Newspaper Clips

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At IITs, Placements Trump Slowdown

Facebook, Google, Sony & Rio Tinto rush to campuses with 10-20% higher salary packages

SHEETAL BHARGAVA

If this year’s campus placement offers at India’s premier technological institutes are anything to go by, the economic slowdown and global stock market turmoil has been shrugged off by the job market. The Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) recorded a jump in salaries at the final placement offers for students in batches 2008 and 2009. Batches 2007 and 2008, which had seen placements averaging Rs 15,000, had seen an overall rise of 20-25% this year. However, placement officers and students say the jump was driven by a surge in offer from B.Tech and M.Tech students. The average salary package for B.Tech students was Rs 15,000 to Rs 25,000, with the highest offer being Rs 10,000. M.Tech students saw an average package of Rs 25,000 to Rs 35,000, with the highest offer being Rs 35,000. The jump in salaries is expected to continue as the placement process for batches 2008 and 2009 is yet to begin. The placement officers expect the number of offers to increase as the season progresses.

Rush at all IIT Campuses

BIG OFFERS FOR IIT STUDENTS

The rise in salaries is expected to benefit Indian students who are looking to pursue higher education in the US.

Microsoft has made 10 offers, of which two are in the US, and 1,309 offers to students in batches 2008 and 2009. Google has made two offers, of which one is in the US. A total of 1,500 offers have been made to students in batches 2007 and 2008. The placement process for batches 2007 and 2008 is yet to begin. The placement officers expect the number of offers to increase as the season progresses.

Rush at all IIT Campuses

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On day one of IIT-M placements, five students offered Rs. 30 lakh per annum

Special Correspondent

CHENNAI: On day one of campus recruitment at Indian Institute of Technology - Madras (IIT-M), 11 companies have come up with offers for 46 students, with some students getting multiple offers. The first day's best offer came from Sony Corporation. "Sony has confirmed selection of five students, one for each of the five profiles it came with, for a salary of Rs.30 lakh per annum for each student," said B. Nagarajan, Deputy Registrar, (Training, Placement and Public Relations), IIT-M.

At the Mahanadhi Hostel, it was a busy and tense day for students as they shuttled from one room to the other for multiple interviews. Apart from their core area of study, students could attend interviews of companies with finance, consulting and analytical job profiles.

"We know the IITs have the top two per cent of students. The brains are there. We are looking at students' ability to think and their curiosity of what's happening in the world of finance," says Anand Vilayunnur, Director, Global Markets Structuring, Deutsche Bank Group. "Across five IITs, we will recruit 42-45 students," he said.

There is a bit of home coming too. From the McKinsey team of recruiters, three top executives are IIT-M alumni. Boston Consulting Group and Deutsche Bank also had an IIT-M alumnus each in their team of recruiters. These are the students who actually sat across the table last year to clear the interview. "When the alumni return to any good campus to recruit, there is a richness of interaction. Companies prefer it as it is a win-win situation," says L.S. Ganes, Dean (Students).

I.V.S. Sandeep, co-curricular affairs secretary, IIT-M, was one of the earliest to get an offer for over Rs.20 lakh. "The company was looking for leadership qualities and they chose me," he said. Apart from his chemical engineering background, his role as Shaastra 2011 convenor tipped the balance in his favour.

While most of them came in formals, team Google came in T-shirts and jeans. "The Google test was basically in coding and algorithms," said a student who failed the interview. As a polite parting gift, Google gave him a gadget to take home.

The recruitment went till late into the night with students interviewed through Skype from the campus placement office by recruiters from US companies Pocket Gems and Facebook, which have come up with the best offers this year.
Why IIT-B can’t crack food poisoning case?

Three months after the incident, Institute has no clue how food got contaminated

DNA Correspondent

Three months after the food poisoning incident, the Indian Institute of Technology-Bombay (IIT-B) has still not figured out why more than 600 students had fallen ill after dinner at the hostel mess.

Despite the fact-finding committee probing into the matter, the institute, which takes pride in scientific research, has been unable to figure out how bacteria, the bacteria that was found in the stool samples of the affected students, was present in the food.

"Around 80% of gastrointestinal diseases are caused by bad handling of food and unhygienic methods. Not all food contamination is caused by the raw material. In fact, on most occasions, food gets contaminated when it is not handled hygienically," said Aasthita Bhaduri, head business relations, Equinox Lab, a professional expert agency in hygiene auditing.

"If the food handler is suffering from an illness, how can he pass the contamination to the food? Hence, maintaining a clean kitchen and hygiene of the workers is important."

Questions are now being raised if the institute went about finding answers in a scientific manner or it is simply brushing the issue under the carpet.

In a bid to quell reports in the media, IIT-B went to the extent of issuing a gong order on students and even conducted an opinion poll last month to see if a blanket ban on media should be implemented.

The key questions that the institute doesn’t have answers to are how the fact-finding committee would probe into the incident when it was formed in late as the last week of October — almost a month later. Obviously, it did not have food samples to check. The institute was quick to rule out water contamination believing a report submitted by the purifier manufacturer, and the food handlers were not subjected to medical examinations immediately to check if they had any infections.

The committee reportedly also overlooked other sources of infection such as seepage in the walls of the hostel mess that could lead to mold. Bhaduri said the panel should have checked the possibility of contamination by air as the walls of the hostel mess were extremely moist.

While professor Utkarsh Vaish, dean of students affairs at IIT-B, admitted no medical checks were conducted on the food handlers, he gave an assurance it has been made mandatory in the new contract.

"Routine medical check-ups and regular training for the canteen workers to maintain basic hygiene will be part of the canteen contract. All canteen staff has been asked to use sanitizers for washing with immediate effect," Vaish admitted that the suspect food samples were not made available to the panel.

"We have not been able to take samples of the food and water consumed by students on September 25 because they started showing symptoms and reporting to the campus hospital at different points. Some even complained of stomach ache a day later. The samples could only be taken only of the items that were available after students started complaining of illness," he said.

He, however, denied claims that the water at the campus was being tested by a purifier manufacturer: "Students do not have complete information. The water was properly tested by experts at the IIT-B labs. But, it would not be correct to completely rule out water as a cause of contamination as the director-appointed committee’s report is yet conclusive."

In one of the issues of Insight, an official IIT-B students’ magazine, Prasoon Thapyal, general secretary of hostel number 13 (one of the messes affected by food poisoning), mentioned how the purifier manufacturer’s staff had conducted tests. He also lamented the poor construction of the kitchen and uncontrolled seepage in the walls.
Changes likely in UPSC main exam from 2013

Vishwa Mohan | TNN

New Delhi: After successfully introducing changes in the civil services (preliminary) examination this year, the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) is looking at bringing some changes in its ‘main’ examination with effect from 2013.

UPSC has constituted a panel which is expected to come out with its report early next year. The civil services examination (CSE) that is meant for selecting candidates for elite central services like IAS, IFS, IPS, IRS and others has three stages comprising ‘preliminary’, ‘main’ and personality test (interview).

UPSC chairman D P Agrawal said: “Consistent with the need for selecting right kind of person from huge pool consisting of multiple languages, culture and communities, the commission has now constituted a high power panel to suggest possible changes in the pattern of CS (main) examination”.

Though the chairman did not elaborate, he made it clear that the endeavour of the commission is to ensure that all the candidates are judged “on the basis of in-depth knowledge and understanding rather than information gathered at the last moment”.

UPSC, which changed the ‘preliminary’ exam pattern this year by infusing elements of ‘aptitude’ test, had brought a minor change in the ‘main’ test pattern last in 1993 when it introduced an additional paper of ‘essay’ of 300 marks.

However, it is felt that the new paper introduced 18 years ago has not served the desired purpose of bringing candidates opting for high scoring science subjects at par with those opting for humanities and languages as the optional papers are not as scoring in science subjects.