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UCONNECT

The Education Newsletter

Vol. III, Issue 16

Freedom Edition

Beyond AI: The Power of Judgment

Building

India's Second Infrastructure

Powering the Future: Cell Manufacturing

The Practice of Entrepreneurship

Photo credits - Team UC

Contents

We would like to invite our readers to participate in our exciting Photo Contest by sharing powerful moments that reflect learning, mentoring, and student life. The winning entry will be featured on the cover of our newsletter. Please send your entries to write@uconnectworld.com
Submissions must be in portrait format

Behind This Month's Cover Page

For this month's cover, we present an eclectic collection of photographs from the University Connection team, capturing the spirit, beauty, and diversity of India. Together, these images celebrate the unique cultures, landscapes, traditions, and people that make our nation truly extraordinary.

As India marks another year of Independence and continues to move forward with confidence and purpose, let us pause to reflect on the invaluable gift of freedom and honour the courage, sacrifice, and unwavering dedication of the soldiers and martyrs who made it possible.

We extend our warmest wishes to all our readers and fellow citizens for a Happy Independence Day!

Contributors

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COVER STORY

The Second Infrastructure: Why Upskilling India's Education Ecosystem Is Nation Building

By Bhakti Shah, Founder of The Outreach Collective

The future of India's students will be shaped not just by classrooms, but by the continuous growth of everyone who influences their choices.

Count the adults who shape a single student's future.

The teacher, yes. But also the school counsellor advising on streams. The university admissions officer reading her application. The outreach representative who addressed her school assembly and framed what a degree leads to. The independent consultant her parents hired. The product team whose app suggested her shortlist. The test-prep tutor. The loan adviser. The visa consultant. A student's path is not decided in a classroom alone. It is assembled, decision by decision, across a long chain of professionals — some inside education, many adjacent to it, all shaping outcomes. The quality of that chain is a national variable. And in India, we have only just begun to acknowledge it exists.

The recognition has arrived

To be precise, about where India stands, the policy architecture is not entirely missing; the National Education Policy 2020 explicitly emphasises guidance, counselling, and holistic student development. In 2025, the Supreme Court issued rulings on student wellbeing, one laying down 21 guidelines that recommend professional career guidance for students and parents. And CBSE has revised its Affiliation Bye Laws, approved in November 2025, to mandate counselling capacity in schools, including, for the first time, a dedicated career counsellor as a specialised role distinct from the wellness teacher. This is genuine progress, and deserves to be named as such. India's policy establishment has formally recognised that a student's decisions need professional support, not just familial goodwill.

But read the mandate closely, and you find its most honest clause: where a trained career counsellor is not available, schools may appoint a trained teacher instead — with a two-year window to acquire the qualifications. The policy itself concedes the constraint. India has an estimated ten thousand trained career counsellors for over twenty-six crore school students — roughly 1:3,000, against a globally recommended 1:250 (Infigon Futures, 2025). The UN-backed Bharat Career Aspirations Report 2025, surveying over 21,000 students, found only about one in ten in Classes 9 to 12 has access to expert career guidance.

A mandate can create a role overnight. It cannot create competence overnight. Between the two lies the real work — and it is the work this country talks about least: the continuous, structured upskilling of every professional in the student-decision chain.

The chain is longer than we think

Here is where the national conversation, even at its best, stays too narrow. When we say "guidance," we picture the school counsellor. But consider who else is dispensing judgment at scale, right now, with no mandated professional development at all.

Keeping up is not professional vanity. It is the minimum standard of care.

University admissions and outreach teams spend entire seasons travelling between schools, addressing thousands of students, answering questions about careers, costs, and futures. Their words carry institutional authority. Yet most learn the craft — and its considerable ethics — informally, on the job. There is no board exam for representing a university honestly to a sixteen-year-old.

EdTech founders and product teams sit even closer to the decision. Their platforms shortlist colleges, interpret psychometric tests, and nudge families toward choices. Many are genuinely skilled at product; far fewer have deep context on how students actually decide, what assessments can and cannot predict, or what a counsellor sees in a room that a dashboard cannot. Their assumptions ship to millions.

Independent consultants advise families making the largest financial commitments of their lives. Test-prep educators calibrate expectations that shape a student's self-belief. **Every link in this chain influences outcomes.** Almost none has structured access to current knowledge, peer challenge, or shared standards. Teachers, rightly, have training institutions and mandated development. The rest of the ecosystem has conferences designed to sell to it. That asymmetry is the gap the mandates cannot close on their own.

Why this is a nation-building question

Two facts elevate this from a professional concern to a national one.

The first is **scale and irreversibility.** Stream at fifteen. Degree at seventeen. Country at eighteen. These decisions are compressed, high-stakes, and largely one-way. Over 1.3 million Indian students study abroad; behind many stand families committing sums that industry estimates place between ₹80 lakh and ₹1.5 crore — often the largest financial decision in a household's history — into a landscape where policies and costs genuinely shift within months. Research by Infigon Futures suggests 93% of

COVER STORY *Contd.*

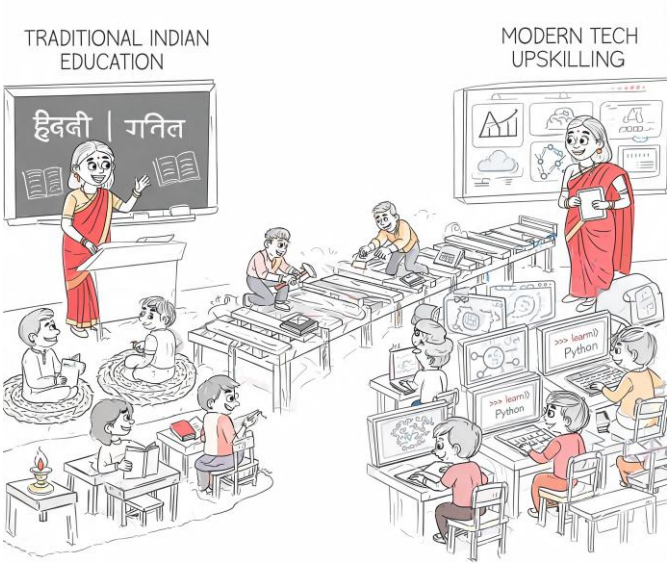
Indian students can name ten careers or fewer, out of more than 250 documented options. When decisions of this magnitude rest on thin information, the loss compounds across cohorts into a systematic misallocation of the country's most valuable resource during the very decades our demographic advantage is supposed to pay out. The dividend is a window, not a permanent feature. Cohorts advised badly do not get re-runs.

The second is the mainstreaming of AI. The 2024 Annual Student Quest Survey by the IC3 Institute and FLAME University found that over 85% of school students now use AI tools like ChatGPT for career guidance while at least 40% have never once interacted with a career counsellor. The technology reached students before the profession did. This does not solve the problem; it sharpens it. A chatbot retrieves information. It does not sit between an anxious parent and a conflicted teenager and surface the option neither imagined. Technology amplifies whatever judgment already exists in the system; so the better the tools become, the more the quality of the humans wielding them matters, across every link of the chain.

Other nations offer reference points, though none offers a finished answer. Germany's apprenticeship system runs on a substantial guidance apparatus; the UK, Canada, and Australia embed career development within schools; Singapore links skills forecasting to national planning. Yet all carry well-documented strains — counsellor shortages, uneven quality, provision that varies sharply by region and school. The lesson is not that anyone has perfected this. It is subtler: these countries treat guidance as public infrastructure to be maintained, measured, and repaired, not as a private amenity for families who can afford it. Infrastructure can be imperfect and still be infrastructure. The question for India is not whether we can copy someone's system, but whether we will treat the professional capacity around our students with the seriousness we already apply to what happens inside the classroom.

What the second infrastructure looks like

Post-Independence India built the first infrastructure of nationhood — dams, plants, IITs, AIIMS and the institutions to run them. The task now visible is quieter: the infrastructure of judgment. It has three requirements, none of which a mandate alone can supply. Platforms for continuous learning, because in this sector knowledge has a shelf life. Visa rules, admissions practices, testing formats, and funding landscapes change faster than any one professional can track alone. Structures for cross - stakeholder collaboration, because the chain fails at its interfaces. The counsellor, the university representative, and the product builder each hold a partial picture of the same student. They need rooms, literal and institutional, where those pictures are assembled and corrected. Having spent several years helping build one such community in India, the clearest lesson is this: practice changes fastest when professionals are given infrastructure to learn from each other rather than pitches to sit through.



Indian knowledge production

For decades, the frameworks, assessments, and professional standards of this sector have been developed elsewhere and adapted here, often imperfectly, because they were designed for other students in other systems. A country serving the world's largest student population should also be producing professional knowledge for its own context: assessments normed on Indian students, standards written for Indian realities, evidence drawn from Indian classrooms and counselling rooms. That is self-reliance in its most compounding form — every professional who upgrades their judgment upgrades hundreds of student decisions a year, for years.

Their world, our homework

There is one more reason this cannot wait, and it is generational. The students walking into counselling rooms today are not younger versions of us. They are AI-native, raised amid information abundance, portfolio careers, and professional categories that did not exist when most of us chose ours. They consulted the machine before they consulted us. This is their world, and the professionals guiding them are, in a real sense, the immigrants to it.

That inverts a comfortable assumption. We tell students lifelong learning is the defining skill of their era. But we cannot instil in students what we do not practise ourselves. This is not a philosophical nicety; it is arithmetic. The skills required to stay relevant in the next decade — reading AI critically, navigating shifting global systems, unlearning outdated defaults — are, if anything, more urgent for the older generations in this chain, because this world's DNA is newer to us than to them. A counsellor, a university representative, or a founder whose knowledge froze in 2015 is not neutral in a student's life. Keeping up is not professional vanity. It is the minimum standard of care.

The decades after Independence built the visible infrastructure of a new nation, against far worse odds than ours. The quieter work is this: ensuring that every adult standing at the junction of a young person's decisions is equipped for the world that young person will actually live in.

The first infrastructure decided what India could build. The second decides what its people become. It will never be finished. Every generation has to build it again.

***Sources:** Bharat Career Aspirations Report 2025 (UN-backed survey of 21,000+ students, Classes 9–12); Infigon Futures research (2025) on counsellor ratios and career awareness; 2024 Annual Student Quest Survey, IC3 Institute & FLAME University; CBSE Affiliation Bye Laws revision (approved November 2025); Supreme Court of India rulings on student wellbeing (2025); National Education Policy 2020.*

Top Sports Achievements of 2026 - Focus India

TOP 10

As part of our special Independence Day Freedom Edition, we are delighted to present this exclusive list, thoughtfully curated by Ankit Gupta (Lead - Career and Guidance Counselling at Delhi World Public School, Delhi, NCR)

The Indian sports industry is going through a rapid transformation from simple entertainment into a rapidly expanding, multi-billion-dollar business ecosystem driven by digital media, government policy, rising income, and a young, engaged population. In 2024-25, the sports industry had been valued at around $19-52 billion and is estimated to reach around $130 billion by 2030 with strong job creation potential. (Source: ResearchGate, KPMG, India Times).

Check out the Pictures Archive on Page 11

Let's have a look at the Top Indian Sporting Achievements of 2026

Cricket
- India successfully hosted the ICC Men's T20 World Cup.
- Royal Challengers Bengaluru (RCB) won the IPL 2026 title, becoming champions for the second consecutive season.
- The Indian Women's Cricket Team recorded its first-ever Test victory in England.
- Vaibhav Sooryavanshi became the youngest player to be inducted into Team India.
- Kranti Gaud (22) became the first Indian woman to feature on the Lord's Honours Board after taking a sensational five-wicket haul during India's historic Test victory in England.

Badminton
- The Indian Men's Team secured a historic bronze medal at the Thomas Cup.
- P. V. Sindhu won the Japan Open 2026 title.
- The doubles pair of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty claimed the Singapore Open title.

Football
- Minerva Academy won the prestigious Helsinki Cup.
- The academy also lifted the Gothia Cup 2026, defeating Brazil 2–1 in the final.

Shooting
Neeru Dhanda won India's first-ever gold medal at the ISSF Shotgun World Cup.

Karate
Alisha Choudhary became the first Indian karate athlete to win the Asian Karate Championship.

Athletics
Neeraj Chopra became the first Indian javelin thrower to breach the 90-metre mark, throwing 90.23m at the Doha Diamond League.

Para Athletics
India finished the World Para Athletics Championships with 15 medals: 2 Gold, 5 Silver and 8 Bronze.

Squash
Anahat Singh won the JSW Indian Open Squash 2026 title.

Hockey
The Indian Women's Hockey Team defeated New Zealand 2–0 to win gold at the FIH Women's Hockey World Cup Qualifiers in Hyderabad.

Discuss Throw
Seema Kaliramna clinches Bronze in CWG 2026.

The Power of Belief

This year's Commonwealth Games in Glasgow once again showcased what Indian women can achieve when talent is matched with opportunity. Sakshi Chaudhary, Preeti Pawar, Jaismine Lamboria, Priya Ghanghas, and Arundhati Chaudhary each brought home gold, reflecting years of perseverance, disciplined training, and the steadfast guidance of their coaches and support systems. As India celebrates its 80th Independence Day, their victories remind us that when women receive equal opportunities, quality coaching, and unwavering encouragement, they do not merely compete- they lead, inspire, and elevate the nation, paving the way for future generations of champions.

Careers in the field of Sports in India
by Ankit Gupta

Careers in the field of sports in India extend far beyond professional athletics, offering meaningful opportunities for those with a sporting background. For sports professionals, these pathways can be an excellent fit because they allow them to use their experience, discipline, and understanding of the game in professional roles with long-term relevance. Fields like sports management, sports science, data analytics, coaching and instruction, and sports law each offer different career possibilities.

India's Sports Industry: Opportunities Beyond the Field
by Sruthi John, Research Counsellor and Projects Lead, University Connection

India's sports industry is no longer limited to on-field careers. Today, it encompasses a growing ecosystem of opportunities in sports law, healthcare, media, analytics, management, technology, and event operations. For students aspiring to enter this dynamic industry, qualifications alone are not enough. Gaining hands-on experience by volunteering at sporting events, building a professional presence by publishing sports-related insights on platforms like LinkedIn or Medium, and developing in-demand technical skills are equally important. Business students should strengthen their expertise in Excel and corporate pitching, while technology students should learn tools such as Python or Tableau. In the sports industry, practical skills and experience often matter as much as passion.

STUDENT'S Corner

Travelling Through Bangladesh, Discovering Economics

By Anuvrata Das, Grade 12 IBDP student,
Sancta Maria International School, Faridabad, Haryana, India

From informal labour markets to unequal infrastructure, a firsthand account of how Bangladesh illustrates the economic realities behind growth and inequality.

I arrived in Bangladesh on a vacation to visit my father, who's currently working there. I reached with anticipation, awaiting the hills, food, endless tea gardens, and cultural warmth, for which the country is celebrated. I found all of that. But I also found the inequalities hidden beneath it.

The Invisible Workforce

On almost every street corner, people laboured relentlessly beneath the midday sun. Street vendors waited for hours to make a sale, rickshaw pullers pedalled with visible exhaustion, and construction workers carried loads that seemed far beyond what anyone should have to endure. None of this work is accounted for. It's the informal economy, the part of the labour market that never shows up in official statistics but employs a huge share of the country's workforce: no contracts, no minimum wage, no safety net if the day goes badly. There was no enjoyment in any eye that I looked at. Just a look of exhaustion. It led me to ask a question economics usually dwindles to statistics: Why do millions work this hard and stay poor?

A Case Study in Inequality

A few days later, travelling to a resort in Mymensingh answered more than any textbook could. The roads were crowded, badly maintained, and noisy. What should have been a short journey became an excruciatingly long one, hemmed in by half-finished buildings and roadside stalls. Then almost suddenly, we arrived. Inside the resort, which catered to wealthier visitors, were perfectly paved roads, quiet surroundings, and landscaped gardens. Everything was functioning exactly as was intended. The transition almost felt unsettling.

Economists use the Gini coefficient to quantify inequality. But no statistic could capture the sensation of travelling from struggling communities to entering a place where any slight inconvenience disappears.

Infrastructure isn't just concrete and asphalt. It also encompasses reliable electricity, sanitation, internet access, and public transport. As a form of public capital, it provides the government-funded foundation upon which economic activity depends. Unequal access to such infrastructure contributes to differences in countries' Gini coefficients, revealing broader disparities in opportunity and living standards. Substandard roads lead to higher costs for businesses transporting goods, costs that get passed onto the buyers. Investors think twice before building a factory where deliveries are uncertain. This leads to fewer employment opportunities for the ones that need it the most. Businesses go where infrastructure already works. The resort had all of that solved. The streets outside didn't. Wealth and poverty sit at the same table here, separated only by a few kilometres.

Incentives Shape Decisions

Then there was the driving. Cars squeezed into impossible gaps, motorcycles ignored lanes altogether, and buses overtook one another at alarming speeds, pushing smaller vehicles to the edge of the road. Horns had long ceased to mean "warning" and instead became the language of the streets. At first glance, it looked like recklessness. In reality, it was economics shaping behaviour. Many bus drivers earn more by completing additional trips or carrying more passengers. Every minute saved is money, and every minute lost can mean no food on the table that day. This isn't an excuse for the rash driving; it's a reminder that the fix lies in changing the incentives, not just the habits.

Understanding Poverty vs. Inequality

The longer I stayed, the clearer the issue became. I saw children selling snacks by the roadside, helping in their parents' shops, and carrying livestock through busy streets, working harder than I have ever had to, yet caught in the cycle of poverty. It is a detrimental disadvantage at birth, one that can follow generations. Poverty isn't a lack of effort. It's a lack of opportunity. That's the difference between poverty and inequality. Poverty is not having enough to live on, whereas inequality is the gap in living standards between people. Bangladesh grapples with both. A family in the informal economy, with limited access to education or the infrastructure needed to progress, often remains trapped in poverty, while the gap between them and the rest of society continues to widen.

None of this makes Bangladesh a failing nation. Quite the opposite, really. Over the past decade, poverty has fallen, literacy and life expectancy have risen, and industries like garment manufacturing thrive internationally. But that prosperity isn't distributed evenly. Unequal access to infrastructure and education has prevented many communities from sharing equally in that progress. For every modern mall is a family unsure of tomorrow's meals. For every luxury apartment are workers whose wages can't keep up with inflation. For every two steps forward, one foot lingers behind — the reality facing much of the developing world.

Looking Beyond the Numbers

As students, professionals, or simply individuals fortunate enough to have access to opportunities such as education and stability, experiences like these should not merely evoke sympathy; rather, they should challenge how we think about opportunity, inequality, and our own responsibility. They serve as a reminder that the opportunities we take for granted every day are fought for by millions who may never have the chance to access them. Perhaps that is the most important lesson I learned, not from my economics classroom, but from the journey between unfinished roads and perfectly paved ones.

At University Connection, we engage with visionary thinkers from around the globe who are redefining the landscape of education. By capturing the essence of their ideas and insights, we serve as a bridge connecting all stakeholders in the education ecosystem.

UCONNECT would be incomplete without the valuable contributions of such trailblazers.

Educator SPOTLIGHT

In today's Educator Spotlight, we're honored to feature **Mr. Hussaini Syed, Academic Director of Greenfields English High School, Ohar, Aurangabad.**

Ohar is a rural village and growing residential area located in the Aurangabad (Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar) taluka and district of Maharashtra, India.

In Conversation with Hussaini Syed

What inspired you to transition from a successful IT career to education?
My transition into education was inspired by the time I spent in the Netherlands and Denmark. Observing the educational systems there fundamentally changed the way I looked at learning. I saw classrooms that went beyond textbooks and exams, placing a strong emphasis on Competency-Based Education (CBE), STEM education, creativity, collaboration, and problem-solving. Students were encouraged to think independently, explore ideas freely, and apply their knowledge to real-world challenges. It made me ask myself, "Why can't we have this kind of education system in India?"

Was there a particular example that strengthened your vision for education?
Yes. One powerful example was LEGO, the iconic Danish company. What began as a simple wooden toy manufacturer evolved into a global leader in educational products, teaching children science, technology, engineering, and mathematics through the power of play. For me, LEGO became a perfect metaphor for how a strong educational mindset and an innovative approach can transform not just a company, but an entire generation's approach to learning and creation.

What was the defining moment that shaped your mission as an educator?
Over the years, I observed students struggling with critical academic and career decisions. I saw capable students who were uncertain about their strengths and future pathways. The issue was not a lack of ability, but the absence of structured guidance, exposure, and systems that help students understand how they learn and what they are naturally inclined toward. This realization shifted my focus from simply admiring progressive education models to actively building them.

Why is career guidance such an important part of your work?
A central component of my work is guiding students toward the right career path. Through my participation in the IC3 Institute's Empower Program, I have strengthened career and college counseling frameworks within schools. The program connects educators with global experts in higher education, enabling schools to develop comprehensive systems that guide students through career exploration and university planning. Platforms like UniversityConnection.in are also helping bridge the gap between schools and global institutions by ensuring students receive accurate and updated guidance on international opportunities.

What advice would you give to emerging educators and counselors?
My advice is simple: cultivate curiosity and empathy. In a world where education is constantly evolving, educators who remain open to learning will be best equipped to guide their students. Above all, I believe in the power of listening. When educators truly understand a student's aspirations and challenges, they can provide guidance that leads to confident and meaningful choices.

What is your vision for the future of education?
At the heart of my work is a clear mission: to equip schools with the vision, systems, and capabilities needed to prepare students for a rapidly evolving world. By integrating STEAM, competency-based learning, artificial intelligence, and structured career counseling, I hope to contribute to an education system that prepares students not only for examinations, but for thoughtful, purposeful lives in an ever-changing global society.

What the world needs most today: Compassionate leadership and responsible innovation.

An overlooked superpower among students: Curiosity and adaptability.

Hometown: Aurangabad, India.

If you're an educator who has a perspective or insight to share, we'd love to hear from you. Please write to us at write@uconnectworld.com
Disclaimer: The views expressed in this article are solely those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of University Connection, UCONNECT, or its constituting team of Research Counselors)

At University Connection, we engage with visionary leaders and industry experts from around the world who are shaping the future of their respective fields. By bringing together their perspectives, experiences, and insights, we create meaningful conversations that connect students, educators, institutions, and professionals with the evolving world of work.

Industry SPOTLIGHT

UCONNECT would be incomplete without the valuable contributions of these thought leaders.

In today's Industry Spotlight, we are honoured to feature **Jude John of Agratas,** whose insights offer a deeper understanding of the Cell Manufacturing industry's evolving landscape, key trends, and the opportunities and challenges that lie ahead.

Cell Manufacturing

In Conversation with Jude John

By Jude John, Senior Manufacturing Engineer at Agratas- A Tata Enterprise

agratas
A TATA Enterprise

Tell us about the professional world you represent and the journey that has shaped your perspective within it.

I work in the energy storage and battery engineering space, and I've been in this field for around eight years now. My journey started on the research side, where I was focused on understanding electrochemical behavior, testing, and failure mechanisms in cells. That phase really shaped how I think; it gave me a strong foundation in asking "why" things happen, not just observing them. Over time, I've gradually moved closer to the manufacturing and industrial side of batteries, working more on areas like formation, testing, and process development. It's been an interesting shift from studying cells in controlled environments to seeing how they behave at scale, where consistency, reliability, and real-world constraints come into play. I think this mix of research and practical experience has shaped my perspective quite a bit. I tend to approach problems analytically, but I also keep in mind what's actually feasible on the ground. It's been a learning journey so far, and I'm still very much evolving within this space.

Describe a typical day in your job in just three words.
Analytical, collaborative, evolving

What's the biggest misconception about your profession?

One common misconception is that battery engineering is just about materials or lab research. In reality, a big part of the work lies in understanding how those materials behave in real-world conditions and at scale. Especially in manufacturing and testing, it's not just about designing a good cell; it's about ensuring consistency, safety, and performance across thousands or millions of cells. There's a lot of problem-solving, iteration, and cross-functional work involved that people don't always see.

When you're looking at a resume today, what makes you pause and say, "This one looks promising"? And what instantly makes you skeptical?

When I look at a resume, what usually catches my attention is when someone has clearly worked on real problems and can show some ownership, not just listing tasks, but what they actually did and what came out of it. Even small details like how they describe a problem or the outcome can tell a lot about how they think. I also tend to notice when someone has gone a bit beyond their core role, whether that's picking up data analysis, working across teams, or taking initiative in something outside their immediate scope. What makes me skeptical is when a resume feels too generic or overloaded with buzzwords but doesn't really show depth. Also, when everything sounds perfect, but there's no mention of challenges or learning, it feels less real. I usually look for signs of actual problem-solving rather than just responsibilities listed out.

What are the must-know technical skills in your field right now? Are there any tools or platforms students should already be experimenting with?

In the battery space right now, I think the most important technical skills are a mix of fundamentals and the ability to work with real data.

A solid understanding of electrochemistry and cell behavior is still essential, but increasingly, being able to analyze test data and draw meaningful insights from it is just as important. On the practical side, familiarity with tools like Python (especially for data analysis), basic SQL for handling large datasets, and even something like Excel or Power BI for quick analysis goes a long way. A lot of work in testing and manufacturing comes down to identifying patterns, outliers, and trends in large volumes of data. For students, I'd definitely suggest experimenting with real datasets, even simple battery cycling data, and trying to understand what the data is actually telling you. It's less about mastering a specific tool and more about building the habit of asking the right questions and connecting the data back to physical behavior.

INDUSTRY Spotlight *Contd.*

What human qualities or soft skills make someone truly stand out in your field right now?

Beyond technical skills, what really stands out is how someone approaches problems and works with others. In this field, things rarely go exactly as planned, so having the patience to dig into issues, stay structured, and not jump to conclusions too quickly makes a big difference.

I also think curiosity is underrated. The people who ask "why is this happening?" and keep digging tend to grow much faster than those who just follow processes. Overall, it's a mix of being analytical, curious, and reliable someone who can be trusted to handle ambiguity and still move things in the right direction.

Where do you see a gap between what students are taught and what your industry actually needs?

One gap I've noticed is that a lot of academic learning is focused on ideal conditions: clean data, controlled experiments, and clear outcomes. In reality, especially in manufacturing and testing, things are much messier and more unpredictable.

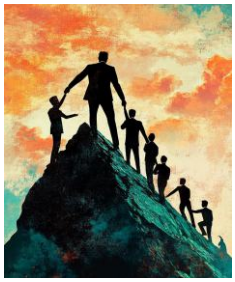
Data isn't always perfect, systems don't behave exactly as expected, and you often have to make decisions with incomplete information. Another gap is around scale.

In school, you might work on a single cell or a small experiment, but in industry, the challenge is making that same performance consistent across thousands or millions of units. That shift from understanding something to making it repeatable at scale is quite significant.

I also feel there's less emphasis on cross-functional work. In practice, you're constantly interacting with different teams process, quality, equipment, safety and aligning everyone is a big part of getting things done. So while the fundamentals taught in school are important, the real learning comes from dealing with ambiguity, scale, and collaboration in real-world environments.

Even in early-career professionals, what leadership behaviours impress you the most?

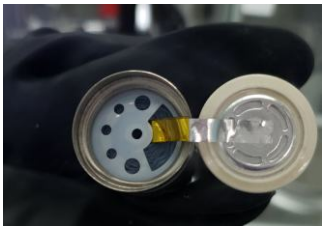
Even early in someone's career, what stands out to me is a sense of ownership. It doesn't have to be something big, but when someone takes responsibility for a problem and sees it through instead of waiting to be told what to do, it really shows. I'm also impressed by people who communicate clearly and aren't afraid to ask the right questions. Early on, you're not expected to have all the answers, but knowing when to speak up, clarify, or challenge something thoughtfully is a strong sign of maturity. Another thing is how someone handles setbacks. In this field, things go wrong quite often, so staying calm, being structured, and focusing on solving the issue rather than reacting emotionally makes a big difference. Overall, it's less about formal leadership and more about mindset: being dependable, curious, and someone others can rely on when things get difficult.



What is something technology will never fully replace in your line of work and why?

I think one thing that won't really be replaced is human judgment, especially in situations where things don't quite add up. In this field, you often come across results or behaviors that don't fit neatly into expectations, and at that point it's not just about data; it's about how you interpret it. Sometimes it's small things: a trend that looks slightly off, or a result that technically passes but doesn't feel right. That kind of intuition usually comes from experience and from having seen similar issues before. Also, a lot of the work isn't just technical it involves coordinating with different teams, making calls under uncertainty, and taking responsibility when things go wrong. I think that combination of judgment, context, and accountability is something technology can support, but not fully replace.

What's something about your work that would genuinely intrigue someone seeing your industry from the outside?



One of the coolest parts of my job is that you're constantly trying to understand something that isn't directly visible. You're working with cells that look simple from the outside, but internally there's a lot happening, and you're trying to interpret that through data, testing, and behavior. It's a bit like solving a puzzle. You run tests, look at patterns, and try to piece together what the cell is actually doing and why. Sometimes small changes in process or conditions can have a big impact, and figuring that out is quite interesting. Also, knowing that this work directly contributes to technologies like electric vehicles or energy storage makes it feel more meaningful; you're not just analyzing data, you're helping enable something larger.

DID YOU KNOW?

India's Battery Waste Management Rules, 2022, mandate that recyclers recover 90% of materials from EV and portable lithium-ion batteries by 2026–27, with rules following an Extended Producer Responsibility framework requiring producers to register with the Central Pollution Control Board and meet rising collection and recycling targets over time.
Reference link **(https://www.iea.org/policies/25166-battery-waste-management-rules-2022).**

(If you're an industry professional/expert who has a perspective or insight to share, we'd love to hear from you. Please write to us at write@uconnectworld.com

PARTNER Spotlight

The Entrepreneurial Mindset Is Not a Talent. It Is a Practice.

By Professor Anil Srinivasan, Founder, KRUU

What if entrepreneurship is not born from business plans or startup ideas, but from curiosity, persistence, and the habit of solving real-world problems long before students ever call themselves entrepreneurs?

KRUU

I want to tell you about a student named Rishab. Sixteen years old. KSN School, Chennai. Assigned a physics project on a Tuesday — the kind of thing students do because the teacher said so, not because the universe demanded it. Except something happened in the doing of it. He went deeper than the assignment asked. Nobody told him to. He just could not stop.

A few weeks later, Sunday morning, he is reading a newspaper. Not the front page. Three pages in, where stories go when editors have decided most people will not bother. A small article. Glacial floods in Sikkim. **He reads it once. Sets it down. Picks it up again.**

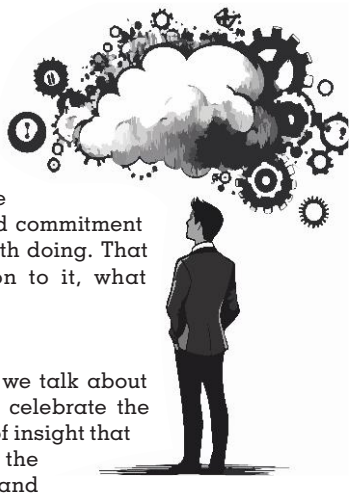
And then — and this is the part I find myself returning to — he does not scroll past it the way the rest of us would. He connects it to everything he has been sitting with. He frames a problem. He builds a hypothesis. He proposes a solution to mitigate glacial lake outburst floods. His teacher reads it and goes very quiet. Then she tells him about the Rashtriya Bal Puraskar. He applies. He gets shortlisted for a national award.

A Question Worth Asking: What Makes an Entrepreneur?

Rishab was not trying to become an innovator. He was doing a physics project. So let me ask you something. Is Rishab an entrepreneur? And if he is — what exactly built that in him? I have been asking myself a version of this question for twenty-five years.

Not always about students. Sometimes about myself.

I did not come from a family with wealthy connections or an obvious path into business. I came from music. I spent years practising scales before anyone would pay to hear me play. I learned, through that process, something that no classroom ever taught me explicitly — that mastery is not a destination you arrive at. It is a daily decision to return to the work, especially on the days when the work does not return the favour. When I eventually walked into rooms with investors and started talking about CAC, LTV, and GMV, I was not speaking a language I had studied. I was applying a discipline I had practised since childhood. The tolerance for ambiguity. The willingness to revise. The understanding that the performance on stage is built in ten thousand hours of practice that nobody ever sees.



Every investor who believed in KRUU knew me first as a musician. That trust did not come from a pitch deck. It came from decades of demonstrated commitment to something difficult and worth doing. That is, if you pay close attention to it, what entrepreneurship actually is.

The Myth of the Great Idea

We have a problem with how we talk about entrepreneurial mindsets. We celebrate the idea. The spark. The moment of insight that changes everything. We tell the stories of founders in garages and dropouts who built empires and make it sound like the most important ingredient was the vision itself.

The graveyard of failed ventures is full of visionaries.

What separates the people who build from the people who imagine is not the quality of the idea. It is a set of capacities I have come to think of as Creative Intelligence, and it is almost never what we are building in schools.

Understanding Creative Intelligence

Creative Intelligence, as I understand it, is not a single thing. It is a composite. It is cognitive: the quality of questions a person habitually asks, not the volume of answers they can recall. It is collaborative — the ability to work with minds unlike your own, to disagree productively, to build something together that neither of you could have built alone. It is innovative — the imagination that looks at a real problem and asks what if, then stays with that question long enough to find out. And it is artistic — the capacity to make meaning from complexity and give it a form that others can act on.

A musician understands this instinctively. You do not perform a concerto by knowing the notes. You perform it by having practised the relationship between the notes so many times that the music flows from something deeper than conscious thought. The same is true of entrepreneurship. You do not build a company by knowing the theory. You build it by having practised the underlying capacities until they become instinct.

PARTNER Spotlight *Contd.*

Rishab, reading that newspaper on a Sunday morning, was not applying a framework. He was thinking the way someone thinks when they have practised inquiry long enough that it stops feeling like a method and starts feeling like a reflex. That reflex is what we are trying to build.

Across 450,000 students in over 500 schools, what KRUU has shown and what keeps me genuinely optimistic on the days when optimism is hard to find is that this reflex can be cultivated deliberately. Not through inspiration sessions. Not through pitch competitions where students spend forty-eight hours with an idea and call it entrepreneurship. Through sustained, structured exposure to real problems, real experts, and the expectation that a student's thinking is consequential.

When Students Learn to See Problems Differently

A student at Don Bosco International School looked at food going into the bin after lunch and turned it into a data problem. Attendance records, menus, and weather patterns combined into a prediction model 40 percent more accurate than current practice. He was not training to be a founder. He was learning to see a system, identify its failure, and build a response. The innovative dimension of Creative Intelligence, practised in a school cafeteria.

A student at Delhi Public School Navi Mumbai spent a week mapping empty classrooms before writing a line of code. His finding: the timetable itself was the source of energy waste, not the technology. He built a dynamic scheduling system projecting reductions of 20 to 30 percent. He did not wait to be told what the problem was. He went and found it.

Neither of these students had a spectacular idea. They had structured exposure to real problems, real mentors, and the trust that their thinking was worth taking seriously. Over time, that trust becomes an internal conviction. And internal conviction is the only reliable foundation an entrepreneur ever builds on.

As counsellors, you occupy a position of unusual influence.

You see students before the world has told them what they are capable of. Before they have succeeded or failed publicly at anything. Before the habits of mind that will define their working lives have fully set.

That window is not permanent.

The question I would ask you to carry into your work, not as a diagnostic tool but as a genuine inquiry, is this: Are the learning environments through which your students move every day building the capacities that entrepreneurship actually requires? The tolerance for ambiguity? The habit of inquiry? The ability to work across difference? The confidence to begin before the outcome is guaranteed?

Or are they building something else — technically proficient, examination-ready young people who have been so thoroughly trained to find the right answer that they freeze the first time a question arrives without one.

Entrepreneurship Begins Long Before a Startup

Entrepreneurship is a choice. Every entrepreneur chooses it, usually more than once, usually on days when the sensible thing would be to choose something safer. But the capacity to make that choice and follow through — the resilience, the curiosity, the creative intelligence underneath the decision — that is built long before anyone calls it entrepreneurship.

It is built the way Rishab built it. One question at a time, in a classroom where someone trusted him enough to hand him something real and step back.

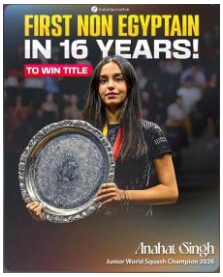
It is built the way I built it. In years of practice that nobody scheduled, in a discipline that taught me everything about persistence that business school never could. The entrepreneurial mindset is not a talent. It is not a personality type. It is not something your students either have or do not have.

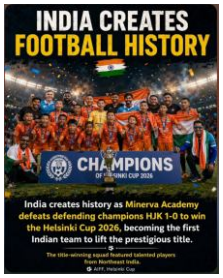
It is a practice. And it begins much earlier than we think.

TOP 10

Contd. from Page 5

Every medal tells a story of perseverance, discipline, and national pride. Here are some of the Indian athletes who made the nation proud in 2026





YOUR Opinion MATTERS

The Next Competitive Advantage for Universities Isn't AI. It's Judgment.

By Professor Aryapriya Ganguly, Associate Dean, Indian School of Business and Finance (ISBF)

A reliable way to make people believe in falsehoods is frequent repetition, because familiarity is not easily distinguished from truth. – Daniel Kahneman, Thinking, Fast and Slow

The New Challenge: Trusting Information in the Age of AI

Imagine asking five different AI tools the same question. Within seconds, you'll likely have five polished, persuasive, and seemingly confident answers. Some may be brilliant. Some may be incomplete. One or two may even be spectacularly wrong. The real challenge isn't finding an answer anymore. It's knowing which one deserves your trust.

This is the defining educational challenge of our time.

For centuries, universities were custodians of knowledge. Today, knowledge is everywhere. It lives in our pockets, arrives in endless notifications, and is increasingly generated in seconds by artificial intelligence. Ironically, just as information has become abundant, judgment has become scarce. The competitive advantage for tomorrow's graduates will not lie in how quickly they can retrieve information, but in how thoughtfully they can evaluate it.

System 1 and System 2: Why Slower Thinking Matters

Daniel Kahneman and Amos Tversky's groundbreaking work on decision-making offers an important lens through which to understand this shift. They proposed that our minds operate through two systems. System 1 is fast, intuitive and automatic. It helps us make countless everyday decisions with remarkable efficiency. System 2 is slower, more deliberate and analytical. It demands effort, questions assumptions and resists easy conclusions. In a world drowning in information and opinions, it is this slower mode of thinking that deserves renewed attention.

The Psychology of Misinformation and Cognitive Bias

After all, misinformation rarely announces itself with a warning label. It often arrives dressed as certainty, amplified by algorithms and endorsed by thousands of likes and shares. Behavioural science has repeatedly shown that we are vulnerable to confirmation bias, social proof, anchoring and countless other cognitive shortcuts. We are all susceptible. Even academics occasionally find themselves clicking on an article with a sensational headline, only to discover halfway through that they have been expertly click-baited. Our brains, it seems, enjoy taking shortcuts almost as much as our smartphones do.

This is precisely why universities must move beyond rewarding the memorisation of information and place greater emphasis on cultivating discernment. Students should graduate not only knowing what to think about, but how to think. They should develop the confidence to ask uncomfortable questions: Who produced this information? What evidence supports it? Could there be an alternative explanation? What assumptions am I making? These questions may slow the thinking process, but they almost always improve the quality of the outcome.

AI as a Thinking Partner, Not a Thinking Replacement

This philosophy also demands that universities rethink their relationship with artificial intelligence itself. At ISBF, we recognise that generative AI is neither a shortcut to learning nor an adversary to be feared. It is a powerful thinking partner, provided students engage with it critically rather than passively. Rather than asking, "Did you use AI?", we encourage a far more meaningful question: "How did you use AI, and why did you trust or reject what it produced?"

Rather than asking, "Did you use AI?", we ask: "How did you use AI, and why did you trust or reject what it produced?"

This principle is reflected in the permitted use of generative AI for assignments and dissertations across our University of London programmes at ISBF, where students are expected to disclose their use of AI through a structured appendix. They identify the tool used, document the key prompts they entered, explain how the outputs informed their work and, perhaps most importantly, critically evaluate whether those outputs were effective or flawed. In doing so, the assessment extends beyond the final submission to the student's decision-making process itself. After all, prompting is easy. Judging the quality of the response, recognising its limitations and deciding what deserves to be retained, refined or discarded is where genuine learning occurs. Perhaps the future of assessment is not measuring whether students can produce answers independently, but whether they can exercise sound judgment when powerful technologies help produce those answers.

The LSE Approach: Cultivating Evidence-Based Inquiry

This philosophy of evidence-based inquiry has long been embedded in the academic approach championed by the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE), where students are encouraged to challenge ideas as confidently as they absorb them. The objective is not simply to accumulate knowledge but to interrogate assumptions, evaluate evidence critically and defend conclusions with intellectual rigour. These habits of mind extend well beyond university, shaping graduates who are equipped to navigate complexity rather than shy away from it.

Employers are noticing the difference. Artificial intelligence is rapidly democratising technical skills, but organisations continue to prize graduates who can frame ambiguous problems, interpret evidence responsibly, collaborate across disciplines and make sound decisions when there is no obvious right answer. Technical expertise may open the door, but judgment determines what happens once you're in the room.

The Enduring Value of Human Wisdom

Artificial intelligence will undoubtedly reshape higher education. Yet perhaps its greatest gift is that it has reminded us of what technology cannot easily replicate: wisdom, discernment and thoughtful human judgment. As educators, our role is no longer simply to prepare students with answers. It is to prepare them with the habits of mind to question those answers, including the ones generated by AI itself.

Because in an age where everyone has access to information, the graduates who will truly stand out are not those who think the fastest. They are those who know when to slow down.

Your Education Digest:

Snapshots of events that matter

Are you hosting an event for your institution?
Send us details, and we will be happy to feature relevant events within this section of UCONNECT

Current Affairs: India witnessed widespread student-led protests last month, with the national capital at the forefront, as thousands demonstrated against examination irregularities, unemployment, and alleged police excesses. The movement was triggered by the NEET paper leak, administrative and technical issues during CBSE examinations, and growing concerns over student suicides linked to academic pressure. Protesters demanded transparent examination systems, accountability, better employment opportunities, and stronger mental health support.

The unrest has since evolved into a legal standoff, with student groups accusing authorities of reneging on earlier assurances. According to protest organisers, over 2,800 students across Delhi, Bihar, Assam, and West Bengal are currently facing police cases following investigations aided by CCTV footage and social media monitoring. The Supreme Court of India ordered the immediate release of all detained minors, expressing concern over excessive crackdowns. The UCONNECT family believes every student deserves an education system founded on integrity, transparency, and equal opportunity, and hopes these principles remain at the forefront of future reforms.

University Outreach: Komal Singh, from University Connection, attended the Paris Business Academy fair in Delhi on July 3rd, which provided a valuable platform to establish direct relationships with leading French institutions and explore collaboration opportunities. Engaging in person with key leaders, including Aldric Boulanger (Financia Business School), Quentin Guette (Alternis Business School), Marc de Kervenoel (HEMA), and Liping Zhang (GGI), offered deep insights into their academic programs while opening doors for direct partnerships, recruitment, and scholarship options.

The fair showcased the strong appeal of Paris Business Academy's offerings, which feature three-year Bachelor's and two-year MBA programs across March, June, and October intakes. Delivered entirely in English with an industry-focused curriculum, these globally recognized degrees are paired with robust career support, student work rights of up to 20 hours per week, and housing assistance through government CAF benefits, making them an excellent pathway for international students.

Program Spotlight: Meenal Damani recently shared their reflections on serving as a judge for the StarterSky Summer Program, a five-day entrepreneurship workshop where students aged 13 to 18 transformed raw ideas into real-world startups. They highlighted the event as a powerful demonstration that innovation and problem-solving do not suddenly emerge in college, but rather begin much earlier when young minds are given the platform to question, build, fail, and try again.

A significant portion of the reflection focused on the impressive maturity and entrepreneurial mindset displayed by the young participants. Far beyond theoretical concepts, the students tackled pressing real-world issues, ranging from Gen-Z mental health to sports gear recycling and scheduling challenges, by conducting validation surveys, defining target audiences, building MVPs, designing websites, and delivering confident pitches. Ultimately, the experience underscored the value of fostering curiosity and hands-on learning at a young age, concluding with warm congratulations to the StarterSky team for creating an ecosystem that empowers the next generation of leaders to learn by doing.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Futurowise Invites Students (14+) to Explore the Psychology Behind Everyday Decisions (28 August – 8 September)

Study in Japan Project (Supported by MEXT) Hosts a Matcha Networking Evening Inspired by the Japanese Spirit of Wa

BuildUp's Global Internship Challenge Combines Real-World Case Solving with Career Exploration

Check your Orange Quotient (OQ)

Welcome to the Freedom Vault: "Decode 1947"

You're locked inside the National Archives Command Center, where every act of courage rewrote history, but every choice came with a cost. Your mission is to escape by proving you understand the spirit of India's freedom struggle, and what it still asks of us today.

Ready? Let's unlock independence.

Level 1: Find the odd one out

1. Mahatma Gandhi, Bhagat Singh, Cristiano Ronaldo
2. Sarojini Naidu, Subhas Chandra Bose, CV Raman

Level 2: Are you civic-ethically smart?

3. During the Salt March, thousands defied the law by making salt themselves, knowing they'd be arrested. What made civil disobedience such a powerful tool for freedom?
- A. It avoided confrontation with the British entirely.
- B. It combined moral conviction with mass, nonviolent resistance to make injustice visible to the world.
- C. It relied on secrecy so the British wouldn't find out.

4. India has 22 official languages, hundreds of dialects, and dozens of religions, yet the freedom movement united people across all of them under one flag. What's the real lesson here?
- A. Unity means everyone should eventually speak and believe the same way.
- B. Diversity is a problem to be managed after independence, not before.
- C. Unity in diversity means shared purpose can coexist with, and is strengthened by difference.

5. Every August, misinformation and doctored quotes about freedom fighters spread faster on social media than verified history. As a young citizen curating content for your community, what do you do?
- A. Share whatever gets the most engagement, the intent is patriotic anyway.
- B. Verify from credible sources before sharing, and gently correct misinformation without shaming people.
- C. Stay silent, since history is "someone else's job" to get right.

Level 3: Are you ready to build the next 25 years?

6. What's the most future-proof mindset for a young democracy racing toward Viksit Bharat @2047?
- A. Economic growth alone will automatically solve every social problem.
- B. Progress is entirely the government's job, and citizens can stay uninvolved.
- C. True nation-building is an intersection of ambition, active citizenship, and empathy for those left behind.

7. Freedom fighters didn't have satellites, AI, or the internet, yet they organized a movement of millions. What human skill still makes a nation resilient today?
- A. Waiting for technology to fix systemic problems on its own.
- B. Grassroots organizing, courageous conversation, and the will to act on your convictions.
- C. Memorizing dates and facts without applying their meaning.

The Orange Meter: Patriotism Quotient (PQ)

Just like the upside-down answer key above,
let's see where you land on the meter!

Score 1–3 (Pale Orange): (Saffron — Courage in Progress)
The History Buff. You know your facts, but freedom isn't just a chapter to memorize — it's a mindset to carry forward. Revisit what these stories actually ask of you today.

Score 4–5 (Bright Orange): The Informed Citizen.
You understand that history and today's choices are deeply connected. You weigh conviction against context effectively.

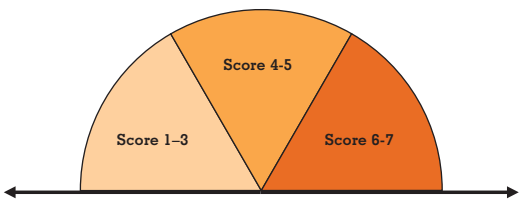
Score 6–7 (Deep Orange): The Visionary Citizen. Excellent!
You get that real progress needs a blend of ambition, ethics, and empathy for everyone still catching up. Consider yourself officially free!

Answers
Level 1:
1. Cristiano Ronaldo
2. CV Raman

Level 2:
3. B
4. C
5. B

Level 3:
6. C
7. B

The Orange Meter



The Voices Behind Our Freedom Edition

Every page of this edition reflects the passion, expertise, and dedication of those who chose to share their stories with us. Through thoughtful opinions, practical insights, research, and personal experiences, our contributors have enriched UCONNECT and strengthened our growing community of learners, educators, counsellors, and changemakers.

This Independence Day, we celebrate not only the freedom of our nation, but also the freedom to exchange ideas, embrace diverse perspectives, and learn from one another.To every contributor, thank you for being a cherished part of the UCONNECT family.

Your voice has helped inform, inspire, and empower our readers, and we sincerely appreciate your trust and collaboration. We look forward to many more stories together.

Bhakti Shah
Founder of The Outreach Collective

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The Education Newsletter.

Share your story via UCONNECT

We are proud to be connected with a diverse network of individuals and organizations that resonate with our mission of empowering career choices one student at a time. We welcome and value insights from students, parents, partners, and educators on a wide range of topics and issues, and look forward to sharing their perspectives.

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