Task force for national-level exams

THE HRD ministry has constituted a seven-member task force under former IIT Kanpur director Sanjay Dhande to set up a national testing agency for conducting various kinds of national-level exams.

“It will prepare a blueprint for creating a special purpose vehicle to take the concept of National Testing Agency (NTA) forward,” the ministry said. It added that representatives of the CBSE, UGC, NCERT, AICTE as well as the ministry will be on the task-force.

The proposal for a NTA had earlier been endorsed by the Central Advisory Board for Education, on the rationale that it would relieve some of the pressures on bodies such as the UGC and the IIT, which currently have to take on the responsibility of holding national-level tests.

Mail Today/New Delhi
TASK FORCE TO SET UP AGENCY TO CONDUCT EXAMS

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, MAY 31

The Union HRD ministry has constituted a task force to set up a national testing agency for conducting various exams like JEE, AIEEE, NET, CAT, CMAT and GATE.

The seven-member task force, headed by former IIT Kanpur director Sanjay Dhande, will prepare a blueprint for creating a special purpose vehicle to take the concept of National Testing Agency forward. The Central Advisory Board for Education, the highest decision-making body on education, had last month endorsed the government proposal. The setting up the body is expected to ease bodies like UGC and the IIT from the responsibility of holding national-level tests.
About 26,000 JEE ‘qualifiers’ give up IIT dream midway

HT Correspondent
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LUCKNOW: In a worrying trend, nearly 26,000 of the 1.52 lakh candidates who had cleared the Joint Engineering Examination (mains) will not write the JEE (advanced) to be held on Sunday.

One of the reasons that have stopped these B Tech aspirants, already eligible for NIT, IIIT and some deemed universities, from registering for the test for admissions into coveted IITs is being cited as the change in pattern for the elite examination.

If a candidate does not turn up and complete the formalities in a week’s time then what could IIT do?

Dr Phalgungi Gupta
JEE chairman

With the JEE replacing All India Engineering Entrance Examination (AIEEE) from this session, many candidates were caught unawares of the pattern that demanded registration of eligible candidates who were keen to take the second level of test.

“Many of the eligible candidates did not register for the second round despite the fact that the date of registration was publicized on IIT websites. You expect candidates to follow the website. The online registration of candidates appearing for JEE (advanced) was held between May 8 and 13, but many candidates did not do so,” said Dr Phalgungi Gupta, JEE chairman.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 10
OVER 26,000 JEE ‘QUALIFIERS’ GIVE UP IIT DREAM MIDWAY

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Even after May 13 deadline, candidates who had registered but did not deposited JEE advanced fees, were accommodated.

“We entertained such applications till May 15-16. But it cannot be an endless process. If a candidate does not turn up and complete the formalities in a week’s time then what could IIT do. I am afraid candidates were not serious about it,” he added.

Also, several candidates who qualified in the JEE main exam but ended up around the cut off range felt that they do not stand a chance to crack JEE advanced test and hence might have not registered.

“They must have thought that unless they score high percentile, they cannot get into IITs,” said an expert.

Besides, those who had already completed three attempts chose to remain away.

“Some of the candidates who were not sure of getting good marks in Class 12 also might have decided to skip advance test,” said a teacher.
Govt plans to spread IIT, IIM wings abroad

DEEPAK KUMAR JHA
NEW DELHI

In a first of its kind initiative, India is all set to open educational institutions like elite IIT, IIM, National Law School and prestigious Indian School of Business (ISB) abroad. Qatar is likely to be the first destination to have such centre of excellence in Asia under India’s twinning arrangement system. Sources said that HRD Minister MM Pallam Raju is expected to make a brief presentation in this regard to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on Saturday in the presence of Finance Minister P Chidambaram. As of now, only a couple of private educational institutions and a few CBSE-affiliated schools have opened their branches in Dubai and Muscat.

A high-level delegation from Qatar is likely to visit India shortly and deliberate the viability of establishment of elite institutions. Ministerial sources said that Chidambaram discussed the issue with Emir of Qatar Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani on an official visit to Qatar last month. The Emir is reported to have renewed his country’s interest in opening of prestigious educational institutions at Qatar.

The idea to open India’s best engineering, management and legal institutions was first mooted by Qatar during the Emir’s visit to India in April 2012. “From India’s point of view, the move will impart fresh momentum to the friendly ties and growing bilateral cooperation between India and Qatar. In the long run this is also being perceived as gas diplomacy,” said a HRD Ministry source.

Chidambaram was in the West Asian country to seek investments on various sectors, but Qatar reportedly expressed its interest in setting up the world-class infrastructure for an IIT, IIM, a NLS and ISB and academic quality will be imparted by India.

Presently private institutions like IMT, Gaziabad and BITS Pilani have their extended branches in West Asian countries. India’s only private university Amity University has earned the credit of offering management programmes from multiple foreign cities — including Dubai, Singapore, London and Romanian campuses.

“We are the only university able to open full-fledged university programmes unlike others who have their study or extended centres in other countries,” said Savita Mehta, vice-president (Corporate Communication), Amity University. The Indian Government has, through notification, allowed top 500 universities across the world to start courses in India through twinning arrangement. The move to open, elite institutions abroad may be seen as a crucial decision to take global the country’s technical and management studies.

According to UGC, “twinning” is an arrangement by an Indian university or institution with a foreign institution or university to offer academic programmes either jointly or independently. With uncertainty over the Foreign Educational Institutions (Regulation of Entry and Operations) Bill, 2010, in the Rajya Sabha, the UGC Draft Regulations on twinning arrangement last year paved the way for educational courses to be offered by the foreign universities in India and vice-versa from forthcoming academic session.

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Dainik Jagaran ND 01/06/2013

श्रीमान राजकेशव सिंह, नई दिल्ली

देश के आईआइटी, आईआइएम फहराएंगे विदेश में झंडा

भारत से बाहर करते हुए इस नई में चुनाव संभाला है

पहला कैप्स
Girl clears IIT but fails Class XII, High Court orders re-evaluation

ANEESHA MATHUR
NEW DELHI, MAY 31

PROVIDING relief to an IIT aspirant, who has not cleared even one paper in her CBSE Class XII examinations, the Delhi High Court on Friday directed the Board to recheck her papers and issue fresh results within five days.

Livleen Kaur (17), who cleared the IIT-JEE main paper and obtained an all India rank of 926, approached the court after the Central Board of Secondary Education results for Class XII exams showed her as having failed in every paper. In the results declared on Monday, Livleen had obtained only 2 marks in physics theory, 14 in chemistry and 7 each in mathematics and biology. Incidentally, she is shown to have obtained 29 marks out of 30 in her physics practical exam, and 30 out of 30 in the chemistry and biology practicals.

"The respondent, with regard to the peculiar facts and circumstances of the case, i.e. the marks secured by her in practicals and the corresponding marks obtained in her theory exams, would recheck the papers of the petitioner by June 5, 2013," the court of Justice G.S Sistani ordered.

"The results of the rechecking will be informed to the petitioner by email or any other swift mode" the court directed, after noting that delay in the results would affect her counselling session.

Kaur, who has been a high-ranking student at the Kulachi Hansraj Model School in Ashok Vihar, is due to attend counseling for IIT admission on June 7.

Kaur’s father Gurdeep Singh said the family approached the High Court after CBSE officials informed them that the application for revaluation or rechecking of papers would take at least a month. "She has to go for IIT counselling. With the incorrect results, she would be ineligible for an admission in IIT," Gurdeep Singh said.

"Even my school teachers were in shock about my CBSE result. I have been a good student. I have studied both medical and non-medical streams in school, and obtained 8.9 CGPA in Class X," Livleen told Newsline.

Livleen is also planning to take the AIIMS medical entrance exam this weekend, and has already taken the NEET All India Medical Entrance examinations.
Forensic test on girl's papers

RARE CASE CBSE to seek approval for allowing her to re-appear in both the papers

Asth Saxena

Noida: The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) will send answersheets of Class 12 student Pooja Soni who drew a blank in two papers — accounting and economics — for forensic investigation. The girl claimed that CBSE officials told her that ‘vanishing ink’ was used on the answersheets.

The CBSE has also decided to seek a high-level committee’s approval for allowing her to re-appear in both the papers as it is a ‘very rare case’.

“We have seen the copies and they have not been tampered with. But as the student has expressed her doubts about the answer books, we will send them to a forensic lab for verification. The papers were written with a pencil and then erased. The girl’s future will not be affected,” said Vineet Joshi, chairman, CBSE.

On May 27, Hindustan Times had reported how 18-year-old Soni was shocked to see her report card, which showed zero marks in two subjects.

Her report card showed English 81, mathematics 95, business studies 66, accounting practical 20 (out of 20), economics 0 and accounting theory 0. She had scored 98 in economics in the pre-boards.

“If she is correct, we will help her out. But if she is wrong, then the earlier she accepts the reality the better,” said Joshi. While CBSE officials argued that the candidate wrote the exam with a pencil, Soni insisted that she had used a pen.

“My daughter wrote her name with a pen, then how can she write the answers with a pencil? Her future is at stake,” said Vijay Soni, her father.

CBSE CHAIRMAN VINEET JOSHI

‘Can’t understand why a student would erase what she wrote’

What you have to say about Pooja Soni case? How often do you hear about such issues?

This is a unique case. We do get cases where people deny having written the paper after looking at their answersheets. But confusion in the use of ‘pen’ or ‘pencil’ makes this case distinctive. Even for us, it is hard to understand why a student would erase her own answers. It is mandatory for students to either use blue or black ink.

What is the role of parents in such cases?

Expectation of parents bothers students the most. Many times, parents have forced children to choose a career of their choice. Parental expectations should stay on par with a student’s performance.

What is the role of board in such cases?

People should have faith in the system. We have been working for students’ future for years. Their failure is our failure. The girl might have got nervous at the time of examination. We have been handling large number of students. We will not do anything against them.

What do you feel about the overall results for Classes 10 and 12 this year?

The results have improved this year for both board exams. The pass percentage for Class 10 was recorded at 98.76% this year — up from 88.84% in 2009 (where there was no OCE). For Class 12, the number of students scoring 50% and above stands at 7,231 up by over 6% from previous years.
High Court quashes AICTE notices against IIPM

Press Trust of India
New Delhi, May 29

The Delhi High Court today quashed show-cause notices issued to the Indian Institute of Planning and Management (IIPM) by the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) for running MBA and BBA courses without its approval, saying the technical body has no jurisdiction over the institution.

“We don’t see any merit in the submission of the counsel for the respondent (AICTE). In view of the judgement of the Supreme Court in the case of Association of Management of Pvt colleges, clearly AICTE is not concerned with the courses run by the petitioner (IIPM). As per the findings recorded by the respondent, the petitioner is said to be running MBA, BBA courses. Hence, AICTE would have no jurisdiction over the institution.

“In view of the above, we quash the notices of...and the communication of June 20, 2007,” the court said.

The court’s order came on a writ petition filed by IIPM seeking a direction against AICTE on the ground that the institute is engaged in conducting planning and entrepreneurship courses which are non-professional and non-technical and AICTE’s approval is not required to run such courses.
DU is set to break new ground this admission season as it launches ‘prickly’ 4-yr UG courses

By Neha Pushkarina in New Delhi

TEACHERS protest, political intervention and open letters—nothing could stop its launch.

In less than two months, Delhi University’s four-year undergraduate programme (FYUP) is set to be in full swing. This year, DU aspirants will choose a major course called Discipline Course II at the end of the second year. That is the course they will do their honours in. Unlike the traditional programmes, however, students in the four-year system will also study 11 to 12 courses, the ‘Foundation courses’, a minor course of their choice called Discipline Course II and four skill-based applied courses. Besides this, they will also engage in compulsory activities for ‘internationalisation and identity and soul’. Though the followings of this concept are expected to change the face of college education in DU, critics call it a “dumbing-down” process with little hope for a new high status of the university may completely lose their strength and charm.

FOUNDRATION COURSES

- Language, Literature, and Creativity I (Hindi/Modern Indian languages)
- Language, Literature, and Creativity II (English)
- Information Technology
- Business Entrepreneurship, Management
- Governance and Citizenship
- Psychology, Communication & Life Skills
- Geographic and Socio-Economic Diversity
- Science and Life
- History, Culture and Civilization
- Building Mathematical Ability
- Environment and Public Health

GRUDGES AGAINST ‘FYUP’

- Only eight core and 20 non-core courses in first two years
- Foundation courses unnecessary, will eat away a lot of time
- One year of extra expenditure for students
- Ad hoc teachers may lose job

The compulsory foundation courses, to be taught over two years, has also been questioned. However, the university believes these courses will help make even the most “non-sense” course and enjoyable. “The foundation courses have been interleaved on the second-semester syllabus for the first time in the DU system over the last five years. The employers often complained about the lack of communication and IT skills and the analytical ability of DU graduates,” said former DU registrar Sanjay Shukla.

He said that these courses have been made compulsory to ensure that all students of a subject choose to major in, as all of them will impart basic necessary skills to students such as instance, students scoring anything between 50 and 59 per cent in their Board conduct examination in zoology. Many of them do not want to go for research or higher studies, he in a paper like Human Physiology, we will put them through practicals like blood testing, kidney function, liver function, ECG, EEG. If a student plans to end the course after two years, he will be able to work at a pathology lab, besides having analytical ability and communication skills,” Raj said.

Students in the four-year programme will be allowed the option to opt for their second and third year. At the end of the second year, they can get a GPA, while in the third, they will have a bachelor’s degree. The option of joining the course again afterwards is also available.

ST. STEPHEN’S KICK-STARTS DU RACE

ST. STEPHEN’S College will roll out its online admission process on Saturday, four days ahead of Delhi University, thus officially starting the 2013-14 admission season. This year, the entire application process for admission to St. Stephen’s is online—even for persons with disabilities. “Those facing a problem in filling the online forms can visit the college, where officials will assist them,” Dr Karen Gabriel, media adviser to the college, said. The admission form for people with disabilities is free, while others have to pay 500 for each subject. The admissions will be based on the aspirants’ Class XII results.

The cut-off marks will be released on June 21. Even though the admission procedure remains largely unchanged, college officials said the marks for admission under sports quota have been redistributed to give more weightage to trials and past achievements.

Mail Today/New Delhi

Holistic growth on offer by Malashri Lal

AFTER July 2013, higher education in India will change significantly, thanks to the initiatives that have culminated in FYUP.

The students who join DU will benefit from a holistic curriculum which gives them core competence as well as specific specialisation. The foundation courses, for example, engage with India’s contemporary challenges of environment, technology, data analysis, multipolarities, culture, conflict and others, an understanding of which creates informed citizens and global players. The useful knowledge acquired in the first two years, combined with skill-based courses, will aid job seeking, especially since DU grants a diploma at the close. For those who stay for the third year, subject specialisations emerge in areas like Management, Biological Sciences or Management Studies, areas where their studies have incorporated professionalism.

The institute’s research capacity that enables them to produce quality faculty and experienced professionals.

The FYUP is a win-win situation for teachers and students, potential employers and aspiring entrepreneurs. Why? Because:

- The writer is dean (academics) and head of the English Department.
- The FYUP is a win-win situation for teachers and students, potential employers and aspiring entrepreneurs.
‘Children are the key to protecting environment’

Yugratna Srivastava, 17, is the only child representative at the UN Environment Program. An IIT aspirant, one of India’s youngest ‘green girls’ spearheads a campaign that envisions a country full of trees and gardens

What inspired you to take up environmental issues?
I was once travelling from Shamli in western UP to Lucknow when I was taken aback at the sight of hundreds of old and big trees lying uprooted, their roots exposed. It left a mark on my mind. Since then, I decided to work extensively on planting saplings and telling people about the need to plant as many trees as are felled.

How are you going about your campaign?
I sensitise people against felling trees. I undertake campaigns in educational institutions about the importance of cleanliness, and planting of trees for a better future. I also spread the word at companies about the need for protecting the environment.

You are also associated with the UN Environment Program. What has been the experience like?
The experience has been fantastic. In fact, I am the only child representative at UNEP. My tenure, which started from 2009, continues till 2014. One of the main things I learnt there is that the need to protect the environment is a value that must be imbibed from early childhood. I was amazed to see children studying in kindergarten in Japan being aware of the need to segregate waste. We, too, need to start early and make people conscious about how this seemingly small act can make a big difference.

What about future plans?
I intend to build a sustained campaign for environment protection. Lack of awareness, I have seen, is the crucial bottleneck. I want to speak to more and more people about the importance of trees in urban settings and gradually extend this to rural areas. Preconceived notions need to go for change to happen.

Isha Jain
June 2

HT, Mumbai

64.3% HSC cut-off for IIT admissions

HT Correspondent
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MUMBAI: Class 12 state board students who have scored over 64.3% and have made it to the final round of the Joint Entrance Examination (JEE) that will be held on Sunday (today) stand a chance of being selected to the Indian Institute of Technology (IITs), as per a statement released by the state board.

The cut off for general category this year is lesser than 73.4% cut-off the board had circulated to give students an estimate, based on last year’s data.

According to the Maharashtra State Board of Secondary and Higher Secondary Education, the cut-off score for the top 20 percentile of the general category has been fixed at 386 (which is 64.3%). For OBCs, the cut-off will be 348, for SCs, 343, and 341 for STs, as per a statement released by the state board.

Secondary Certificate (HSC) results announced on Thursday. “I had scored less than my expectation, but I am relieved to have qualified for the top 20,” said Parth Shah, student from Bhayander who secured 75% from Science stream.

“Students who have made it to this final round of examination but do not find them within the cut-off need not lose heart and should consider the exam as a good exposure,” said Sarjerad Jadhav, state board chairperson.
JEE Advanced exam surprises students

STUMPED Increased negative marking to bring down cut-offs

HT Correspondent
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NEW DELHI: A drastic increase in negative marking flummoxed students at the first Joint Engineering Examination (JEE) Advanced for admission to Indian Institutes of Technology (IIT). The exam was held on Sunday.

Experts said this will bring down cut-offs.

The second level qualifying exam for IITs was conducted in two shifts, paper 1 from 9 am to 12 pm and paper 2 from 2 pm to 5 pm, each containing questions from physics, chemistry and mathematics.

Although students were expecting a paper pattern and marking scheme similar to last year’s, it was quite different.

“In total, paper 1 and paper 2 was of 360 marks as opposed to 408 marks last year and 480 marks in 2011. There was a substantial increase in the number of questions with negative marking. Except for 30 of the 180 questions in paper 1, the rest had negative marking. In paper 2, all questions had varying degree of negative marking,” said R L Trikha, director of coaching institute FIITJEE.

Students were a bit taken aback by the changes. “We had only 10 minutes to get adjusted to the new marking scheme and change our strategies. There were quite a few shocked faces after paper 1,” said Yash Sharma, a student. Many found chemistry and mathematics tricky with paper 2 being comparatively easier than paper 1.

“The paper lived up to its name and was definitely advanced in difficulty level. It was tougher than the papers in the last 5 to 6 years. Increased penalty for wrong answers will reduce cut offs,” said Praveen Tyagi, MD, IITians PACE.

For the first time this year, admission to IITs is being done in two phases — JEE Main and JEE Advanced. The top 1.5 lakh students in JEE Main were eligible to appear for JEE Advanced.
Over 1 lakh appear for JEE advanced

NEW DELHI, DHNS: At least 1.28 lakh students took the Joint Entrance Exam (advanced) on Sunday after getting shortlisted in the JEE main held on May 6.

Fourteen lakh candidates registered for JEE 2013, while 1.5 lakh got shortlisted in the JEE main. The difference between the previous years' and this year's entrance examinations is that earlier, entry to the Indian Institutes of Technology was based on the performance in IIT-JEE examination papers subject to obtaining minimum 60 per cent qualifying marks in class 12 board examination.

But this year, the performance in JEE (advanced) will be taken into consideration if one qualifies to be in the top 20 percentile of the respective class 12 board exam.

The JEE (advanced) had two objective-type papers. Each paper comprised physics, chemistry and mathematics.

» JEE, Page 7

Over 1 lakh appear for JEE advanced

JEE, from Page 1

The duration of each paper was three hours.

According to experts, this year the marking pattern has been changed drastically in both papers. “A few questions in chemistry part are tough. Mathematics is relatively tougher than physics and chemistry. Overall, Paper 2 is a shade easier than Paper 1. However, cut-offs are expected to be lower than previous years,” said the director of IIT-JEE.

JEE (main) was relatively easy this year. It is an eligibility test for the JEE (advanced), which the candidate has to take if he or she is aspiring for admission to undergraduate programmes offered by IITs.

DH News Service
बदले पैटर्न व घुमावदार प्रश्नों ने उलझाया

अमर उजाला ब्यूरो

नई दिल्ली। आईआईटी में दाखिले के लिए रक्षावार को आयोजित जेई एडवांस (संयुक्त इंजीनियरिंग प्रवेश परीक्षा) प्रवेश परीक्षा में 1.52 लाख छात्रों ने हिस्सा लिया। दस हजार सीटों के लिए आयोजित परीक्षा के बदले पैटर्न और घुमावदार प्रश्नों ने छात्रों को काफी मशक्कत कराई। हालांकि, छात्रों ने मिलीजुली प्रतिक्रिया दी। कुछ ने पेपर को आसान तो कुछ ने मुश्किल बताया।

अद्वीत, निहारिका और आकाश ने बताया कि बदले पैटर्न, घुमावदार प्रश्न और निगेटिव मार्किंग के चलते परीक्षा काफी मुश्किल रही। पेपर दो में प्रश्नों ने काफी उलझाया। पहले पेपर दो में बहुविकल्पीय उत्तर या एक उत्तर में बारे में लिखा रहता था, वहीं पेपर दो के प्रथम वर्ग में इस बार
New marking scheme surprises IIT-JEE aspirants

Bhavya Dore
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MUMBAI: A different marking scheme and format for the Joint Entrance Exam Advanced (JEE-Advanced) paper caught students off guard on Sunday.

JEE-Advanced is the second level exam for the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) aspirants. Around 1.27 lakh candidates who cleared JEE-Main were eligible to appear for the exam.

Students were surprised to find negative markings introduced for several questions, and removed from others.

“It was a tough paper and the different marking scheme made it more difficult,” said Aditya Kale, who was among the high scorers in JEE-Main.

“It was quite a surprise. But you have to be prepared for changes and deal with it,” said Palak Jain, another JEE-Main high scorer.

Most said questions were challenging in all subjects - Maths, Physics, Chemistry. One coaching institute reported two minor errors that weren’t confirmed.

“The exam pattern keeps changing” said HC Gupta, chairperson, JEE 2018. “The exam went off very smoothly. Nothing was out of syllabus.”

Cut-offs, however, could drop. “It should not be difficult for serious, focused student to sail through,” said RL Trikha, director, coaching institute FIITJEE.

Both three-hour papers totaled 360 marks, lower than previous years when the total was above 400.
आईआईटी जेईई एडवांस की परीक्षा में छात्रों का छूटा पसीना

माइन्स स्कूल बाराकर खेल से जेईई एडवांस की परीक्षा देते हैं तक करने वाले कर्मचारी ने इस परीक्षा की मुहिम को बताया। यह परीक्षा छात्रों के लिए बहुत मुश्किल रहेगी। लेकिन यह खेल का हिस्सा है और इसमें छात्रों के लिए भी बहुत महत्वपूर्ण है।

चादनी चौक इलाके से जेईई एडवांस की परीक्षा देने आए स्वभाव के कारण यह परीक्षा हादसे को बताया। एक पीपर ने आदान-प्रदान के लिए एडवांस को भेजा था। जेईई एडवांस की परीक्षा देने आए स्वभाव के कारण यह परीक्षा हादसे को बताया।

राजस्थान की प्रशासन ने समाज को नुकसान नहीं किया। जेईई एडवांस की परीक्षा देने आए स्वभाव के कारण यह परीक्षा हादसे को बताया।

डाईनिक जाग्रन 03/06/2013  P-5

दस हजार सीट और सवा लाख की परीक्षा

नेशनल दुनिया

नई दिल्ली: केंद्रीय माध्यमिक संस्थान (नई दिल्ली) के अध्यायों में जाने वाले रूपों के लिए जेईई एडवांस की परीक्षा में हजारों सीटें बनीं। इस परीक्षा में छात्रों को दो दिनों में पांच हजार सीटें हैं।

जेईई एडवांस की परीक्षा देते हैं दो दिन, लेकिन इसमें कुछ छात्रों को एडवांस परीक्षा सीटें मिलीं।

सीबीईएस के अनुसार जेईई एडवांस की परीक्षा में हजारों सीटें हैं। इसमें छात्रों को दो दिनों में सीटें मिलीं।

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नेशनल दुनिया 03/06/2013  P-3
Cheap eye-screening tech by IIT Madras

Vanita Shrivastava
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NEW DELHI: The Indian Institute of Technology, Madras has designed an eye-screening technology that is affordable and accessible to a wider section of people.

The computing technology ‘Eye-PAC’ created by the Healthcare Technology Innovation Centre (HTIC) at the institute is used for extracting information from eye images.

The technology can be deployed to create screening and diagnostic solutions for a range of vision-threatening diseases such as diabetic retinopathy, glaucoma, and age-related macular degeneration.

This enhances visual appearance of eye images produced by 3muthra, an ophthalmic imaging system, and locates disease signs that may lead to vision loss at a very early stage.
Writing JEE in the stone age

Vasudha Venugopal

CHENNAI: A test to select the brightest minds in the country turned out to be not-so-brightly organised. Nearly 560 students who had just begun writing the JEE (Advanced) at the Madras Institute of Technology, Chromepet, had to spend nearly five anxious hours in the exam hall — at least an hour in pitch darkness. The students had just cherry picked the easy questions and moved on to the challenging ones when the lights started flickering.

The students had already taken a three-hour exam in the morning and were attempting the second session of the test, which was scheduled between 2 p.m. and 5 p.m. It was after 6:30 p.m. that the tired-looking students came out wondering if this was the appropriate finale to years of hard work.

The aspirants had qualified to write JEE (Advanced) — the final gateway to the IITs, after cracking the JEE (Mains) last month. This is the first time a two-tier system was introduced for students. Across Tamil Nadu, some 3,100 wrote the exam in Chennai — 2,640 in Chennai and 555 in other parts of the State.

Logistical problems marred the JEE (Advanced) in other centres too. Some 25,000 of the 1.5 lakh qualified students did not register for the test — mostly out of ignorance — despite ads taken out by the IITs telling qualified students that they need to register for the Advanced test online. The exam was be conducted by IIT-Delhi in collaboration with IIT-Kanpur and IIT-Bombay.

Angry parents at MIT expressed their anger at the lack of proper arrangements at the exam site. “This is one of the largest centres and it is a government-run institute, not even a private one. Couldn’t they ensure proper backup,” fumed Anil Rangarajan, a parent. Many parents waited near the venue, in the rain, trying to cajole authorities to restore the power supply.

Mr. Rangarajan’s daughter, Asha, said that though examiners gave them 50 extra minutes, she had lost the momentum as soon as the lights started flickering around 2.20 p.m., a few minutes after the exam started.

“Then they went off at around 3 p.m. completely. We were in the exam room till six thirty, and it was very stressful especially because most students were panicking,” she said.

MIT officials termed the incident unfortunate and said they had made all arrangements. “Since it rained unexpectedly, the generator was unable to retrieve power. We tried our best and gave extra time to the students. We have also informed IIT officials about it,” said an official.
OBCs break the caste barrier in JEE-advanced

Mumbai: The OBCs have sprung up in the performance charts. When close to 1.26 lakh brightest high school graduates took the JEE (advanced) on Sunday, it turned out that an almost similar number of open category students and OBC candidates were vying to get into the IITs.

Data shared by IIT-Delhi, in-charge of conducting the test, shows that 51,170 general category students and 47,085 OBC candidates registered for the exam.

Part of the reason for bridging of the caste divide is that several OBCs went on to do pretty well in the JEE (main) and did not use the reservation gates when they signed up for the advanced exam, said IIT-Guwahati director Gautam Barua.

“A lot of the OBCs qualified under the general category,” said H C Gupta, chairman JEE (advanced) 2013. Experts now forecast that even in the final seat allotment, many OBCs may not need the special reservation to join the elite engineering colleges and may qualify under the open category. “We feel there are quite a few general category students who have dropped out and that may also be responsible in narrowing the number of OBC and general category students,” Barua added.

While the IITs had shortlisted a total of 1.5 lakh top candidates of the JEE-main, about 15%, “thousands who hail from Gujarat”, did not sign up for the advanced test as they preferred their state engineering college over the IITs, said Gupta. He estimated that there were around 20,000 OBC candidates who hadn’t registered because they did not meet the OBC eligibility criteria.

For the full report, log on to www.timesofindia.com
ANUBHUTI VISHNOI

Time HRD came up with a reform blueprint

AS THE DEBATE over Delhi University’s switch to the four-year undergraduate programme rages on, and eminent academics line up to trash or praise it, it is the ambivalence of the Union Human Resource Development Ministry that confounds most. The Pallam Raju-led ministry would rather not interfere with the affairs of an autonomous Central varsity, but at the same time continue to host meetings after meeting on the issue without dropping as much as a hint of whether or not it will ‘rescue’ DU.

In fact, Raju has in recent press interactions maintained a perplexing ambivalence, saying that change and reform are good things and are always resisted, but also stating at the same time that efforts are on to find a resolution, the VC has been ‘grilled’, meetings are taking place, and so on. His deputy, MoS Shashi Tharoor, reacted fast, categorically and publicly backing the university’s move even before Raju had made his views known on the subject.

Raju’s reluctance to take a strong position is not limited to the DU. The minister has been as careful not to ruffle any feathers or create controversy on any other issue as well. If his comments on a possible rethink on the Aakash tablet project caused a mini furore, the minister was quick to retract those views and say he was misunderstood.

Having come after a minister like Kapil Sibal—who ensured quite a limelight for the ministry, but at the same time courted far too many controversies that may have finally cost him the job—Raju obviously thinks it politically prudent to aim at 2014 and quietly bide time as UPA II sails into the sunset. So much so, he has been careful not to overturn policies drafted by Sibal.

Sadly, the casualty in this determined status quoism is the education sector. Raju came with the promise of new-age thinking for a critical sector but months down the line, we are yet to see the minister unveil his vision, ideas or even a ‘to-do’ list for HRD. For all his faults, Sibal challenged status quo with every other idea, shook up every file and department in the ministry and kept it on its toes all the time. Raju’s ministry is one in passive mode, going through the motions but with no greater vision or direction guiding them.

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ALUMNI MEET
IIT-BHU will be conducting its annual global meet on June 29 at Hotel Lalit Ashok, Bangalore, to facilitate the alumni community across all walks of life. The alumni come together, pay homage to alma mater, evolve a guidance to the institute, address global issues, recognise societal change agents amongst alumni, share experience and expertise across the community. The one-day event will have a panel discussion on ‘Working together towards Excellence-Public/Government, Social and Corporate Spheres’ and ‘Entrepreneurship’.

India needs institutions producing research with a global impact that pushes forward the boundaries of understanding. It is essential for the continued success of India’s economy.

NEW HEIGHTS

GLOBAL IMPACT

For the majority of institutions, this focus on local priorities must continue: expanding learning opportunities to under-represented groups, working with the local community and providing higher level vocational skills to ensure that India’s demographic dividend is the almost unimaginable potential latent in its huge population of young people—does not turn into a demographic disaster. India needs institutions producing research with a global impact that pushes forward the boundaries of understanding. It is essential for the continued success of India’s economy.

This means publishing research in the most widely recognised and widely-read global research journals. It means India’s best collaborating with the very best academics from wherever in the world they may be based, to share brainpower on shared challenges. It means working harder to create the right environment to retain India’s best brains. It means opening up borders, and offering top salaries, to attract the top academic talent from abroad.

India’s universities must also ensure they are nurturing the next generation of free-thinking, global leaders prepared for an uncertain future in a world-class learning environment. This means developing global citizens. It means attracting more international students to India to create a rich, multi-cultural study environment; embracing new global partnerships, and harnessing technology to offer Indian students access to the best teaching from all over the world.
**Blurred boundaries**

**HC Pokhriyal**, executive director, School of Open Learning (SOL), Delhi University, on how technology connects the learner with the content

As a teacher, the role is to create a learning environment, whether in a real or a virtual classroom. The criticality is not in the learning content given by the teacher, but in the environment and with a mentor, who works on to improve the competency of students. In many ways, classroom learning is restricted. In a classroom, there is less peer-learning and so an attitude of creating an atmosphere where learners can look for ways to improve their skills and knowledge has to be encouraged.

Technology has changed the way education has traditionally been disseminated, changing the dynamics of the teaching and learning process. It is through technology that distances can be bridged and education can be brought to the doorstep of the student. Technology connects the learner with the content. There is a big movement where people believe that the concept of copyrights should not exist as learning should be free and open to all, including downtrodden masses. When learning is free and open, boundaries are blurred and students from anywhere can access relevant content and increase capabilities.

In today's world, there is a need to provide the best to students. Learning through a distance mode allows students to study at their own pace and access quality material from any part of India. Students can read, re-read material at any time of the day without having to think twice.

In the case of Delhi University students who study through the open learning system get the same benefits as students who study from the regular system. Learning is done through the distance education mode. Personal contact classes are conducted for them and through this system, they are able to complete their education and acquire other skills, which help them. Democratization of learning has begun in India and it is here to stay.

- As told to Anitha Isaac

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Digitisation, internationalisation and collaboration in the higher education arena has had a two-fold effect – bringing affordable education to a much larger audience and allowing collaboration between universities and countries, thus, sharing best practices in education.

Virtual Learning

By Karan Gupta
International Education Consultant

Cloud Campus

While the concept of "classroom" is undergoing a revolution, education is being redefined to cater to the needs of the 21st century learner. With this in mind, NIT Limited has introduced an initiative called "Cloud Campus," which will make available new-age skills to students across the country.

It aims to offer over 100 courses across 300 locations by the end of 2023, thus enabling a coverage of over 50,000 students by 2024. The training programs will be offered in IT, banking, global finance, management, digital and social media marketing.

Among other things, the initiative will include cloud classrooms where students can interact with experts from anywhere in the world.

For more information, interested students can log on to the NIT website.
Learning is happening in different ways on campus: labs, machine shops, in dorms, through projects, etc. Beyond the classroom, lectures are still important, but more and more institutions are looking at online learning, project-based learning, problem-based learning, and so on. These ideas encourage active engagement with the student rather than passive listening. Online is helping with aspects of learning, especially the transmission of codified content — what we call instruction. Online is being seen as a substitute for some forms of lecturing.

While active learning, project-based learning, problem-based learning and similar ideas require more face-time and one-on-one time between the professor and the student, online learning can substitute lecture time. Automatic grading enables professors to be sure that students have done some basic preparation before they come to the classroom, the studio, the lab or the machine shop so that the students’ face-to-face time can be enriched further. For students who don’t have access to colleges or campus life, i.e., when face-to-face time is impossible, MOOCs contain online video but that is not new. The things that distinguish MOOCs include automatic online grading — which enables students to do exercises and get grades and certificates; forums in which students can ask questions and get them answered, often by peers, enabling them to have their doubts cleared as if in a classroom; in the case of edX, online simulations and visualising, which further enrich the experience. Simulations include building a circuit and testing it, or viewing a complex molecule.

MOOCs will be the great equaliser: enabling any college to get great lectures. Professors in the college can then ‘flip’ the classroom. This means engaging in active learning with students. This is usually win-win for students — higher quality lectures and higher quality on-site experiences.

edX is free — students can take the class for free. There are other services that may cost money — certification or proctored certification are examples. Over 10 years ago, MIT made its curriculum open through the open courseware efforts. Today, we get more than one million visitors a month. We don’t believe people will tune out of edX offerings. And if they do, so be it. We are engaging in this activity not just as a service to the world, but also as a service to ourselves. More than anything, we plan to use the online material to change the way we teach on campus.

We don’t want to compete with established universities. We work with established universities. We see a trend towards change in teaching methods, and we believe that MOOCs will enable everyone to improve. Meanwhile, a large fraction of our students are actually older. They are taking classes online simply to enrich themselves. Finally, we do provide certificates (the majority of which have been free) and we hear that people value them.

Sanjay Sarma, director of digital learning and professor of mechanical engineering at Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), in charge of building courses that appear on edX, on how learning is taking place beyond classrooms.

As told to Poonam Jain
Learning at crossroads

Higher Education, The Stakeholders And The State

rudrashis datta

A RAPIDLY changing global economic and socio-political order has prompted a rethink among governments on the status and prospects of higher education. The transition to a meritocratic, knowledge-based world order has its own challenges and rewards. The challenges are as diverse as the rewards and the rethinking has to be as innovative as practicable. The last decade saw radical proposals among policy-makers on such issues as enrolment, costs and sustainability vis-a-vis the demands of the society in terms of economic and human resources.

The Higher Education Commission (2005) of the United States, generally referred to as the Spellings Commission after the then Secretary of Education, Margaret Spellings, was perhaps the first to realise that the structure of higher education in America — as also elsewhere — has failed to serve the interests of the stakeholders and the State. It observed: “Over the past decade, literacy among college graduates has actually declined. Unacceptably numbers of college graduates enter the workforce without the skills employers say they need in an economy where, as Einstein would say more than ever.”

The word “literacy” does not imply the alphabet or familiarity with the language, but minimum employable skills. This observation was reflected in the Report of the independent Inquiry by the UK’s Higher Education Commission (2012). It stated that employers were finding it difficult to recruit post-graduates with the specific skills they needed.

The UNESCO World Conference on Higher Education (2009) expressed the collective concern of the member-states by declaring that “the training offered by institutions of higher education should respond to and anticipate social needs.” And this must include “promoting research for the development and use of new technologies and ensuring the provision of technical and vocational training, entrepreneurship education and programmes for lifelong learning.”

As India rises to the position of a key stakeholder in the world economic order, the issues facing the relatively advanced economies of the world can hardly be brushed aside. The last few years have seen the establishment of a number of key commissions related to the wider contexts of higher education. Notably, the National Knowledge Commission (2006-2009), Committee on the Renovation and Rejuvenation of Higher Education, commonly known as the Yash Pal Committee and the proposal to set up a National Commission for Higher Education and Research (NCHER).

The perceptions of the inquiry commissions and committees are strikingly similar. The triad of access, equity and quality have been the primary considerations before the stakeholders. Whereas the regulatory bodies may have their own utility, the multiple regulatory bodies with overlapping jurisdiction have often resulted in unclear responsibilities and little autonomy for the institutions of higher learning.

The National Knowledge Commission observed that “the present regulatory system in higher education is flawed in some important respects. The barriers to entry are too high. The system of authorising entry is cumbersome.” There is a multiplicity of regulatory agencies whose mandates are both confusing and overlapping. The system, as a whole, is over-regulated and under-governed.

Ed and under-governed.

It is perhaps because of this critical observation that the decision to set up a replacement for various regulatory agencies such as UGC, AICTE, NCTE, etc. was taken through the draft resolution to create the National Commission for Higher Education and research (NCHER). This draft, going by the website of the Union HRD ministry, has certain clauses that run counter to the basic concept of institutional autonomy. It has mooted a proposal to create a beehive, named the Collegium, that shall have overriding powers to curtail and modify the authority of the state governments vis-a-vis higher education. It could be transformed into the spirit of governance, and not a dearth of regulatory statutes. The sudden replacement of the regulatory bodies by a single entity might create a free-for-all situation. A single entity may not be in a position to effectively advise and govern institutions across the country. The resulting vacuum might attract shady players who will establish and govern institutions with a profit motive, thereby relegating the critical issues of higher education.

Also, the increasing emphasis on an interface between higher educational institutions and industry can adversely affect study and research in the liberal arts and humanities. Unlike in the West, India lacks a vibrant system of endowment funding.

There is a multiplicity of regulatory agencies whose mandates are both confusing and overlapping. The system, as a whole, is over-regulated and under-governed.

Another `regulating’ entity rather than a governing institution. Also, the sheer diversity of higher education curricula, disciplines and specialisation across the country can render effective peer-based governance virtually impossible.

Admittedly, the present regulatory regime with overlapping jurisdiction and an ineffective watchdog mechanism, has its own drawbacks. Most of these bodies operate through a dubious exercise of powers — a scenario that often tempts the unscrupulous to indulge in corruption, masquerading as inspection and regulation. This is especially true in the context of the regulatory regime for technical institutions where significant financial investment and profit-making drives, especially among private investors in such institutions, have led to bribery and other forms of corruption involving the members of the entity.

While it is true that we need to adopt international practices in the management of higher education management to keep pace with the changing order, we ought also to consider that certain critical issues are unique to this country. Thoughtless adoption of Western models might aggravate the existing problems instead of resolving them. The overwhelming issue in the current regulatory mechanism is the absence of another regulating entity rather than a governing institution. Also, the sheer diversity of higher education curricula, disciplines and specialisation across the country can render effective peer-based governance virtually impossible.

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The history of education in independent India bears witness to several inquiry committees and commissions, beginning with the University Education Commission (1949) under the chairmanship of Dr Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan. Over the years the mandate of such commissions has remained virtually the same.

This has resulted in repetitive recommendations, untenable proposals, inadequate financial support and far from comprehensive implementation. The resultant stagnation has made some of the best known Indian universities and institutes recede to the background in the global ranking scale. Paradoxically, the proposals of the NCHER, as they now stand, are unique in that they seek to undo repetitive and overlapping regulations by advocating a strong central government control over higher education. At the same time, they stress the need for autonomy of selected institutions of higher learning. The NCHER is silent on how to address this stark contradiction at the micro-level. This silence can prove to be costly if the overall objectives of higher education are to be attained.

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