students work hard for years. Yet there is no guarantee of success. In this entire process, the biggest risk is borne by the student.

Therefore, treating the Satya Niketan incident merely as a matter of building safety would be to underestimate the problem. Action against illegal construction is necessary, but alongside it, it is equally important to provide students with safe, affordable and convenient accommodation.

The administration must regularly inspect the safety of such areas. Buildings must have proper fire-safety arrangements, emergency exits, electrical safety measures and construction according to their permitted capacity.

But an even bigger reform is required in the fields of education and employment. Not every young person can—or should—become an engineer, doctor or government officer. The country also needs technicians, entrepreneurs, teachers, designers, researchers, skilled workers and professionals in thousands of other fields.

What is needed is to ensure that young people have several respectable pathways to success. Only then will failure in one examination not be considered a failure in life.

Consider exempting...

6 students of this year. You can introduce it from next year," it had said.

The senior counsel for one of the petitioners has contended that the CBSE has no jurisdiction or authority to frame the curriculum for classes 6 to 8 as this has to be done by the NCERT.

On May 27, the top court had agreed to examine a plea challenging the policy and issued notices to the Centre, the CBSE and the NCERT seeking their responses.

According to a circular issued by the CBSE, the study of three languages, including at least two native Indian languages, has been made compulsory for Class 9 students beginning July 1.

The move is part of the CBSE's alignment of its scheme of studies with the National Education

Policy (NEP) 2020 and the National Curriculum Framework for School Education (NCF-SE), 2023.

According to the circular issued on May 15, students opting for a foreign language may do so only as the third language after studying two native Indian languages, exposure to an overseas university through options such as home-campus visits or semester exchanges. Interest in such programmes rose from 27 per cent among pre-college respondents to 39 per cent among students transitioning to higher education.

The report also highlights the growing role of AI in learning. Around 82 per cent of respondents said they use AI or generative AI tools at least weekly to learn or build new skills. However, 60 per cent said they feel burned out by the pressure to continuously.

Because the real strength of a country does not lie merely in the size of its young population, but in the security of its young people's dreams.

If the students who dare to dream are themselves unsafe, the shine of development remains incomplete.

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Is the appeal...

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IIT Kanpur launches certificate programme on Python for AI, ML and deep learning



■ EJ - Kanpur

The Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Kanpur has introduced a certificate programme on Python for Artificial Intelligence (AI), Machine Learning (ML) and Deep Learning. This four-week programme will be conducted from December 14, 2026, to January 15, 2027, in online mode.

Applications for the programme are now open for students, scholars, faculty members, industry professionals, and research and development (R&D) staff. Meritorious class 11 and 12 students are also eligible to participate. Interested candidates can visit the official website of the institute, iitk.ac.in, to apply for the programme by paying the prescribed registration fee.

According to IIT Kanpur, the programme will comprise Python projects based on real-world datasets from areas including business, medicine, science and engineering. Participants will work with Python libraries such as NumPy, Matplotlib, Pandas, Scikit-learn, TensorFlow and Keras.

Through this certificate programme, the institute aims to provide participants with in-depth knowledge and hands-on experience of implementing algorithms and software of AIML and Neural Networks (NN) in projects, research and placements to accelerate their careers.

The classes will be conducted by IIT Kanpur through the Zoom platform. According to the institute, sessions will be scheduled during evenings and weekends to make it easier for participants to attend.

No prior programming experi-

MBBS, BDS...

by interns and residents. "If a patient has been admitted under the government scheme, the paperwork is our job. We have to get the discharge papers done, their insurance papers and other things. This, unfortunately, takes away from our core role," he said.

In Kerala, government medical colleges pay interns around Rs 28,000 a month along with accommodation, Vishwanath said. In some private medical colleges, however, accommodation-related charges and other deductions can substantially reduce the amount received by interns, with some taking home between Rs 5,000 and Rs 18,000, he said.

The Supreme Court is separately hearing a batch of petitions concerning non-payment of stipends to medical interns across the country.

From Digital...

replace human connection with technology; it will use technology to strengthen it. The transition from digital to smart universities should ultimately be viewed not as a technological upgrade, but as a fundamental transformation towards education that is adaptive, inclusive, sustainable, personalized, and human-centered.

Applications for the programme are now open for students, scholars, faculty members, industry professionals and research and development (R&D)

ence is required to enrol in the programme. Participants will need a laptop with Python installed. They may use integrated development environments (IDEs) such as Anaconda or Spyder for Python programming.

Candidates can visit the official website mentioned above for details on registration dates, the application process, and the programme schedule.

New Zealand...

Work Visa.

Under the new route, graduates must have completed an eligible New Zealand Qualifications and Credentials Framework (NZQCF) Level 5, 6 or 7 qualification. The qualification must have been studied full-time for at least 24 weeks and must not already make the graduate eligible for a Post-Study Work Visa.

English-language, foundation and bridging qualifications will not qualify for the new visa. Applicants will also need to have at least NZD 5,000 in available funds and meet the relevant health and character requirements.

The Short-Term Graduate Work Visa will provide open work rights, meaning graduates will not need to have a job offer before applying and can work for any employer, subject to visa conditions. The visa will be valid for a maximum of six months and can be granted only once. It cannot be extended.

Applicants must apply within three months of the expiry of their New Zealand student visa. The visa is intended as a short-term pathway for graduates to find employment and, where eligible, transition to another work visa such as the Accredited Employer Work Visa.

Alongside the new six-month visa, New Zealand is also expanding eligibility for its existing Post-Study Work Visa.

From November 16, graduates who complete an eligible NZQCF Level 7 Graduate Diploma in New Zealand can qualify for a Post-Study Work Visa if they also hold a bachelor's degree. The bachelor's degree can have been completed either in New Zealand or overseas.

To qualify, students must have studied the Graduate Diploma full-time in New Zealand for its entire duration. Cross-crediting or recognition of prior learning will not count towards the qualification for visa purposes.

Eligible Graduate Diploma graduates can receive a Post-Study Work Visa for the duration of their study, up to a maximum of one year. Applicants will need to provide evidence of their bachelor's degree and an official academic transcript. An International Qualification Assessment will not be required for an overseas bachelor's degree, although INZ may verify the qualification. Postgraduate Diploma and Master's degree graduates will continue to have separate Post-Study Work Visa provisions. Eligible Level 8 Postgraduate Diploma graduates may qualify for a one-year visa, while eligible Master's graduates may qualify for a three-year visa, subject to meeting the study requirements.

The Teacher of the Future: Balancing AI and Human Connection

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is changing the way we live, work, and learn. In education, AI has become one of the most powerful tools available to teachers. It can create lesson plans, generate quizzes, explain grammar, suggest classroom activities, and even provide instant feedback. These innovations save valuable time and help teachers prepare more engaging lessons.

However, despite its remarkable abilities, AI cannot replace the most important element of education—the teacher. A great teacher does much more than deliver information. Teachers inspire, encourage, motivate, and build meaningful relationships with their students. They recognize emotions, understand individual needs, and create a safe and supportive learning environment. These human qualities cannot be replicated by technology.

The teacher of the future is not someone who competes with AI but someone who knows how to use it wisely. AI should be viewed as a teaching assistant rather than a replacement. It can handle repetitive tasks, allowing teachers to spend more time on creativity, communication, critical thinking, and personalized instruction.



In English language teaching, AI offers exciting opportunities. Students can practice speaking with AI-powered tools, improve their writing through instant feedback, expand their vocabulary, and explore authentic learning materials from around the world. At the same time, teachers guide students in developing communication skills, cultural awareness, creativity, and confidence—qualities that

technology alone cannot teach.

The rapid growth of AI also reminds us of the importance of digital responsibility. Students must learn not only how to use AI but also how to evaluate information critically, respect academic honesty, and use technology ethically. Teachers play a crucial role in helping students become responsible digital citizens.

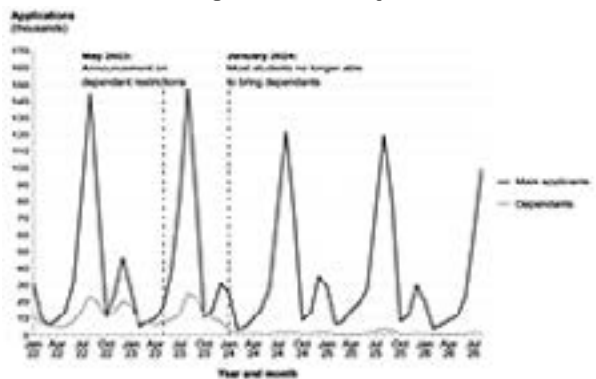


Natia Bolghashvili
Educationist
Sighnaghi - Georgia

The future of education is not about choosing between humans and technology. It is about combining the strengths of both. When teachers use AI thoughtfully while maintaining empathy, creativity, and meaningful human interaction, learning becomes more effective, engaging, and inspiring.

As educators, our mission remains the same: to prepare students not only for exams but for life. AI may change our methods, but it will never replace the heart of teaching—the human connection between a teacher and a learner.

August applications for UK study visas fall 16% in just a year



■ EJ - Agency

There were 360,700 sponsored study visa main applicants in the year ending August 2026 – 16% lower compared to the same point in the previous year, data released by the Home Office today shows.

The figures point to a worrying trend, given that study visa applications tend to peak in August ahead of the academic year beginning in September. Another seasonal peak also occurs in December, just before the January intake.

The number of applications from the dependants of students has also remained low, at a 22% drop on the previous year, the data shows.

It follows an almost outright ban on international students' ability to bring their dependants to the UK with them – although this is still possible for some research

and PhD students.

Responding to the figures, Russell Group chief executive Libby Hackett said the data “underlines the volatility in the international student market”.

“Successive government policies, including the previous leadership’s proposed tax on international students, are no doubt contributing to the change we’re now seeing – a 30% decline in applications across the sector this calendar year so far compared to three years ago,” she said.

Hackett called for a “period of stability” in immigration policies – urging new UK Prime Minister Andy Burnham to take “quick and decisive action” to reverse the policy.

“The volatility in international recruitment also demonstrates why linking this to the funding of maintenance grants does not make sense,” she pointed out.

Universities Australia calls for student concessions as living costs soar



■ EJ - Agency

The peak body for Australia’s universities says students are facing steep increases in the cost of everyday essentials, with rents, groceries, utilities and fuel all rising significantly since 2021.

According to Universities Australia analysis, student rents have increased by around 40% since 2021, while grocery prices have risen by 27%, utilities by 39% and fuel by 43%.

The pressure is also reflected in research published this year by the Australian Centre for Student Equity and Success, which found that one in three university students surveyed were experiencing financial insecurity.

“Students are doing it tough and there are practical things the government can do right now to ease some of that pressure,” said Luke Sheehy, chief executive officer of Universities Australia.

The organisation is calling for every domestic university student to have access to a concession card while studying.

Concession cards can reduce the cost of essentials such as medicines, public transport and utility bills. While some domestic students are eligible for a Health Care Card through income support or other criteria, university enrolment itself does not guaran-

tee access.

“Giving every domestic university student access to a concession card would help with the everyday costs that keep going up,” said Sheehy.

Universities Australia is also calling for international students to receive the same access to student public transport concessions as domestic students, regardless of which state or territory they study in.

Access to public transport discounts currently varies across Australia. “And international students shouldn’t have to pay more than the student sitting next to them to catch the same bus or train to university,” said Sheehy.

“These changes won’t solve every cost-of-living pressure students face, but they would make a real difference... Opening the door to university is only half the job. Students need to be able to afford to stay once they get there,” he added.

“You can have two students sitting next to each other in the same lecture, paying the same rent, buying the same groceries and catching the same bus to campus... One gets the concession. The other doesn’t. That makes no sense when students are already counting every dollar.”

“If you’re a domestic university student, you should get the con-

cession card... The same principle should apply to public transport for international students. They study in the same classrooms, live in the same communities and face the same rising costs.”

The calls come as the government faces pressure to improve access to higher education while also addressing the financial barriers that can prevent students from completing their studies.

Sheehy said making university more affordable was essential to Australia’s longer-term goal of increasing participation in higher education and developing the skilled workforce the country will need.

“For our nation to thrive in the future, we need more university graduates, and we know where much of that growth has to come from,” he said.

“We need more students from low-income families, regional and remote communities, First Nations Australians and families where nobody has been to university before.”

“But asking more of those Australians to go to university means making sure they can afford to stay there. This isn’t separate from the equity challenge: it’s a big part of the equity challenge.”

Is the appeal of studying abroad decreasing?

Indian Gen Z is now leaning towards global courses in India

■ EJ - Agency

Study abroad is losing some of its appeal among young Indians, while international university programmes offered in India are gaining attention, according to a new report by Emeritus.

Indian Gen Z is changing the way it looks at higher education and career choices, with concerns around the cost of studying abroad, visa rules and post-study work opportunities influencing their decisions.

The findings come from Emeritus’ report, ‘India’s GenZ Outlook 2026: Recalculating Education, Ambition, and Success; The No

Cap Generation’. The report is based on a survey of 1,010 respondents aged 15 to 28 across major Indian metros.

According to the report, 48 per cent of respondents who would consider studying abroad said their interest had declined over the past year. Rising costs, visa requirements and uncertainty around post-study work options were among the main concerns. The United States recorded the sharpest decline in interest, the report said.

At the same time, students are showing interest in getting an international education without leaving India. About 87 per cent

of pre-college respondents and 92 per cent of those transitioning to higher education said they would be likely or extremely likely to consider a programme offered by an internationally ranked university in India.

Among students transitioning to higher education, 69 per cent said they would prefer an India-based international programme over studying abroad, with visa uncertainty being one of the factors behind the preference.

Interest in hybrid education programmes is also increasing. These courses allow students to study in India while getting

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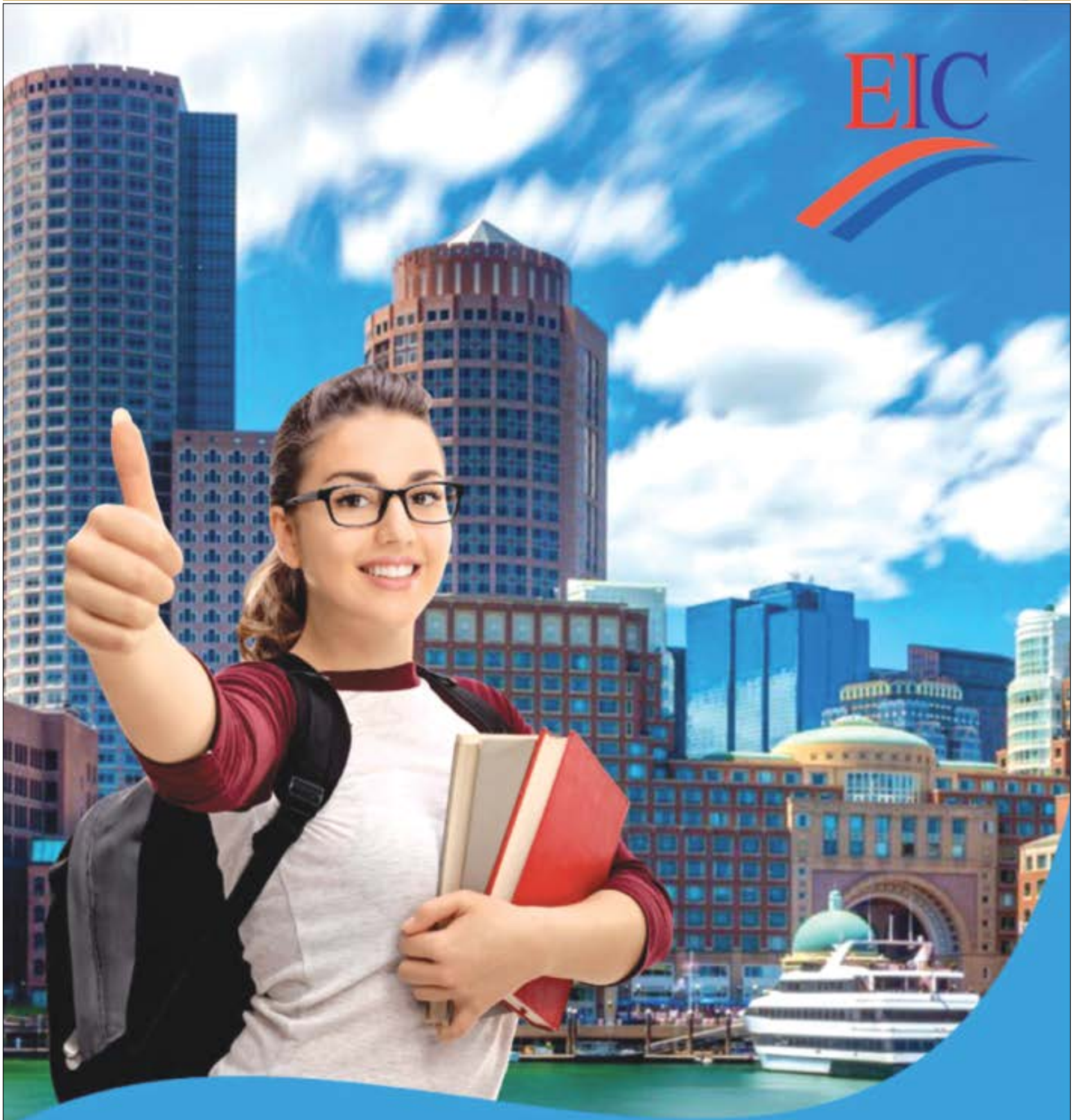
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