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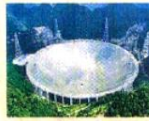
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Distance education now online

New initiative makes learning on the go possible for working professionals

S. SENTHALIR

PUDUCHERRY: Students pursuing distance education can study their courses on the move through their mobile phones and laptops.

In an initiative to help working professionals access quality higher education without taking a career break, Directorate of Distance Education, Pondicherry University, is going digital by offering select courses through online. It has begun this initiative by directly delivering course materials to the mobile or laptops of students enrolled for Master of Business Administration (MBA) programme.

One of the first batch of students who benefited from this online course, Vivek K.A.R., Manager, MSD Pharmaceuticals, said: "For quite some time, I wanted to pursue my post-graduation as I did not have the option of either doing a full-time course or attend contact classes of traditional distance education programmes. I joined Pondicherry University for the distance MBA programme which has additional lectures online. It offers me the flexibility to attend classes at my convenience. The universities' video lectures delivered through the app are excellent."

At present, at least 2,500 students have enrolled to study MBA course through the internet with Pondicherry University's distance education programme. Online delivery of distance education courses is enabled by the Avagmah Technology Platform, which can be ac-



SAVING TIME: Students can now access MBA course materials on their mobile phones or laptops.

cessed by students either via Android App on the mobiles or laptops.

The students enrolled for these programmes get a user id and password through which they can watch video lectures, attend live online sessions, participate in online case studies and have online discussions between students and faculty. All these form part of the curriculum. The platform helps solve traditional distance education's issues by providing quality education anytime, anywhere on any device.

Almost half of these students from tier 2 and tier 3 cities are availing the benefits.

"The UGC has given approval to introduce online courses for nine courses. At present, we have introduced

it in five branches of MBA," said Arvind Gupta, Assistant Director of Distance Education, Pondicherry University.

He added that postgraduate courses in Hindi, Sociology, English literature and M.Com will go online from the next academic year.

Sibnath Deb, Director of Distance Education, Pondicherry University, says: "For India to achieve its Gross Enrollment Ratio target by 2030, it is imperative for the education ecosystem to adopt technology. At Pondicherry University too, by adopting technology, we have endeavoured to make quality education accessible to deserving students in far-flung areas who would otherwise have no access to good education from a recognised university."

Dinoop N.D., Senior Manager, Academics - Tata Class Edge, who is pursuing MBA said: "As an experienced academic professional working with a multinational company for the last 10 years, I wanted to upgrade myself and learn more about the business side of things. The best part is the technology platform on which the university online learning support is delivered, which even has a dedicated app that can be downloaded from Google play. I use the app to study while travelling to work and back. It's great for working professionals like me."

The university has 35,000 students in its 87 affiliated colleges, including 27,000 students in the distance education mode, which is approved by UGC and Distance Education Bureau.