Newspaper Clips

January 16, 2014

IIMs take NIC help to firewall CAT scores

BY PRASHANT K. NANDA
prashant.n@liveinimt.com

NEW DELHI

The Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs) have hosted their Common Admission Test (CAT) results on the state-owned National Informatics Centre’s (NIC) server this year after the elite B-Schools faced flak following a score-tampering scandal last year.

“We are the host of their CAT results this year,” said M. Vinayak Rao, state informatics officer of Madhya Pradesh. IIM-Indore was the organizing IIM for CAT 2013, the results for which was declared on Tuesday.

“The processing of data was done by the IIMs and we hosted them. Our system was tamper-proof,” said Sanjay Hardikar, senior technical director at NIC, Bhopal. “The data will be with the NIC server till the end of 2014.”

Last year, nearly 80 students managed to tamper their score in connivance with a private website that hosted the results. Though the IIMs themselves were not affected, many top B-Schools, including the Faculty of Management Studies (FMS) of Delhi University, that use the CAT scores were affected.

Hardikar said NIC’s platform is equipped to handle up to a million hits on the first day.

Rohit Kapoor, the CAT convenor and an IIM-Indore professor, said there were some teething troubles, especially for students with very long email IDs—they couldn’t log in—but added the issue was corrected within a few hours.

“We follow a lot of rigour for the entrance (CAT), and last year, it was an embarrassment when some scores were tampered with. So we went to NIC this time,” IIM-Rohtak director P. Ramshah said.

Of the 194,516 students registered for the CAT exam, 173,738 took the test, the lowest in six years. Of the total applicants this year, 56,962 were female, about 4,000 fewer than last year. Last year, 214,000 students registered for the test and 191,642 appeared for it.

“We have low registration this year, which means the competition will be tough. Due to economic downturn, only serious students sat for the exam, which is also good,” Kapoor said.

The IIMs have not done the detailed demographic profiling of aspiring students so far and Kapoor said it could be similar to previous year, which saw an increasing number of students from smaller towns.

According to the results, eight candidate scored a perfect 100 percentile. Another 10 scored a 99.9 percentile. CAT-2013 was conducted in 76 centres across 40 cities, from 16 October to 11 November. US test conducting firm Prometric Inc.’s India arm was the test delivery partner for the IIMs.
Engineers will continue to dominate IIM campuses

High enrolment in engineering courses and CAT's math tilt help these students

P SARASWATHY & KALPANA PATHAK
Mumbai, 15 January

Engineers will continue to dominate the campuses of the Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs). With the top 80 percent scorers being engineers and initial data showing that a large chunk of engineers gave the Common Admission Test (CAT) 2013, the classrooms of these business schools will have BE and BTech graduates filling most seats.

"Engineers taking up most IIM seats has been the case and will continue this year too. The main cause for this is the number of students taking up engineering courses as compared to arts and commerce courses. There is a general push by parents, too, to enroll their children into engineering and medical streams and, hence, there are a large proportion of engineers who appear for CAT," said Sai Kumar, Director, TIME! Mumbai.

The report 'Higher Education in India: Vision 2030' by Ficci and Ernst & Young (EY), released in November, says of the 30 million students in 2011-12, about 24 percent were enrolled into engineering/technology streams. Science and commerce streams accounted for 15 percent each, while law constituted only 2 percent. It also said that among the European countries, United Kingdom, United States and India, the country with maximum engineering enrolment was India.

While arts was the top stream of choice with respect to enrolment according to the Ficci-EY report, officials pointed that such students have diverse career choices and very few opt for management courses. "Arts students go for academics and other diverse professions. However, engineering followed by management has become one of the most common courses opted by students in India," said the head of academics of a new IIM.

Though officials figures were not available, insiders suggest that almost 55-60 percent of CAT entrance exam takers were from engineering backgrounds. "Being from engineering may put you at a disadvantage with respect to final selections by IIMs, compared to arts or law graduate. But, cracking the entrance is the first step and that is where these engineering degree holders get it right," said the head of a New Delhi-based MBA coaching institute.

That is because the CAT examination pattern, with a clear skew towards the mathematical ability of a student, helps engineers, say experts. Gautam Puri, vice-chairman & managing director, CL Educate said of 60 questions in CAT, almost 40 were based on maths. "The ideal pattern would be to have a mix of 50-50 with respect to maths and language. The system as a whole is biased," added Puri.

H Chaturvedi, Director, BIMTECH, said CAT did not offer a positive balance in academic quotient, emotional quotient and social quotient, which are needed for a professional to be effective and efficient in the corporate world.

"The entrance test has been set up in a manner that it has been biased towards engineers, which is creating an imbalance in the labour market ecosystem. Across the world, B-schools are changing their admission process to have more and more categories. CAT, with its bias towards engineers, does not allow others to be part of India's management pool," he said.

Officials associated with implementing CAT say they have not yet decided on changing the examination pattern. "We are yet to take any decision for CAT 2014," said a senior official associated with the process.

A senior IIM admissions official warns that unless the CAT exam pattern is changed, no difference would be seen in enrolments.

Some IIMs had earlier said they were also concerned over the low number of female applicants taking the CAT and were also looking to go deeper to find out the reasons for the same. A senior IIM admissions official said that unless the CAT exam pattern changed, no difference would be seen in enrolments.

CAT 2013 was conducted between October 16 and November 11, 2013 and 194,000 lakh candidates had registered for it. Out of these, 1,73,735 candidates eventually appeared for CAT 2013.
IIT-Madras engineer tops CAT 2013

Vasudha Venugopal

The 23-year-old, who works at Ashok Leyland, scored a 100 percentile.

A soccer enthusiast and aspiring fantasy writer, Chennai lad Abhiram Iyer, a mechanical engineer from IIT-Madras who topped the Common Admission Test (CAT) 2013 with a perfect 100 percentile, is not your average geek.

The 23-year-old employee of Ashok Leyland is one of the eight toppers of the test that determines admissions to the prestigious Indian Institutes of Management. Around 1.94 lakh candidates took CAT 2013, results of which were declared on Tuesday.

Abhiram, who has been a project planner at Ashok Leyland for the last 18 months, got the score after attempting the test twice earlier.

"Each time I was stuck somewhere between the 99th and 100th percentiles. I think everyone in that range is equally talented. A bit of luck and a good mood during the test can get you that extra point," he said.

Three years ago, Abhiram had managed to get into IIM-Indore but chose to decline the seat. "At the interview, a professor asked me if it would be better to pursue an MBA after a few years of work. Though at the time I convinced him that I, a fresher then, deserved the seat, I later realised he was right," he said.

Abhiram is a big fan of fantasy writer Steven Erikson. "Fantasy novels challenge your imagination. They are the biggest stress busters," said the topper who lives in Anna Nagar and plans to write a fantasy book sometime.

Recreation and distraction are very important when you are rigorously preparing for CAT, he said, adding, "Before every mock test, I watch a game of football. It reminds me nothing is predictable, just like the CAT."

Abhiram’s mother is a retired State Bank of India manager, and his father, an auditor at the defence accounts department in Mumbai.

Among other toppers in the city is T.S.K Sravanth from Kakinada, a student of electrical engineering at IIT-Madras with a 99.98 percentile. The student, who has already been recruited by a reputed company, said he likes “holding positions of responsibility and managing situations.”

"I will definitely ditch the job if I get into IIM-Ahmedabad, Bangalore or Kolkata," he said.

Madhura Prabhudesai, also a student of IIT-Madras and one of the few girls to make it to the list of top scorers, with 99.8 percentile, said preparing for the test was easy, being an engineering student. "Maths in CAT is very similar to the Joint Entrance Examination that I had already cracked. It was English I had to focus on."

Madhura too has an offer from a top multi-national corporation but is not sure she will take it up.

“I want to take some time over deciding this. Right now, the feeling of getting a score like this is just sinking in,” she said.

Keywords: Abhiram Iyer, IIT-Madras, CAT 2013 topper, CAT 2013 results


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HRD ministry wants St Stephen's to become a university now

If any college is accredited with NAAC, they must apply for autonomous status: HRD secy

DHIRENDRA KUMAR

NEW DELHI: It's matter of time before Delhi University's top college St Stephen's and other famous institutions become autonomous universities. In a bid to reform higher education system, the Human Resource Development Ministry is all set to adopt completely new approach towards funding varsities under the centrally sponsored scheme Rashtriya Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA). Under the scheme HRD ministry will promote autonomous colleges as university, while non-autonomous colleges would be upgraded to autonomous to pave the way for university status.

In an exclusive interview to Millennium Post, HRD secretary (higher education) Ashok Thakur said, 'We are encouraging St Stephen's to move ahead to be an autonomous body.' Thakur, however, said that it's the university which doesn't want to free colleges from its apron strings as it (the University) gets a handsome amount as affiliation fee. 'It's the universities which don't want to free such colleges. We are ready to provide them separate identity if they fulfill the required norms,' Thakur said. Enumerating the norms for autonomous status, the 1977-batch IAS officer said, 'If any college is accredited with National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC), they must apply for the autonomous status.'

On the question whether setting up of new universities mean compromising with quality of education, Thakur said, 'Under RUSA, existing autonomous colleges and institutions that fulfill the specified conditions will be upgraded to university status, and cluster of colleges (usually between three and five) with a high-performing institution acting as nucleus will join together to form a university.'

Recently, the HRD ministry has approved the guidelines and sanctioned grants for eight states under the Centre's ambitious Rs 1 lakh crore RUSA programme.

On the issue of domiciled-based quota in Delhi University, Thakur said, 'It will not happen in Central universities.'

Notably, a total of 316 universities and 13,024 colleges will be covered under RUSA and 54 existing colleges would be converted into model degree colleges. Infrastructure grants would be given to 150 universities and 3,500 colleges to upgrade and fill critical gaps in infrastructure especially libraries, and laboratories. The RUSA scheme would also support 5,000 faculty positions.
The Hindu

Tharoor interacts with US students

Our Bureau
Thiruvananthapuram, Jan. 15:

Education in India has made monumental progress since the early days of Independence but it continues to face challenges, according Shashi Tharoor, Union Minister for Human Resources Development.

He said this was interacting with students and faculty members from Kansas University visiting Kerala as part of an exchange programme with the Asian School of Business.

Education has had little focus on excellence and employability which is to India’s detriment, he said. "We have islands of excellence floating in a sea of mediocrity," he added.

ICT: China edges ahead of India in HR

Focus on knowledge industries, training pays off

T.E. Raja Simhan
Chennai, Jan. 15

China has edged out India in the availability of software developers and is closing the gap in the size of human resource skilled in information, communication and technology (ICT) – an area that India has dominated for over two decades.

US TOP THE LIST

The US continues to be the leader in both categories, according to research firm International Data Corp (IDC).

Globally, there are 18.5 million software developers of whom 11 million are professional developers and 7.5 million hobbyist developers (amateurs). There are 29 million ICT skilled workers, including professional software developers, and 18 million operations and management skilled workers.

The US accounts for 19 per cent of global software developers (both professional and hobbyists). China is ahead of India by 10 per cent while India’s share is 9.8 per cent. The US also accounts for 22 per cent of global ICT-skilled workers followed by India with 10.4 per cent and China with 7.6 per cent, IDC said.

The numbers of both developers and ICT-skilled workers are expected to grow over the next few years. However, shifts in how IT is being delivered through cloud-based services will favour the growth in software developers over other ICT-skilled workers, according to Al Hilwa, Program Director, Application Development Software, IDC. A few years ago, China decided to focus on knowledge-based businesses and to train people on coding/software development apart from making them proficient in English. Results are now showing with China fast catching up with India in ICT, said R. Balaji, a HR expert. China is home to successful Internet companies such as Baidu, Alibaba and Tencent. "India’s track record in this aspect is patchy," he said.

China is demonstrating its ambition in playing a global role in ICT. It has a large domestic market for ICT and many large software service firms and product companies of global scale have set up development centres in China to leverage on the local talent pool. However, they are not yet on an equal footing with India to work on a global scale, said Aditya Narayan Mishra, President, Staffing, Randstad India, an HR company.

INDIA AHEAD

Annually, India produces around 7.5 lakh engineers at a growth rate of 5 per cent whereas China produces around 25 per cent less in comparison. Indian graduates are more exposed to processes and systems during their academic years due to evolution of the IT industry over the last two decades and English as a spoken language is far more prevalent in India.
Industry-led skilling is key

The country’s skill development policy is sketchy, at best, and there is little to show in the name of implementation. We could very easily lose the dividend due from our rising youth population

NIRVIKAR SINGH

My last column had some wishful thinking for the New Year, hoping for tax reform, financial sector reform and changes in how India pursues its global strategy on the ground. These were modest wishes. But perhaps the paramount concern should be what is good for those at the centre of it all: India’s people. In 1965, economist Milton Friedman offered these remarks in a memorandum to India’s Ministry of Finance, “In any economy, the major source of productive power is not machinery, equipment, buildings and other physical capital; it is the productive capacity of the human beings who compose the society.” “The implication that “investing in people” is crucial for economic development has continued to rise in importance in policy thinking.

India’s version of this approach has included national missions for education and health, and now a major push to increase the availability of foodgrains. Like many policy initiatives, targeting and implementation have left much to be desired. But the overall goal of investing in people makes sense, and policy corrections can be made. Mothers and infants are getting somewhat better care, but need even more focused attention. More children are coming to school, and being fed there, but they are not learning enough. Many people in India need more calories (see Heather Schofield’s recent study of rickshaw pullers in Chennai), and may get them with the “right to food,” if distribution mechanisms can be made to work.

What else needs to be done? The next step beyond basic health, nutrition and education is that of skilling India’s burgeoning population of young adults. This challenge has not received the same attention as more basic needs, but it will rapidly grow in political and social salience. Of course there is a National Skill Development Policy (NSDP), in place since 2006. There was a target set of skill-building of 500 million Indians by 2022. However, it seems that so far only bureaucratic and regulatory bodies have been created. Part of the problem is that building skills is a very heterogeneous goal; it can include everyone from managers to carpenters, plumbers and technicians. Some skills are very specialised, like nursing. Others are more generic. The National Vocational Education Qualification Framework (NVEQF) takes a stab at defining learning standards, but it is short on detail, does not have the right structure, and lacks any specification of learning outcomes. Remember that this failure to focus on and achieve learning outcomes has plagued the expansion of primary education in India.

What else is missing? Four years after the NSDP was put in place, institutional change has not occurred. There has been talk of a community college model along the lines of the United States, but the most significant document, a white paper, on this idea comes from a US-sponsored organisation. In September 2013, at a national workshop on skilling India, senior officials spoke of hundreds of existing institutions adopting the community college model and of projects underway, but I could not find a single case study detailing what innovations are being implemented, what works, and what does not. The Ministry of Human Resource Development separates vocational education at the secondary level from technical-post-secondary education, and the latter is still disconnected from the traditional universities. One of the strengths of the US model is the articulation and coordination between high schools, community colleges and universities. In India, it seems that the effort is still to get buy-in from entrenched interests in higher education, rather than being at the stage of implementation on a scale that will make a difference.

One major problem with the Indian skilling effort is that it is government-led rather than industry-led. India’s government does not have a tradition of understanding business or industry. The NVEQF is supposed to have had input from industry, but I could not see the impact of that input in the document. India has little in the way of internships and apprenticeships beyond what happens through the elite business schools. I have seen little or nothing in terms of efforts to learn from Germany on this front, or indeed, the US and its tradition of agricultural universities.

So where does one go from here? Given the institutional inertia, I would hope for a more targeted approach, honing in on specific sectors, occupations and skills to start with, and intensive experimentation with pilot institutions to get a new educational model jump-started. Drawing on a wider range of international experience is also essential in designing these pilots, as well as deeper international collaboration. And government has to allow industry to lead from the front — only those who actually run enterprises have a good sense of what their workers need. Reading government documents on the topic of skilling, I felt there was an air of unreality in them, an airiness in acknowledging the huge task ahead, exhortations and good intentions, but not one concrete example of how things have changed for the better since 2009. I hope I am wrong on this, and hope that I will be proved to be so.

The author is professor of Economics, University of California, Santa Cruz
Oxford apologizes for email blunder

Sophie Murray-Morris

Oxford University has apologized after an administrator accidentally emailed a list of all the poorly performing students' marks to their peers on Wednesday.

The email disclosed the names of students who were awarded marks graded 2.2 and below in their first-term exams at University College.

The Oxford Student newspaper reported that a mistake on an Excel document meant that the names and marks of almost 50 students were sent out on an email originally written to inform students of timetables for upcoming exams. Abigail Reeves, president of the University College's JCR, said that the staff member responsible was "mortified" by the mistake.

Dr Anne Knowland, a senior tutor at the university said, "We would like to apologize to all the students affected by this disclosure for any distress this has caused and reassure them that we are investigating how this happened and are determined to make sure this does not happen again."

The email is believed to have been sent to hundreds of students. The college has 372 undergraduate and 221 graduate students.
Third party inspection for power meters

NEW DELHI: Members of a Delhi-based NGO Chetna met power department officials on the issue of testing of meters announced recently by the Delhi government.

Rajiv Kakria, member of the NGO, said that the meters run fast as they record the current flowing in the neutrals too, leading to inflated bills. “We have asked the power department to look into this aspect. Experts will now keep this point in mind when they test the 10,000 odd meters,” he said.

The power department has also written to a number of universities and institutes, including IIT Delhi, Delhi Technical University (DTU), and Netaji Subhash Institute of Technology (NSIT) to conduct a third party inspection of the meters.
IIT-B may help MPCB clean up the polluted Ulhas river

GREEN TRIBUNAL’S ORDER  MPCB to prepare action plan to revive polluted rivers

Nikhil M Ghanekar  
nikhil.ghanekar@hindustantimes.com

MUMBAI: The National Green Tribunal (NGT)’s Pune bench on Wednesday directed the Maharashtra Pollution Control Board (MPCB) to present a detailed action plan for reviving the Ulhas and other rivers such as the Patalganga, polluted because of the discharge of industrial effluents.

Concerned with the poor state of the Ulhas, the tribunal bench has also asked the MPCB to rope in the Indian Institute of Technology, Bombay (IIT-B), for surveying the health of the river and monitor its pollution levels.

Slamming the MPCB for having taken token action against errant industries, which have been discharging effluents beyond the permissible limit into the Ulhas, the bench of Justice VR Kinganikar and judicial member Ajoy Deshpande asked them how many such industries had been shut down.

MPCB responded that out of 250 industries in Dombivli, eight had been shut down while power supply had been disconnected to 200 industries involved in washing and dyeing of jeans in the Ulhasnagar belt. Representatives of the Ulhasnagar Jeans washing association also sought relief from the tribunal, but the bench refused to hear anything until an intervention application was filed.

MPCB has also been asked to submit an action taken report with the list of all industries.

The bench was hearing a petition filed by non-profit Vanashakti, which has demanded the shutting down of polluting industries along the Ulhas River in Maharashtra Industrial Development Corporation (MIDC), in Dombivli, Ulhasnagar and Ambernath.

MPCB has been directed to deposit funds with IIT-B for the pollution monitoring. “We are not happy with this attitude. Not only Ulhas, but other rivers like Mithi, Patalganga must be restored. If the court finds any industry or industries as a threat to the rivers, they will be relocated,” the bench said.

Two of the respondents in the case – Kalvan Dombivli Municipal Corporation and Ambernath Municipal Corporation were slapped a penalty of Rs20,000 each for being absent at the hearing.

After MPCB’s request during the last hearing in December, MIDC, the nodal authority for regulating the industries in question, has been made a respondent in the case.

MPCB officials were not available for comment.
Seven UK varsities woo IITians

OFFERS GALORE Scholarship, certificate courses, white-collar jobs on platter for IIT-I students

Students of IIT-Indore interact with representatives of the seven UK universities at ‘British is great campaign’ on Wednesday. (Right) Professor Peter Lindstedt from Imperial College of London delivers a lecture on ‘Challenges in sustainable propulsion’. 

ARUN MONDHEJ

HT Correspondent

INDORE: The seven universities from United Kingdom which took part in ‘British is great campaign’ at IIT-Indore on Wednesday, had more than just scholarships to offer to the students.

Offering students, a white-collar job to pay their expenses on campus, to a certificate course for honing one’s presentation skills costing as low as ₹2000, the event saw a good response from the students.

Part of the UK delegation headed by Kumar Iyer, British deputy High Commissioner and Professor Peter Lindstedt of Imperial College of London, the representatives from different universities could be seen putting forward the best deals which they had to offer to students. The programme started with an inaugural session wherein the students were briefed about the entire schedule for the day, proceeded with a lecture by Professor Peter Lindstedt which was then followed by an interactive session.

Satisfying the queries of students, Ranjit Sampath, regional advisor of De Montfort University, Leicester said, “Our main aim is to educate and inform students about the different courses which are on offer, We have different partnerships with schools and colleges already, one being with Daly College.”

 Mentioning that one of the significant achievements of the university is the contribution of Pancreas in the Bionic man, Sampath said, “We wish to introduce students about the scholarships, which can be easily accessed. Plus we will be giving students jobs which will be related to their courses while they study. This is a better option to pursue instead of doing odd jobs which is a normal trend.”

As the offer of getting a real job was put forward by one university a unique concept of developing inter-personal and presentation skills by undergoing certificate courses was put forward by the London School of Training.

Rajdeep Chaudhary representative from the college said, “Our courses are very unique and innovative yet extremely economical to pursue.” Listing the courses which the institute has to offer Chaudhary added, “We have set the fee structure in such a manner that a number of students benefit from the procedure.”

However, as the courses were advertised and put on display for the students to pursue, Mandeep Randhawa, trade and investment adviser at UK Trade and Investment, part of the British deputy high commission said, “This is a wonderful approach. We have brought the institutes together and left them completely free to proceed with their MOUs, collaborations or any other tie-ups which they wish to take forward.”

Tracing the importance of such fests, Vijay Iyer, senior adviser, UK science and innovation network said, “We keep on organising such fests, as it facilitates us to build strong networks. Plus it brings the students the best of everything.”