IIT-B sets up a panel
JEE reforms
MUMBAI: The Indian Institute of Technology-Bombay has formed an eight-member panel to finalise a fresh proposal for Joint Entrance Exam reforms by the end of the month. The panel has been set up following opposition from the faculty and senate across IITs on the proposed JEE reforms. JEE is the entrance criteria to the IITs
IITs study changes mooted, to come up with solutions

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
MUMBAI, APRIL 19

With stiff opposition from faculty members and se- 
ates of the Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) to the 
proposed reforms in the Joint Entrance Examination 
(JEE), the institutes are now in the process of studying 
the changes mooted, while simultaneously formulating 
implementable solutions. The suggestions and views 
will be placed before the respective IIT Senates for dis-
cussion.

"There is a large support 
for some reforms. We will 
"come up with a proposal for 
selection of students. The 
ball is in our court now," 
said IIT-Bombay director 
Devang Khakhar.

There has been discre-
tent among several IITs 
over the manner in which 
the new system is being 
introduced, with faculty mem-
bers even questioning its 
fairness. The proposed re-
forms say that 40 per cent 
weightage has to be given to 
a student's performance in 
the Class XII Board exam. 
Many IIT faculty members 
have argued that this may 
dilute the quality of stu-
dents being admitted to the 
IITs as normalisation of 
state board exam results is difficult and may not be 
foolproof.

A recent meeting be-

tween the Ministry of Hu-
man Resource Develop-
ment (MHRD) and repre-
sentatives from several IITs 
on the proposed reforms had ended inconcluisively. Now, the IITs are 
reviewing the reform pro-
posals and will submit their 
recommendations to the IIT Council in May.

While the Indian Science 
Engineering Eligibility Test 
(ISEET) was expected to be 
rubbed out from 2013, faculty 
members said owing to the 
current deadlock, it is not 
clear whether the new admi-
ission procedure can be imple-
mented next year. "It de-

dpends on how big a change it is," said Khakhar.

Meanwhile, in a move to 

enhance industry collabora-

tions, IIT Bombay will iden-
tify various sectors or themes 
and create a roadmap for re-
search and development with 
the concerned industries. IIT 
Bombay, for the first time on 
Thursday, reached out to the 
industry by showcasing its re-
search projects and current 
collaborations and brainstorming on ways in which 
the interactions can be taken 
forward.

"We can look at existing 
initiatives like the health con-
sortium or our centres in ar-
cas like photovoltaics re-
search, aerospace and 
nanoelectronics to identify 
themes, set a roadmap for 
implementation and take 
yearly stock of developments. Further, we have a 
database of 350 industries 
and are looking at creating long-term, strate-
gic associations with them," said Prof Rangan 
Banerjee, dean of research and development at IIT 
Bombay.

Times Of India Chennai 20.04.12 P-2

IIT head backs students on campus curfews

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Chennai: The Indian Institute of Technology, Madras, which is on a safety-cum-morality drive, is having trouble keep-
ing its house in order.

At an open campus forum on Thursday, IIT-M director 
Bhaskar Ramamurthy said hostel wardens don't have the 
authority to impose curfewsto without his approval.

The director's statement 
came in the wake of reports 
that a few wardens are impos-
ing their own rules in hostels 
claiming that they have the 
right to do so.

The open discussion held 
at the central lecture theatre, which attended by the under-
graduates, postgraduates and 
executive council members, 
discussed the controversial re-
marks made by some senior 
faculty members and wardens.

Ramamurthy clarified that 
views of some individuals is 
not that of the institution. "In-
dividual views are immaterial 
and they depend on how that 
individual was brought up. 
But, just because the students 
are adults, we cannot evade 
rules," the director reportedly 
told the students as an intro-
duction.

A student, who attended 
the meeting, said the director 
was more democratic in his 
opinions. "The director listen-
ted to the complaints of stu-
dents on the new rules im-
pose by a warden at Tapti 
hostel and he promised them 
that such complaints will be 
considered," said the student. 
During the discussion, the 
students raised the issue of a set of 
individually views are 
immaterial and they 
depend on how that 
individual was 
brought up. But, just 
because the students 
are adults, we cannot 
evade rules

Bhaskar Ramamurthy
DIRECTOR, IIT-MADRAS

rules in Tapti hostel like the 
right of room cleaners to con-
tinuously knock student 
rooms until they open and 
strict restrictions to stay in 
the hostel rooms from 5am to 4pm. 
The director disagreed with 
them and said, "Any decision 
to be taken finally will be col-
lectual." Another proposal from the 
management—a declaration 
to be signed by all students — 
also invited protest from stu-
dents. The declaration says, 
"The signatory is aware of the 
risks faced by wandering in 
the night outside safe zones 
and of the potential conse-
quencies of taking these risks." 
A senior faculty said rather 
than admitting and publiciz-
ing dangerous zones, the ad-
imistration should have taken 
measures to make them safe. The management's move 
to curf the freedom of stu-
dents continues to get brick-
bash from several faculty mem-
bers in closed-room email 
communications.

A department head told 
TOI that imposing any individ-
ual views and rules on the stu-
dent community will make 
them apolitical. "Our students 
are better informed and are 
mature than many of us. Their 
source of information and 
ideas should be respected at 
any cost and the errors should 
be corrected in a democratic 
way," he said.
ANURUDDHI VISHNOI
NEW DELHI, APRIL 20

THE row between Datawind and IIT-Jodhpur over Aakash tablets became public on Friday with Datawind CEO Sumant Singh Tal standing the IIT's conduct was "unethical" and had "hurt the reputation of all IITs.

Stating that while he felt that the Ministry of Human Resource Development (HRD) had extended all possible support to keep the project going, Tal expressed "disappointment" over the way IIT-Jodhpur handled the project. He pointed out that the IIT's role was limited to procuring the tablet and there was no "technology input" in terms of design, creation or manufacture of the Aakash tablet from it.

The HRD ministry had authorized IIT-Jodhpur with a Rs 4,772-lakh contract for procuring 100,000 "low-cost access-computing device"—better known as Aakash. While Canadian company Datawind bagged the contract, no more than 600-old devices supplied by it were found good enough by IIT-Jodhpur, which rejected around 7,500 devices as defective. This triggered a conflict the two that also forced the ministry to intervene several times and ultimately led to the Aakash project being transferred to IIT-Bombay.

Tal confirmed that a legal battle could be in the offing with IIT-Jodhpur claiming damages from non-disclosure agreement, as first reported by The Indian Express.

Detailing how IIT-Jodhpur had rejected all but 600-old devices supplied to them by Datawind, Tal accused the IIT of plagiarising military-type testing specification from HP and imposing them for the Aakash tablet and also secretly signing an agreement with Datawind subcontractor Quad Electronics for developing a 'convergence' device that could compete with Aakash.

Admitting that the quality of Aakash-1 may have been found wanting, Tal pointed out that the specifications of that device were in keeping with those outlined in the government tender. "Later, we ourselves offered to upgrade the device at the same cost, replacing a resistive screen with a capacitive one and a faster processor as well," he said.

According to Tal, it all goes well, Aakash will be available to students by May-June. "The transfer process of the project—from IIT-Jodhpur to IIT-Bombay—is on. Devices will now be sent to IIT-Bombay for testing and, hopefully after approval, the HRD minister will launch the upgraded Aakash-2 in May. By June 2012, Aakash 2 will be widely tested as students return to school. July onwards, it will be produced in huge numbers," Tal said.

He added that Datawind would bid for developing 5 million Aakash tablets when the Indian government invites tenders.

Times of India ND 21/04/2012 P-14

No ban on filling DU posts: UGC

Over 4,000 Permanent Teaching Positions Are Vacant In DU

Manish Pratim Gohain | TNN

New Delhi: While more than 4,000 permanent teaching positions across colleges and departments of Delhi University are vacant, the University Grants Commission (UGC) has stated that there is no ban on filling up of teaching positions sanctioned by UGC.

The UGC had written to the Delhi University Teachers' Association on April 13 stating the same. Meanwhile, university administration has said that once the recruitment committee—set up by DU—submits its report, the recruitment shall start.

With the implementation of OBC reservation from 2007, an additional 2,600 plus post have been sanctioned by the UGC in 2008 to meet the increase in number of students. At present, around 40% of the teaching positions in colleges and departments are vacant and things may worsen as the teachers recruited in 1969 and 1970 are scheduled to retire by the next couple of months.

On February 24, DUTA representatives met the UGC chairman to know if there is any ban on filling up of vacant teaching positions in central universities.

On February 24, DUTA representatives met the UGC chairman with a charter of demands that also sought to know if there is any ban on filling up of vacant teaching positions in central universities, specifically in DU. In its reply, A K Saroya, under-secretary of UGC, wrote there is no ban on recruitment of UGC sanctioned teaching positions.

"The university is silent on the issue, which is why DUTA had to approach the MHRD and the UGC. There is no ban on recruitment, and yet DU administration is sitting over the issue for nearly two years," said DUTA president, Amar Deo Sharma.

Meanwhile, DU vice chancellor, Dinesh Singh stated that the committee on recruitment is expected to submit its report soon. "There has been no adverse affect on the teaching process as we have as many ad-hoc teachers as the vacancies. Moreover, we have never claimed there is any ban on recruitment. But my first year went in putting the semester system in place. Reforms take time, and we can't do everything at the same time. We will commence with the recruitment parallel to the new session," Singh said.
Tuli effort doesn’t clarify much

BY SURABHI AGARWAL, PRASHANT K. NANDA & YOGENDRA KALVALAPALLI
NEW DELHI/HYDERABAD

DataWind Ltd chief executive officer Sunmeet Singh Tuli’s effort to clear the air over several controversies surrounding the production, procurement and quality of the much-discussed, low-cost Aakash tablet only served to complicate matters even further.

At a press conference in New Delhi, Tuli reiterated the company’s disappointment with the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Rajasthan, and accused it of “getting engaged with other suppliers” through a “limited tender”, thus breaching its agreement with DataWind for procuring Aakash tablets.

IIT-Rajasthan initially placed an order for 100,000 Aakash tablets with DataWind based on a tender. Tuli recently, IIT-Rajasthan was in charge of procuring the $45 tablet for the human resource development (HRD) ministry. The mandate has now shifted to IIT-Bombay.

The DataWind-made Aakash was announced with much fanfare by the government as a tablet with a rock-bottom price that would help bridge the digital divide amid scepticism over earlier efforts at making cheap computers with the same intent. Aakash prototypes met with disappointment, persuading the government to seek a better device.

Tuli said he had sent a “legal notice to two professors of IIT-Rajasthan” for not honouring the agreement. He then clarified that what he had sent was a “legal warning” and that this was not directed against the institution or its director.

Tuli has accused Quad Electronics Solutions Pvt Ltd, DataWind’s erstwhile manufacturing partner, for breaching intellectual property (IP) rights by signing a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with IIT-Rajasthan for producing a so-called rival to Aakash, as reported by Mint on 13 April.

Quad has, in turn, accused DataWind of non-payment, a claim refuted by DataWind. Tuli promised on Friday at a press briefing to provide proof that the payment had been made, but wasn’t forthcoming later. Quad has denied accusations about breach of IP rights.

In an interview in his office in Hyderabad recently, Quad managing director Raminder Singh Soin said his firm was building a smart communications device with IIT-Rajasthan and not a competing low-cost tablet as alleged by Tuli.

Quad has entered an MoU for five years (effective 14 January) with IIT-Rajasthan “to develop such computing and communications devices for the optimum cost” and “serve as enabler to bridge the digital divide of India”, he said.

Mint has reviewed the MoU signed with IIT-Rajasthan, but couldn’t independently establish what the device is and whether it will compete with Aakash.

Soin said the MoU that Quad entered into with IIT-Rajasthan does not violate the manufacturing services agreement with DataWind. Under the Freedom of Action clause in the agreement, Quad can manufacture similar devices for other parties. He was referring to the clause that states, “Except as expressly provided, the article shall not prevent Quad or its affiliates from marketing, acquiring or developing materials, products or services which are similar or competitive to those of customer.” It added, however, that Quad will not deal with those suppliers of DataWind that it hasn’t had previous dealings with.

Tuli reiterated that Quad’s agreement with IIT-Rajasthan for a so-called convergence device is, in fact, for a tablet. “What is a convergence device—is it a taxi, is it a toaster, is it it? It was a tablet. Using funny language to go around it didn’t help” them, he said.

On the issue of delays in delivery to customers, many of whom have made advance payments, Tuli said that after DataWind’s dispute with Quad, the company tied up with other sub-contract manufacturers and will launch the upgraded UbiSlate 7+ on 26 April, when product details and specifications will be disclosed.

“We expect to catch up on the delivery of products in the next two weeks,” he said.

The number of people who have made advance bookings was very small compared with the overall number, he said.

DataWind’s last stated number of pre-bookings was three million. Tuli said the company is receiving 8,000-10,000 more bookings every day. He also said the company has received corporate and institutional bulk expressions of interest for around four million tablets.

Tuli, however, refused to give details of the total number of bookings and payments received so far or the line of credit with distributors. “We have now decided to not give out the details as it causes resentment among our competitors.” But the company will provide the exact number of deliveries as “we catch up”, apart from details of its government dealings, he added.

Can DataWind begin commercial sales of tablets with nearly identical specifications as the proposed upgraded Aakash before fulfilling its commitment to provide 100,000 tablets to agencies appointed by the HRD ministry?

Mint didn’t receive a response to this question and on other issues either from HRD minister Kapil Sibal or IIT-Rajasthan director Prem Kalra. According to Tuli, though some of the specifications are identical, they are two different tablets.

Sibal had said earlier that delivery of the upgraded Aakash will start in May.

Some key executives have resigned recently from DataWind. One of them told Mint on condition of anonymity that he did so over reservations about collecting advance money before having a product.

Asked about the employee exit, Tuli said the company has 150 employees globally and “three-four leave every month as more people join”. Mint has confirmation of at least two key executives who have left DataWind in India recently.

Meanwhile, DataWind has issued a legal notice to Pankaj Mohindroo, national president of Indian Cellular Association, for alleged defamation during the lobby body’s interaction with the government. Mohindroo said that “whatever is alleged in the legal notice is not factually correct” and he will deal with it.

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Vibrant linkages between varsities, industries needed

THUFAIL P.T.
NEW DELHI, APRIL 20

Union human resources development minister Kapil Sibal on Friday called for building "vibrant linkages" between universities and industry in order to shorten the gap between the demand and supply of skilled labour in the country.

Addressing the "India-UK Round Table on Innovation", Mr Sibal sought UK's cooperation to make India a "hub" of skilled human resource in the 21st century. "Improving the interface between institutions of higher learning and business as well as delivering a better environment for commercialising research are the common focal points for both the countries," Mr Sibal said.
Agni V can hit Europe too: Chinese experts

Saibal Dasgupta | INN

Beijing: Chinese experts on Friday claimed the range of India’s Agni V missile was 8,000km and not 5,000km as cited by India. The experts included Du Wenlong, an expert at the PLA Academy of Military Sciences and Zhang Zhaozhang, professor with PLA National Defence University.

Zhaozhang was quoted by the Global Times, as saying, “According to China’s standard, an ICBM should have a range of at least 8,000km. The Agni V’s range could be further enhanced to become an ICBM.” There were also signs that China will try to pressure the US and Russia into not selling their missile guidance systems to India.

“The missile brings whole of Asia apart from 70% of Europe and other regions under its strike range and puts India in a select band of countries to possess ICBM technology,” said the official Xinhua news agency. Global Times carried a map showing Moscow, Tehran and Jakarta among cities within the range of Agni V.

Zhang said Agni V will help India rise from a regional to world power. China must work on developing defence systems against the threat of ballistic missiles. “It’s India’s goal to possess an ICBM, as the country seeks to improve its status and become a major world player. Without it, India will remain a regional power,” Zhang said.

Official People’s Daily commented on “India’s military buildup” saying Agni V shows its intention to seek a regional balance of power. “However, in the context of the eastward shift of global economic power and the changing Asian geopolitical pattern, India should cooperate with neighboring countries and reduce its own persecution mania,” its said.

China successfully conducted its first ground-based mid-course ballistic missile interception experiment in January 2010, becoming the second country in the world to conduct this kind of missile defense test, the local media pointed out.

Other Chinese experts questioned India’s ability to use the missile.

“India doesn’t possess high precision guidance system. It has to buy it from the US and Russia. These countries may be reluctant to sell their most advanced technology,” the official China Central Television quoted some experts as saying and even questioning India’s infrastructure capabilities.
DRDO’s new target: Anti-satellite weapons

New Era For Space Defence In India, Says Top Scientist

Rajat Pande for TOI

New Delhi: After testing the over 3,200km Agni V missile, which went up to 6,000km into space during the parabolic trajectory, the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) now feels it can fashion deadly anti-satellite (ASAT) weapons in double quick time.

“Agni V’s launch has opened a new era. Apart from adding a new dimension to our strategic defence, it has ushered in fantastic opportunities in say, building ASAT weapons and launching micro satellites on demand,” DRDO chief K S Saraswat said on Friday. The ASAT weapon would include energising Agni V’s propulsion system with the “kill vehicle” of the under-development two-tier BMD (ballistic missile defence) system that has been tested a few times to track and destroy hostile missiles both inside and outside the earth’s atmosphere.

“An ASAT weapon would require to reach about 300km altitude. Agni V gives you the boosting capability and the kill vehicle, with advanced seekers will be able to home in to the target satellite,” he said.

The top defence scientist was however, quick to stress that the government had not given its nod for the ASAT programme. “India does not believe in weaponisation of space. We are only talking about having the capability. There are no plans for offensive space capabilities,” he said. The fact, however, remains there is a rethink on the entire issue ever since China shocked the world by using an ASAT weapon to destroy an old satellite in 2007.

Beijing has set a shocking pace in developing advanced ASAT capabilities with “direct energy” missile, hit-to-kill “kinetic” and directed energy laser weapons. The defence ministry in 2010 had even drafted a 15-year “Technology Perspective and Roadmap”, which held development of ASAT weapons “for electronic or physical destruction of satellites (100km altitude above earth’s surface and US synchronous orbit)” a threat area.

Consequently, apart from direct energy weapons, defence scientists are focusing on “space security” to protect India’s space assets from electronic or physical destruction. Another spin-off from Agni V test is that the DRDO feels it can work towards launching mini satellites for borderfield use if an adversary attacks the country’s main satellites.