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## Rights of education for economically weaker sections

The situation, following the implementation of the scheme providing 10 per cent reservation mandatory in private schools to children from the economically weaker sections, does not seem to have made things any easier for them.

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MANY PRIVATE schools in the city have failed to follow the directions issued by the education department, which has made it mandatory for all schools to admit a minimum of 10 per cent students from the economically weaker sections (EWS) of the society. While the department says they have taken note of this, schools are violating the norms unchecked. It is reality that schools have not followed the norms publicly. This provision is dodged in numerous ways; schools claim ignorance of the law, that they can't find poor students that poor students have to be educated separately even if admitted and so on.

The sections of society living in slum areas generally face numerous problems in getting their children admitted to private schools (as compared to government schools) in the city. This is particularly true of Delhi where, 'social distance' between rich and poor status are quite high. The situation, following the implementation of the scheme providing 10 per cent reservation mandatory in private schools to children from the economically weaker sections, does not seem to have made things any easier for them.

Problems range from difficulties in obtaining application forms to facing discriminatory comments at schools. Practically all good private schools have been very clever with the notices, announcing admissions to their institutions. Instead of advertising in Hindi dailies, they have chosen to announce the admissions in English dailies and mostly schools put online form on computers, which most of the people from this section of society don't subscribe to and no computer at home (distance dream for these people, when parents are illiterate). Mostly all these advertisements in fine print are inconspicuous and easy to miss.

While the government rules allow for financial aid for students from the economically

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weaker sections, not all schools provide uniforms and books to them. The expense on transport, uniform and stationary for the children is often unaffordable. The school does not charge tuition fee but there are transport charges and high cost of uniform and stationary. Parents with more than one child in the school find it difficult to manage the expenses. Parents who are almost uneducated of such students find themselves hesitant when it comes to approaching teachers in parent-teacher association meetings, or students may bully their children because of his or her background.

Law that provides for reservation of seats for weaker students is laudable, the problem is that it may lead to discrimination after the students are admitted should be addressed properly. Education is the right of every child irrespective of his economic status. We must make sure that they are not denied their right.

## [Outstanding Economist, Institution Builder, Beacon for Young People A Tribute to K.N. Raj](#)

[Monday 1 March 2010,](#)  
[by C. Rammanohar Reddy](#)

### **TRIBUTE**

The years after independence saw a number of outstanding young men and women throw their hearts and bodies into building a new India. K.N. Raj was a giant of that generation. Today when careerists and those who put their self-interest above everything else rule the day, it is important to stress how K.N. Raj and others of his kind, one could very easily have made their names anywhere in the world, were fired with passion for just one thing: contributing to a modern and equitable order in independent India.

Professor Raj was many things: an outstanding economist, an excellent teacher, a builder of institutions, a beacon for young people and, not least, someone who could think well ahead of his time.

The first half of his working life was spent outside Kerala. After obtaining his Ph.D from the London School of Economics, it was in the drafting of the First Plan that Raj first made his mark. While it is the Second Plan that gets noticed by all for the contribution of Mahalanobis, in many ways it was the First Plan that was the trailblazer—and Raj was one among a small group of professional economists who contributed to its making. That was when Raj became a Nehruvian, something he remained I think to the very end of his life.

Yet, it was in the new Delhi School of Economics, where Raj became a Professor in his early thirties, that he really shone. For more than a decade, Raj was one of the stars who gave the DSE its brilliance—attracting fine minds like Amartya Sen to join the faculty, electrifying batch after batch of students and contributing immensely to the cross-national exchange of ideas among the economists of the newly independent countries of Africa and Asia.

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That was also the time when Raj sowed the seeds of many new ways of understanding rural India, seeds that were subsequently developed by younger professionals in articles and books on inter-locked markets, under-employment, land

reforms etc. Raj was also one of the first economists of independent India to acquire international status—and, rare for today, his interests were not confined to economics.

Raj was for a while very close to Indira Gandhi as well, but differed with her and her advisers both on the devaluation of 1966 and, more famously, a decade later when he was critical of the Emergency in public. In the late 1960s, he was briefly Vice-Chancellor of Delhi University. That was not the happiest of times, but at the height of his influence and perhaps power he then took a decision which in some respects resembles the actions of the lead character in the Polish filmmaker Krzysztof Zanussi's *Structure of Crystals*—he walked out of the Capital and the corridors of power; he had also been a star in the salons of the Delhi of the time.

Arguing that it was unhealthy for teaching and research in economics to be concentrated in Delhi, Raj moved to what was then the backwaters—Trivandrum. There, with the help of the then Chief Minister, Achutha Menon, and a small group of outstanding talents in economics from all over, Raj established the Centre for Development Studies. It was the CDS that researched and made popular the notion of the "Kerala Model" of development. It could also be said that the early research in the CDS contributed to the international/United Nations' evolution of the idea of "human development". For a while the CDS was perhaps the most exciting centre for the study of economics in India and it was also CDS which brought to prominence the work of that other outstanding personality, the architect Laurie Baker, who Raj sought out to design and supervise the construction of the Centre and popularise "low cost" architecture.

On a personal note I must write here that I was privileged to be a student at the CDS and also a Ph.D student of Raj's, but perhaps what must have been a great source of joy was my subsequent association with the Economic and Political Weekly. Raj was associated first with the Economic Weekly and was one of founder-editor Sachin Chaudhuri's preferred writers in the 1950s and 1960s. Then when Economic Weekly closed, it is said that Raj was one of those who convinced Sachin Chaudhuri to revive the journal and, I hear, gave it its current name as well. Raj was a founder-trustee of the Sameeksha Trust, which publishes the EPW, and remained on its board to the very end. Raj was a friend of Sachin Chaudhuri, and it was also a student of his from the DSE, Krishna Raj, who was editor of EPW for 35 years and built up the institution. When in the last years, Raj was unable to attend the meetings of the Trust, I asked his son, Gopal, if he wished to continue on the board. Gopal said there were only two things that mattered to him now, the CDS and EPW, and he would want the association to continue to the very end.

K.N. Raj was many things to many people; but he was, most of all, a teacher and a source of inspiration for generations of students. Five years ago, when the indefatigable A.A. Baby of Thrissur organised a conference in his honour, Professor Utsa Patnaik of the JNU, the eminent and forceful economist, wrote that she could

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not attend but that she would always feel a very deep sense of gratitude to Raj. Patnaik said she had been a shy and quiet student at the DSE in the 1960s and it was Raj who sought her out, encouraged her to ask questions and pursue research in

economics—and that, in some sense, it was Raj who pushed her into becoming an academic economist.

(Courtesy: The Indian Express)

The author is the editor of the Economic and Political Weekly, Mumbai.

## Doctorate from Sanskrit university big honour - Pookutty

February 27, 2010

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Mumbai: Oscar winning sound engineer Resul Pookutty is elated that he will soon be awarded an honorary doctorate and says that it is extra special because it comes from a Sanskrit university in [Kerala](#).

"It's a big honour that Sankaracharya Sanskrit University is offering me a doctorate. By winning the Oscar last year, everyone felt that there was a lot of Indian-ness in the Oscar; there were lots of togetherness in the Oscar, lot of brotherhood... maybe it is in recognition of all that the university has decided to give me the doctorate," Pookutty told the sources.

"I feel very honoured, especially because it is coming from a Sanskrit university," he said.

He will be awarded the doctorate by [Kerala](#)'s Sree Sankaracharya Sanskrit University on March 16.

So is he good at Sanskrit himself?

"I studied Sanskrit in my school. It was my third optional language but I am not that acquainted with the language any more," said Pookutty, who won the Oscar for his work in "Slumdog Millionaire".

Pookutty revealed that he had two Hollywood projects but was reluctant to disclose any details in advance.

"I already have two Hollywood projects, but it's too early to speak about them now," he said.

Shooting for one film would start early in March, while the other would begin in July, he added. *IANS*

## Now Skool web technologies in all Kerala schools

February 22, 2010

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Thiruvananthapuram: The [Kerala](#) government in collaboration with Intel recently launched a regional version of the Skool Learning and Teaching Technologies educational website - an online platform to help teachers and students learn key concepts in mathematics and science.

[Kerala](#) thus becomes the first state in the country to deploy Skool content in all schools.

The website (<http://kerala.skool.in/>) can be accessed free on the Internet.

The online resource, an initiative of IT@School Project of the General Education Department of [Kerala](#) government, is designed specifically for students and teachers of mathematics and science, and provides resources in English and Malayalam to enhance their understanding of these subjects.

Peter Hamilton, the worldwide director of the Intel Skool programme, said it is their goal to stimulate the use of technology in learning to benefit societies.

"We aim to help develop strong skills and supporting infrastructures around the world, and ready to use technology to help grow local economies and knowledge development in societies," said Hamilton.

The Skool web technologies are designed for use on all personal computers. Besides the web version, all schools in the state would be equipped with the offline version of Skool content.

"As part of our various initiatives, we have customised free software based programmes such as Dr. Geo, Rasmol, K-Tech lab, Geogebra, Chemtool, Kalcium etc, which have been widely accepted by the teaching and learning community. We are looking forward to enhance the present teaching learning activities to a more enjoyable and exciting process and we believe Skool [Kerala](#) content would enhance this process," said K. Anvar Sadath, executive director, IT@School Project.

State Education Minister M.A. Baby, who was present on the occasion, said that a consortium will be established by linking university departments, affiliated engineering colleges, arts and science colleges, media institutes and other established agencies for developing and generating content appropriate for the new curriculum and for the Virtual Classroom Technology on Edusat for Rural Schools (VICTERS) TV channel.

Skool Learning and Teaching Technology has received the United Nations World Summit Award, Golden Spider Award and the UK BETT Award.

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IT@School Project is the techno-functional arm of the General Education Department of the Kerala government. It was set up in 2000 for empowering the state school populace by imparting Information Communication Technology (ICT) enabled education from the grassroots.

IT@School provides ICT enabled education to over three million students every year in the state. The project saw 0.2 million teachers empowered in ICT through a network of 200 dedicated master trainers and 5,600 IT coordinators.

IT@School is the nodal agency for implementing EDUSAT network and runs an exclusive channel for education called ViCTERS. *IANS*

## [FOCUS - Education to get boost on govt reform, PE funds](#)

[Tue Feb 9, 2010 6:02pm IST](#)

[By Swati Pandey & Nandita Bose](#)

**MUMBAI (Reuters)** - India's education sector is likely to see heavy investments from private equity funds over the next couple of years betting on increased government spending and as private players plan expansions, officials said. The sector, pegged at \$86 billion, is seeing fresh interest from foreigners and large funds who are pumping in money in services, technology and infrastructure, they added.

"The education market in India is roughly worth \$50 billion in the private sector and all parts of the educational value chain are offering good investment opportunities," said Rajesh Singhal, managing partner of private equity firm Milestone Religare Investment Advisors Pvt Ltd.

"Private equity investment in the next two-three years should be in the range of \$400-\$500 million and that should not be a difficult target at all," he added.

Currently, investments are to the tune of \$200-\$250 million, officials say.

Milestone Religare recently invested 250 million rupees in an Indian education service firm from its 6 billion rupees private equity fund that focusses on education and healthcare.

India needs to increase investment in education, health and infrastructure to lift its economic growth rate, which slowed to a six-year low of 6.7 percent in 2008/09 from 9 percent or more in the previous three years.

The resource gap identified by the Planning Commission stands at 2,200 billion rupees and the government plans a public-private partnership approach to bridge the gap.

Pearson, the world's leading player in the education segment, which recently joined hands with Educomp Solutions, said it was enthusiastic to fill that gap and expand footprints in Asia's third-biggest economy.

"India's education requirements are big and immediate and acting now will sustain growth," Khozem Merchant, president, Pearson India, told Reuters

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"It's also an opportunity to collaborate with the government on an unprecedented scale," he added.

Earnings in Indian education services firms is expected to grow 35.5 percent over the next 12 months, according to ThomsonReuters StarMine smart estimates, far outstripping the 14 percent growth forecast in the information technology sector.

## STAKE-SALE

To capture this high-growth potential, television broadcaster Zee Entertainment spun off its education arm while Aptech bought Maya Academy of Advanced Cinematic for 760 million rupees.

Steelmaker Usha Martin is also diversifying into education, aiming to create 200 schools in three years.

"We'll see lots of interests in pre-schools, vocational training, going forward. There will be lots of interesting IPOs in a couple of years," said Sandeep Aneja, managing director of Kaizen Management Advisory, an education-focussed PE firm.

Manipal Universal Learning, the corporate entity of India's largest private player in higher education - the Manipal Education Group, plans to raise 5-10 billion rupees through an IPO, according to media reports.

Yash Birla's Birla Shloka Edutech, valued at \$12.8 million, last month raised nearly 350 million rupees by selling shares to fund acquisitions and bid for government projects.

However, experts feel the limited number of assets, which can deploy such large capital, along with tight regulations remain a key challenge.

"The higher education segment continues to be highly regulated. They have to be set up as non-profit organisations," said Milestone Religare's Singhal, adding it makes investments possible only in non-core services like IT and infra.

(Editing by Ramya Venugopal)

(For more news on Reuters Money visit [www.reutersmoney.in](http://www.reutersmoney.in))

## [Computer-based tests have a bright future in India](#)

[February 08, 2010](#)

Aamir Khan and his friends, in the movie "Three Idiots" rush from the hospital to write an exam. Since they reach late, they keep writing even after the professor says "Time Up", and sure enough the professor refuses to take their answer sheets. Aamir asks the professor whether he knows their roll numbers and names and when the teacher says no, Aamir mixes their sheets with the rest.

A brilliant way to tackle an unsuspecting professor and not so sophisticated paper and pen based exam. However, the ploy wouldn't have worked in the new computer based system. For one the system would have automatically frozen at the end of the time limit and Aamir wouldn't have been able to smooth talk his way out.

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Indian institutes of higher studies are finally embracing the global system of computer-based tests. The [Indian Institutes of Management \(IIMs\)](#) have already tested the waters. Though there were glitches, the bottom line is that every candidate who faced a problem was given a chance to re-write the exam on January 30 and 31. Not only will the IIMs benefit but also about 100 management institutes, who use the [Common Admission Test \(CAT\)](#) results to shortlist candidates.

Considering that over half a million students sit for management exams annually it's not surprising that entrance exam are going the online way. Narsee Monjee Institute of Management Studies, (NMIMS), is reporting a smooth conduct of their exam in 12 countries synchronously with nearly 25,000 candidates having completed their entrance exam, NMAT, in the first 7 days.

The agency administering this test, Pearson VUE, part of the Financial Times group, claims executing this exam using a contingency planning framework fully aware that conduct of an exam of this magnitude could face technical and infrastructure challenges, especially in India. Moreover, they have taken a lead in offering the test-takers the flexibility of late registration and re-scheduling it later.

Of course, exceptional students like Aamir can always face any exam and not get flustered by computers, but for others, like his friends, institutes have orientation programmes that students could walk through online and even take a demo test. For those taking NMAT it was available on the Institute's website.

The Computer Based Exam takes advantage of a more efficient system, which saves time for the students, provides them with the flexibility of choosing and or rescheduling test dates, ensures security, helps differently abled students, and opposed to popular belief, nullifies chances of leaked question papers.

The user interface is also designed to minimize reliance on computer skills. Candidates do not need to have prior computer experience to use CBT. There is a reduction in response errors as questions are presented one at a time. Moreover, mistakes in transferring answers from an exam booklet to an answer sheet are decreased.

Even with these advantages, it retains the edge of the pen and paper exam - ability to move within sections or questions. During the time allowed for the test, candidates may return to previous questions, change their answers and mark questions that they would like to review before completing the test. However, once the candidate completes the test or the test time is over, the candidate can no longer access any test question.

The administration of the test is unbiased as is the scoring, because it negates human error while evaluating answer sheets. Time keeping for each candidate is rigidly controlled so that everyone has exactly the same amount of time to complete



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his test.

For the institutes it is more efficient considering the number of students that sit for management exams every year. The sheer logistical nightmare of distributing question papers to widely scattered exam centres and then collecting and transporting the answer papers back to the evaluation centres is avoided. There is no need to appoint a large staff to painstakingly go through the answer sheets and tally the marks. This also enables easy scalability across geographies, as with NMAT this year, which went going global.

The statements of the chairman of the NMAT Admissions Committee that in the first 7 days, there has been no test batch cancellation because of technological or infrastructure reasons, and only 4 out of the 1,020 batches experienced a temporary stoppage after which the tests were resumed successfully, are re-assuring that the computer based testing has a bright future in India. Perhaps with a lot of contingency planning and a bit of luck! *IANS*

## [Kids, here comes nursery rhymes with Katrina](#)

[February 06, 2010](#)

**New Delhi:** Children might love this. Here comes a bunch of English nursery rhymes from Sa Re Ga Ma that not only offers audio-visual content but also features popular actress Katrina Kaif and some musical magic from Oscar-Grammy winner A.R. Rahman's school.

"Music engages the senses and stimulates the whole mind and body. This venture is a concept that will aim to fulfill this need to make learning rhymes a fun and engaging experience for the child," said B.R. Vijayalakshmi, general manager, audio-visual media of Sa Re Ga Ma.

"Nursery rhymes are a time-honoured play-and-learn method of introducing children to language and rhythm, an engaging way to strengthen and identify, differentiate and practice the sounds that are the building blocks of language," Vijayalakshmi told the sources.

Titled "[Sunfeast Dream Cream Rhyme School](#)", the album is slated to hit the stores in March and Sa Re Ga Ma has roped in Katrina to promote it and composer Rahman supervise the music.

"Adding magic to the mix, Katrina will take the children through the lilting rhymes in her own inimitable style in the video. Katrina's popularity among kids and her affable style and persona on screen made her fit for such a project," said Vijayalakshmi.

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"Rahman is the music supervisor for this project. The students at KM Music Conservatory, a college founded by Rahman, is arranging and composing the music for this album under the supervision of the music master," she added.

Sa Re Ga Ma is concentrating on other languages as well - in the recent past, the label produced animated Tamil children's folk songs "Nila Nila Odiva" sung by Latha Rajnikanth and animated Bengali children's rhymes "Aye Re Aye Tiye", which is a compilation of the traditional and most popular children's rhymes.

Preeti Sagar's "Phulwari Bachchon Ki" is another animated children's Hindi songs title in the pipeline.

Vijayalakshmi said, "Sa Re Ga Ma believes that learning can be made a lot more fun and effective through the use of vibrant multimedia, music and dance. To this effect, the company is launching a series of learning-oriented Home EduTainment products that will impact the way children learn."

To make the album a hit, Sa Re Ga Ma is planning a 360 degree media plan to promote the product with heavy penetration across metros. *IANS*

## [Second in IIT entrance test, he wants to do research in physics](#)

[May 31, 2008](#)

Nishant Totla, the Aurangabad boy who has bagged second spot in the all-India list of successful candidates of the Joint Entrance Examination for the prestigious Indian Institutes of Technology, is among five brilliant students of India selected for the International Physics Olympiad in Hanoi on July 19.

Second only to Shitikanth of Patna, Nishant is among the 8,652 successful candidates out of the 311,258 who appeared for the tough exam to enter the elite science and [engineering](#) institutes.

The polite son of paediatric surgeon Rajgopal and ophthalmologist Santosh was expecting to be among the first 10 successful candidates.

## [Joint Entrance Examination for the prestigious Indian Institutes of Technology](#)

Nishant wants to do research in physics after graduating in computer science either from [IIT Powai \(Mumbai\)](#) or Kanpur.

"I am very happy about the success and overwhelmed by the encomiums showered

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upon me from countless known and unknown people," Nishant, who studied at Devgiri College and Cambridge School in Aurangabad before that, told IANS on phone.

Chief Minister Vilasrao Deshmukh was among the first who phoned to greet Nishant on his success.

Another successful candidate is Ashwini Meshram, a Scheduled Caste girl from the backward Gadchiroli district of Maharashtra's Vidarbha region. Ashwini came 114th in the coveted list, where only 2.8 percent candidates could find a place. She is the first girl in the tribal district to pass the IIT entrance test.

As many as 28 students of Nagpur's IIT-Home are among the first 1,000 candidates in India. They include Ashish Rathi (rank 520), Ankita Agrawal (521), Rahul Srivastav (639) and Neha Jatav (577).

Pritih Kamath of Mumbai, securing 21st rank in the all India list, was a topper from Mumbai zone, from where 2,551 candidates were successful out of the 61,396 who sat for the exam.

Samir Eknath Mandge from Jalgaon has ranked 605 in the all India list and 62nd from among the other backward classes (OBC).

Nishant's father Rajagopal told IANS: "Nishu has a clear mind about pursuing research in physics - he would rather be a basic science researcher than the CEO of some multinational company."

The paediatrician was all praise too for his wife Santosh who stopped her practice for two years altogether so that she could make frequent trips to Kota, Rajasthan, where their son was preparing for his entrance exam.

While Nishant plays the guitar and keyboard besides reading science fiction, his "key passion" as he puts it, is football - both playing and watching. "I regularly follow the English Premier League," Nishant says, admitting that he had to keep aside all his extra-curricular interests while preparing for the entrance test. *IANS*

## [Indian Institute of Technology - Joint Entrance Examination \(IIT-JEE\)](#)

Joint Entrance Examination –JEE is one of the most popular and important entrance examinations for the Engineering, [Technology](#), Design, Architecture & Planning, Pharmacy and basic sciences streams in India. The entrance examination is conducted for admission to the Undergraduate Programmes for Indian and Foreign

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nationals at [Indian Institute of Technology](#) -IIT's, Institute of Technology- [Banaras Hindu University](#) - IT-BHU and Indian [School of Mines](#)- ISM-Dhanbad. The exam is conducted every year by any one of the IITs as directed by the IIT Board.

These institutions offer courses in a number of [engineering](#), technological and scientific disciplines leading to B. Tech. – Bachelor of Technology, B. Pharm. – Bachelor of [Pharmacy](#) and B. Des. – Bachelor of [Design](#). Some of these Institutes offer M.Sc. – Master of [Science](#) Integrated courses in pure and applied sciences and M.Tech. – Master of Technology. Some IITs offer Dual Degree M.Tech programmes wherein both B.Tech. & M.Tech. Degrees are awarded. The entrance examination is popular as IIT-JEE.

## [Bangaloreans learn to make art objects from discarded stuff](#)

[February 13, 2010](#)

**[Bangalore](#):** Bangaloreans on Saturday got a lesson in how to turn discarded stuff like CDs, glass, furniture, plastic and paper into art pieces and make the city litter-free.

A group of seven artists led by Sujata Tibrewala, a network engineer-turned-painter, guided scores of people in Defence Colony area in east [Bangalore](#) to make art objects out of the waste they had brought in.

Sujata and her artist friends Rekha Hebbar Rao, Bharati Sagar, Hari K.P., Tejshvi Jain, Tonnie Roche and Sreenivas Rao Sageeche held such an event for the first time.

"We are happy with the response, though we expected a little more," Sujata, who once worked as a network engineer with CISCO but quit to take to painting full time, told the sources.

The artists plan to organise such events periodically. "We will have regular weekly/monthly workshops," she added.

Sujata, an alumna of [Indian Institute of Technology, Kharagpur \(IIT-K\)](#), and Indian Institute of Science (IIS), [Bangalore](#), said the purpose of the initiative was "just to make people think, experience the joy of art-making and become an art practitioner/follower in the long run." *IANS*

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## Students in Mandi Gobindgarh placed in local BPO

Other states could take this leaf out of Punjab's success story. Prosperity has touched the remotest corners of this land. Three students of **Gobindgarh Public College** have been placed in **Sunil Khullar InfoTech** in Mandi Gobindgarh, Punjab.

CJ: Hs Jonjua

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