IIT council meet to increase quota of students for JEE Advance

NEW DELHI: A crucial meeting of the IIT council – the apex government-nominated body of the 16 Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) – on October 6 could discuss a proposal to increase the quota of students appearing for JEE Advance from 1.5 lakh to 2 lakh and recovering of running expenses of institute through student fee.

Currently, after the first stage, JEE (Main), 1.5 lakh students are selected for the second stage of the selection process, that is JEE Advance.

The meeting in Mumbai would be held within a week of the NIT council meeting on October 1, where the government decided to constitute a core committee to evaluate a proposal to hold a single entrance test for both IITs as well as NITs.

The IIT council at Mumbai could deliberate on adopting a funding mechanism, where the government will appreciably enhance investments in capital assets, labs, etc, but the bulk of the running expenses would be met by the students.

According to sources, this could potentially raise the tuition fee, though the increase would be met by 100 per cent interest free student loan. IITs charge Rs 90,000 from the students annually. The model has already been accepted by the NITs. On the agenda would be increasing the number of students appearing for JEE Advance from 1.5 lakh to 2 lakh from 2016 onwards.

“The number of seats available at the IITs has increased considerably as new IITs have also come into existence. But, over the past three years, only 1.5 lakh students could make it to the IIT-JEE (advanced) examination. We wanted to ensure that more students could take the competitive examination as seats have remained vacant even this year,” said an IIT director.

IITs, on the other hand, are mulling holding a single entrance test by reverting back to the old format as the existing format is proving to be “cumbersome” and “time consuming”.
IIT fees likely to shoot up

Prakash Kumar

NEW DELHI, DHNS: The tuition fee of the Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) is likely to shoot up, with the Human Resource Development (HRD) Ministry urging the premier technical institutes to recover their operating costs from students.

The ministry has proposed a new financial model of funding under which the Centre will provide funds to IITs to meet expenditure on research, capital assets like laboratory and equipment as well as infrastructure development, while the premier institutes will have to manage their “running expenditure” on their own, collecting the cost from students.

Though a final decision in this regard will be taken at the IIT Council’s upcoming meeting at IIT-Bombay on Tuesday, official sources told Deccan Herald the proposed funding mechanism would get the council’s approval as most of the premier technical institutes do not have any objection to it.

The National Institutes of Technology (NITs) adopted a similar funding model proposed by the HRD Ministry at its meeting in Warrangal on Thursday.

Thereby, they became the first among centrally-funded technical institutes to have accepted to meet their non-plan expenditures from their own resources.

IIT fees likely to shoot up

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To help students cope with the burden of increased education costs, however, the ministry said at the NIT council’s meeting that a new scheme for providing 100 per cent loan at 0 per cent interest would be rolled out.

“This scheme will be available to IIT students, too,” said sources.

Scheduled caste and scheduled tribe students will remain unaffected by the increase in tuition fees as they will continue to avail waiver of fees with the government’s support, added the sources.

NITs and IITs are heading to embrace this new mechanism almost four years after a committee headed by nuclear scientist Anil Kakodkar recommended it, stressing that the objective of realising autonomy would be facilitated by de-linking IIT finances from the government’s non-plan support.

As of now, it is not clear how much the fee will be hiked from the current Rs 90,000 per annum for the IITs’ undergraduate programmes.

The Kakodkar committee had in 2011 suggested hiking the annual fees to between Rs 2-2.5 lakh per student.
NIT to increase its course fee by 300 per cent

http://www.abplive.in/india/2015/10/02/article729673.ece/NIT-to-increase-its-course-fee-by-300-per-cent

New Delhi: Tuition fees at the National Institutes of Technology are set to jump threefold, bringing them on a par with those at the best private engineering colleges.

Under a decision taken today, the NITs and the Indian Institutes for Science Education and Research will join the Indian Institutes of Management as publicly funded education institutions that recover their entire running costs from the students.

This could raise the tuition fees at the 31 NITs above Rs 2 lakh a year from the current Rs 70,000, two NIT directors told The Telegraph.

In contrast, the premier Indian Institutes of Technology charge about Rs 90,000 from their undergraduate students annually.

An NIT director said the increased fees might drive some good students away to private engineering institutions.

It wasn't clear how much the fees at the five IISERs, which now charge about Rs 10,000 a year, would rise.

Under a formula adopted by the NIT Council, headed by Union human resource development minister Smriti Irani, the operating costs would be collected from the students while the government would spend on capital assets such as labs and equipment and on research.

The government will set up a panel to work out the modalities. The operating cost includes the salaries of teachers and other staff as well as the expenditures on maintenance.

However, the students will receive education loans with zero interest, to be repaid after the course is over, today's meeting decided.

Education is now heavily subsidised at publicly funded institutions in India, with the government bearing a major slice of the running expenses. The few exceptions include the IIMs, where the tuition fees run into several lakh.

A panel headed by scientist Anil Kakodkar had in 2011 worked out the operating expenditure of the IITs at between Rs 2.25 lakh and Rs 2.5 lakh per student.

Today's meeting did not take any decision on proposals to change the admission norms.

The NIT selection process now gives 40 per cent weightage to candidates' Class XII board marks and 60 per cent to their JEE Main score.

A panel headed by IIT Bombay director Devang Khakhar had recommended that the board weightage be scrapped and the NITs admit students solely on the basis of their JEE Main scores.

A standing committee of the NIT Council accepted the suggestion to scrap the board weightage but recommended that the institutes admit their students on the basis of their JEE Advanced scores, like the IITs.
However, at today’s meeting, some members argued that the weightage to board marks had helped more girls and rural students secure admission. It was decided to set up a committee to study the impact of the board weightage on admissions.
Norms to set up new tech institutes to get tough: AICTE

In a bid to stem proliferation of technical institutions, AICTE is planning to revise norms for setting up of such institutions


Setting up of new technical education institutions is soon going to get tough.

In a bid to stem the proliferation of technical institutions, the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) is planning to revise norms for setting up of such institutions in the country. AICTE is the technical education regulator of the country.

Anil Sahasrabudhe, chairman, AICTE said, “We want to be more strict with setting up of new institutions. With a large number of seats going vacant in technical education institutions, the norms of setting up of new ones need a review.”

Sahasrabudhe took over as the AICTE chairman this July.

Many institutes, Sahasrabudhe said, have come forward and expressed their desire to shut down. “This has resulted in engineering seats coming down by 600,000, almost a 40 per cent decline,” he said.

Currently India has over 1.67 million engineering seats.

AICTE says it has allowed discontinuation of 757 technical and professional courses at educational institutions this year. Of the 757 courses that have been shut, 556 were engineering courses, followed by pharmacy (89), computer application (57) and management (54). Also, 83 colleges — 46 management and 31 engineering colleges — have shut.

Majority of these institutions, 345 or 45 per cent, are situated in Telangana and Tamil Nadu.

Between 2006 and 2013, engineering institutions saw a growth of 131.5 per cent, rising from 1,511 to 3,498. During the same period, the number of management institutes went up from 1,132 to 2,467, up 118 per cent.

Shankar S Mantha, ex-chairman, AICTE says the proliferation has happened due to lack of a perspective plan from the state governments.

“Till states come up with a perspective plan on their educational needs, it will not be possible to stem random proliferation. One needs to know how many students pass out of class X and XII every year. How many of them opt for science, arts or commerce streams? States have to make an estimate of such data and then decide on the seats required for higher studies. These plans can then be discussed in the Cabinet and facilitate decisions,” said Mantha.

Mantha said, in the past, when AICTE had denied permission to individuals or institutions from setting up new institutes, it was taken to court.

“If states have a perspective plan, AICTE can assess which areas require technical institutions to be set up. In the absence of a plan, it becomes difficult to argue in the court why AICTE denied permission to an institution,” added Mantha.
B-school directors say the norms to set up new institutions are not in sync with changing times. For instance, a management institute does not need acres of land to set up a campus.

“AICTE should ask for built up area and not land. In addition to this, AICTE emphasises on keeping physical copies of books and journals. In this digital age, neither students nor the faculty uses hard copies. E-books should be emphasised upon,” said the director of a B-school from Noida.

AICTE, said professors, should encourage good institutions and not leave it all for the market forces to decide.

“Non-serious institutions are indulging in “hire and fire” policy. This demotivates academicians. AICTE has to address all these issues,” the director added.

**PU slips in global varsity ranking**

Sources attribute the slip to the new criteria to rate research and ongoing issues in the university


Slipping by 275 points, the Panjab University (PU) has appeared in the 501-600 slab of the Times Higher Education (THE) World University Rankings for 2015-16.

In 2014, the university was ranked in the 276-300 group and in 2013, in the 226-250 category.

Commenting on the slip in the university’s ranking, PU vice-chancellor Arun Kumar Grover said, “The competition is high among the leading universities and other institutions of the country. All the universities, IITs and IISc have their unique strengths and get different scores according to different criteria and parameters. But, it is a matter of satisfaction that PU is consistently being ranked among the top universities of the country by different rankings.”

Grover added that, “With the support of students, research scholars and teachers, the university is striving hard to further excel in the field of education and research.”

The Panjab University has appeared in the 501-600 slab of world rankings along with Jadavpur University. Aligarh Muslim University (AMU), Amrita University, Andhra University, University of Calcutta, University of Delhi (DU) and Savitribai Phule Pune University have been ranked in the group of 601-800.

Indian Institute of Science has been ranked in the 251-300 category and Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Bombay in the 351-400. IIT Delhi, IIT Kharagpur and IIT Madras are placed in the 401-500 category. IIT Guwahati, IIT Kanpur, IIT Roorkee, Jadavpur University and Panjab University are in the 501-600 category.

Grover attributed the slip in the global rankings to the new criteria for rating research and citations used by Times Higher Education.

“Earlier, the Times Higher Education survey was calculating score of citations on the basis of the data drawn from the academic journals indexed by Thomson Reuters Web of Science database. However, this year they have changed to Elsevier’s Scopus database. The Thomson Reuters and Elsevier’s Scopus have different
database. Therefore, there has been a change in the citations score of the university, which resulted in the change in ranking,” a PU spokesperson said.

“The slip in the ranking is probably because of the fact that owing to several ongoing issues, the university has failed to deliver on key areas like research and global participation. More focus needs to be given to improvement in quality of education at the university,” a university professor said.

According to key statistics declared on the THE website, the Panjab University has 16,691 students with a student to staff ratio of 23:9. The university has 1 per cent international students with a female to male ratio of 46:54.

**FYUP-backer UGC chief to head panel to select DU VC**


NEW DELHI: University Grants Commission chairman Ved Prakash will chair the search team for the new vice-chancellor of Delhi University. The three-member committee also comprise former CAG Vinod Rai and former ISRO chairman K Kasturirangan who was nominated by the university's executive council. The eventful term of current VC Dinesh Singh will end on October 29.

The appointment of the new VC will be closely watched by the academic circle, given the controversies in DU regarding the now defunct Four-Year-Undergraduate Programme (FYUP) and other issues. In fact, Singh was issued a show-cause notice by the HRD ministry earlier this year over FYUP.

Prakash's appointment as the team's chairperson came as a surprise for the university. Apart from the fact that his appointment as the VC of National University of Educational Planning and Administration, before he became the UGC chairman, is sub-judice and is up for hearing on November 19, it is also a well-known fact that FYUP was introduced with his knowledge and Prakash had even publically praised Dinesh Singh for the programme. However, after the NDA government took over, the UGC did a u-turn and asked DU to roll back FYUP in 2014.

"The news that Ved Praksh is the chairman of the search committee has brought some discomfort. The UGC chairman had supported professor Dinesh Singh and his team during the implementation of FYUP. He also turned a deaf ear to representations on other important issues, including violation of the reservation policy. He openly expressed his admiration for Dinesh Singh on platforms including the university's cultural fest, Antardhwani. We fear a conflict of interest since DU needs to be freed from all those responsible for the mess created under Dinesh Singh's administration," said Abha D Habib, DUTA member.
NASA captures Pluto’s moon Charon in stunning detail

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
Washington, October 2

NASA’s New Horizons spacecraft has returned the best colour and the highest resolution images yet of Pluto’s largest moon, Charon, which show a surprisingly complex and violent history.

The image combines blue, red and infrared images taken by the spacecraft’s Ralph/Multispectral Visual Imaging Camera (MVIC); the colours are processed to best highlight the variation of surface properties across Charon.

Charon’s colour palette is not as diverse as Pluto’s; most striking is the reddish north polar region, informally named Mordor Macula, NASA said. Charon is 1,214 kilometres across. The image resolves details as small as 2.9 kilometres.

At half the diameter of Pluto, Charon is the largest satellite relative to its planet in the solar system. Charon’s cratered uplands at the top are broken by series of canyons, and replaced on the bottom by the rolling plains of the informally named Vulcan Planum. The scene covers Charon’s width of 1,214 kilometres and resolves details as small as 0.8 kilometres. Another image shows the details of a belt of fractures and canyons just north of the moon’s equator.

This great canyon system stretches more than 1,600 kilometres across the entire face of Charon and likely around onto Charon’s far side. Four times as long as the Grand Canyon, and twice as deep in places, these faults and canyons indicate a titanic geological upheaval in Charon’s past.
Higher learning and the community

In the process of engaging the academic community in outreach activities, students will be sensitised to social issues that concern the nation, writes G. Palanithurai.

The present government has unequivocally demonstrated that it will follow a different paradigm of governance in which cooperative federalism will be the guiding principle. In the process, much responsibility and autonomy will be given to the state governments for achieving development through effective planning and decision making. All development-related activities will be done through a pragmatic action between state and local governments, and for which adequate resources will be provided. This message has been sent out through two major decisions, namely abolition of the Central Planning Commission, and approval of the Fourteenth Finance Commission report on resource sharing. It is within this non-liberal framework of development there is no ambiguity or vacillation in taking this stand on governance and development. The above paradigm is visible through the Central government’s decision to create NITI Aayog, proclaiming that the Centre will be involved in policy-making and not in preparing schemes and programmes for the states and local bodies. The federal government unambiguously stated that it will follow non-liberal policies, but all safety nets have to be created for the poor only by the state governments and local bodies as they are closer to the people’s point of operation.

When the Central Planning Commission was abolished, the Central government indicated that it would be good sense that states and local governments have to initiate the planning process at the lowest levels. Massive amounts of resources are given to state governments and local governments to carry out activities that they plan, with the active participation of all sections of society and participation of the poor, unorganised, and vulnerable groups. Till date, serious initiatives have been conducted at the level of the erstwhile Central Planning Commission, Central Finance Commission, and the various Ministries of Government of India. However, at the state and local levels, developmental activities and development-related activities have been carried out only by the beneficiaries of respective levels. The state governments considered themselves as the only implementing agencies of schemes of the Central Government.

Having a few state governments, many do not have adequate resources to execute schemes and programmes for development. The efficiency of lower-level bureaucracy is always questioned as they lack professionalism. There is always a gap between the Central government’s decision-making process and implementation by the state and local governments. People who are involved in implementation of schemes are poor in professionalism as there are no adequate professional training institutions offering training and capacity building. Further, the institutional structure, design, and manpower at the grass-root levels are always inadequate. There are fewer faculties and fewer professionals here compared to the Central government functionaries. In the worst case scenario, people’s expectation from the government is increasing as political parties practice competitive populism for electoral politics.

Apart from the above, the life led by people is not based on science and technology but on cultural practices. Governance at grass root level is not based on rule of law and provisions of the Constitution, but on practices of the community. On many occasions, we see a clash between community practices and Constitutional provisions. Given this, governance has to operate in the new paradigm.