Newspaper Clips
October 30, 2011

IIT COACHING CENTRES PLAY A BOARD GAME

As IITs plan a change in their entrance examination, coaching centres tap schools to stay in business

KALPANA PATHAK
Mumbai

With the Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) moving on to the scrutiny of the format of a new joint entrance examination (JEE), IIT coaching centres are all but firming up their course of action to ensure that their businesses do not suffer.

Rota-based Career Point Systems, for instance, will launch a school curriculum coaching division and also look at partnering with schools in rural areas to stay afloat. “Seeing the kind of shift in the regulatory framework might bring in, we are looking at incorporating some changes in our business model,” says Pramod Maheshwari, the chairman and managing director of Career Point Systems. “We are gearing up to open a school-curriculum coaching division by the next academic year. So far we have been preparing students for competitive exams, but now we have decided to partner with schools and prepare them for board exams too,” he adds.

Coaching institutes say they prepare students for high-end examinations and though the IITs’ move will reduce the students’ dependence on them, the impact will be short-term. “The changes may impact the business for the initial two years, but things will be back to normal later,” says Maheshwari. “Even today the majority of 12th standard students take tuition. Coaching institutes will now focus more on coaching students in a way that they secure more marks in the board examination as well as in the aptitude tests. Aptitude tests like SAT, GMAT or CAT require a certain kind of training which coaching institutes have been providing,” adds another director from an IIT-JEE coaching institute in Nagpur.

Last month, the IIT council accepted the recommendations of the T Ramana committee to part with JEE reforms and also proposed a single entrance test for all engineering colleges, including IITs, National Institutes of Technology and private institutions.

The IITs say a notification will be issued in a couple of months which will give details of the format to be followed by the IITs while considering a student for a seat — whether to give 50 per cent or 60 per cent weightage to the board exams and the rest to IIT-JEE scores.

There is, however, a slight confusion and uncertainty about the new JEE-JEE pattern that will be put in place in 2013. “Every year, some new tests are added,” says Maheshwari. “The details, however, would be made available only after a formal notification in January 2012,” says the director of an IIT who does not wish to be named. “We have also agreed that the weightage for the board exams will be a constant across all subjects and not a set percentage. We decided to implement the new system in 2013 because there will be no inevitable concern and feasibility issues,” he says, adding that they now have 15 months to get the new format in order.

Over a decade ago, English and engineering drawing, too, were part of the IIT-JEE examination. IITs would even accept state board toppers directly, informs an IIT director. Ever since IIT directors, Business Standard spoke to, said that the change in the IIT-JEE format is the need of the hour.

“The Chaotic committee report brought out the fact that there is a correlation between school performance and IIT performance,” says a director. “Today, because of the culture of coaching classes, the schooling system has been thrown out of the window to such an extent that students are not even attending school because of the pressure of such training programmes. We hope this will change that,” the director adds.

IIT directors concur that when students graduate from elementary to secondary school, the secondary school performance is taken into account. “And, when one goes from secondary to higher secondary, the performance in the secondary school is considered. Similarly, when one graduates from the secondary school, the system that score needs to be taken into account. The world over, admissions are based on your overall academic performance. Unfortunately, that logic has been reduced to lip service and this causes all kinds of irritation in the education system, which needs to be restored,” says an IIT director.

Industry experts felt that exams like IIT-JEE have been creating difficulties at the school level because there have been shifts from school education. Students do not attend school and instead go to these coaching institutes.

“Today, school education and board exams are getting neglected due to the pressures of the coaching class,” says Gurnam Bains, director, IIT Guwahati. “Students focus only on physics, chemistry and biology and don’t learn geography or English which are subjects taught in school. The ministry has, therefore, constituted the IITs to consider school education in IIT-JEE,” adds Bains.

While the IITs have given in principle approval for the change, the final decision will be taken by the JEE Committee in January next year.

IIT-JEE, say IIT directors, have become a cause among students, largely because of the high-paying jobs on offer after an IIT degree. The directors say it will be an uphill task to bring in changes in the system. “But, a mechanism will have to be put in place to normalise the school results and the numerical boards which the Indian education system follows,” adds Bains.

While IITs believe that the changes in JEE will bring the focus back on school education, coaching institutes argue that with the standard of teachers in schools not up to the mark, that idea appears farfetched.

(With inputs from Piyush Umesh in Mumbai)
Of profits, bodyshops and bestsellers

TOP OF THE MIND
ARNAB RAY

So here's what happened. Narayana Murthy complained that the standards of IIT students were going down and held coaching schools responsible. Nothing particularly earth-shaking about this pronouncement. In every generation, those that have grown old have complained—"When we were your age, things were so much better." Chetan Bhagat, a best-selling author and an IIT alumnus himself, felt sufficiently piqued by this to retort that he who runs body-shopping company should not comment on the standards of others. Such a rap battle, of course, generated a lot of heat and light in the popular media. Of course, then Bhagat's new book released to glowing reviews and insane sales and he kind of apologized for his previous statement and all was right with the world again.

Now, this is not the first time the word "body-shop" has been used in a pejorative sense for an Indian IT company nor will it be the last. If "innovation" of the Apple, Cray and Google type be the sole criterion for excellence and anything less be considered "mediocre" then, yes, definitely Infosys and the others are guilty as charged. But, unfortunately, that is a very restrictive metric for assessing excellence in the technology industry. Infosys, Wipro, TCS, etc. are not "product" companies but vendors of services. In other words, they are not in the business of making general-purpose consumer products like music players, tablet computers or, yes, even search engines. Comparing them to "product companies" is like comparing apples with oranges or more precisely comparing Shakti Kapoor with Ajit Agarkar.

In their respective niches, Indian IT companies have consistently maintained their leadership. In the past the Y2K which, if you are old enough to remember, was when the naysayers had said that Indian IT would go bust. Performance-wise, thus, there is absolutely nothing muddling about them in any way. For those who would say "Yah, even supplying contract laborers to the Gulf is profitable", it is the height of ignorance to presume that what Indian IT companies do is move cheap technical labor around the globe. If it was that simple, then anyone from any country could do it.

Being excellent in this domain means, among other things, leveraging the technical skills of a complex heterogeneous workforce and organizational knowledge to provide IT and software services in a predictable and cost-effective manner. And yes, bying the pervasive image of software coders doing rote work, there are also intellectual challenges in delivering IT solutions (cut testing effort by half through the creation of reusable test automation templates, for example).

These, while not as sexy-sounding as coming up with "Google Wave", are no less important, difficult and brain-cycles-consuming.

The irony in this is that the man who called Infosys "mediocre" has himself been accused of being "mediocre" and farworse. If "innovation" in literature be the sole criterion for quality then that assessment of mediocrity would be true—Chetan Bhagat does not blaze any new trail in terms of content, structure, characterization or language.

And here is the thing. He does not have to.

Bhagat is in the business of writing best-sellers and he does it better than any author in the history of Indian writing. And when one does exactly what one set out to do, book after book, it would be immensely churlish to dismiss that success with a flippant wave of the hand. He consistently engineers successful books by crafting stories that strike a chord in his target audience using language that does not tax their comprehension skills and then prices and markets them perfectly. Sure this is a different set of skills than what Milan Kundera possesses, but that does not make it any the less worthy of admiration.

Call them "mediocre" or whatever else makes you feel good, but the truth remains that Murthy and Bhagat have both developed and internalized "non-obvious business knowledge" that has enabled them to maintain their leadership in their respective niches.

And ultimately, in the market-place of products and services where profit remains the only objective criterion for gauging excellence, that's all that matters.

Arnab Ray is the author of 'May I Have Your Attention Please'.

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"Crux of education should lie in identifying innovators"

Special Correspondent

CHENNAI: Often, we come across people with relentless curiosity, tenacity and who come with a degree of irreverence. They are there in schools, organisations and in board of directors in a company. Do we identify them? If we do, do we encourage them?

Identifying these three aspects as key traits of innovators, Srikanth Datar of Harvard Business School, said the answer to the two questions could be central to changing not just what needs to be done in business schools but in education itself.

Addressing a conference on Rethinking Management Education with Innovation and Creativity organised by the IIM-A Alumni Association - Chennai Chapter, and Anna University here on Saturday, Mr. Datar said research on business schools in the US and the last four months in India has shown that the business schools were not certainly helping the students to think innovatively.

"We are not engaging the students the way we should."

Research on successful companies like GE, HP and Tata has revealed that there were bursts of innovation at points of time which was one of the prime reasons for the success of the companies over a long period of time. "Innovators are extremely curious to find new or different way to go after a problem, they don’t give up easily and interestingly there is a degree of irreverence that comes with them," he said.

HR policies

Asking if the HR polices are tuned to identify and promote these innovators thinking differently, he said the managements should be willing to tolerate their mistakes and failures and understand that they were trying to create a culture of innovation and not measure it in terms of money spent.

"Kids are full of innovation. In US, a 13-year old kid has developed a way of designing solar cells based on observation of leaves designed by nature to receive maximum lighting from the sun," Mr. Datar said. With respect to the question of whether innovation can be taught, the Harvard professor said, "I don’t think so. It can be triggered, provoked and stimulated. The larger the problem, the more innovation you need," he said emphasising the need for fostering innovating talent in the country faced with many social problems.

Samir Barua, Director, IIM-A, said the series of conferences, in collaboration with IIM - Calcutta, was to identify issues in leadership, globalisation and governance and impart the necessary changes in B-schools’ curriculum across the country. Shekar Chaudhuri, Director, IIM-C, emphasised the need to leverage technology to reach out to more students. Mannar Jawahar, vice-chancellor, Anna University, said adopting a cross disciplinary approach would foster creative and innovative thinking. IIMAAA Chennai Chapter president S. Muralidharan and organising committee chairman Kandaswamy Bhatrathan spoke.
Lessons not to learn

What sets a great university apart from the rest? The freedom to think new ideas and challenge old ones. But many of our institutions do just the opposite, racially profiling students, emphasizing stereotypes, hindering questioning minds and caving in to political pressures. Our temples of learning are in need of new gods

"In Madhya Pradesh colleges, they teach the virtues of caste. You can imagine what kind of students will come out of this educational system."

As a former VC of Jamia Millia Islamia University, Mushtaq Husain says the problem with our universities is that questioning is no longer encouraged on the campus.

Dilapidated infrastructure and the lack of cell phones have also contributed to the problem. The government's "Make in India" programme has failed to bring about any significant change.

In the past, students were allowed to express their views without fear of retaliation.如今，学生可以自由地表达自己的观点，而不必担心受到惩罚。
IIM-C widens its net to catch more students

VINIT KONERU
Mumbai

Every year over 200,000 students take the CAT examination aiming to join the premier management institutions, but only about 3,000 make it. Some enter the IIMs, a few more join other premier institutes like IMS, FMS and others. Those who do not clear the examination settle for other management institutes, or foreign universities, or choose a different profession.

Here is an opportunity for those others to look at online courses offered by the top management institutes of the country.

IIM-C, which is celebrating its golden jubilee this year, declared an ambitious five-year plan to reach out to more students. The institute has already started offering online courses on management, and plans to do this in full measure. "We are the only institute of this repute, 10 per cent of whose revenue is generated through online programmes," says Shekhar Chaudhuri, director of IIM-C.

The institute presently houses 462 students. Its strength can be increased to 700 in the coming years. "Yes, we are developing infrastructure to accommodate more students, and our target is to take up 500 students this year. But how far can we increase the strength? We cannot accommodate thousands of students. We cannot conduct online education in real time. There will be no way inferior to full-time campus courses," says Chaudhuri. "We designed the courses so that the candidate will also be visiting the campus for a few days to learn," he adds.

IIM-C has about 600 students on its campus every year, plus about 4,500 through its distance programmes. With the introduction of Internet-based mode, the institute is expecting to add 2,000 more students this year, and reach out to 5,000 more students in coming years. "The courses offered online are socially motivated to reach out to different geographies and different sections of people who would otherwise miss a quality education," says Sougata Ray, IIM-C's dean.

Premji to start two free schools in every district

Hemali Chhapia & Sruthi Susan Ullas | TNN

Mumbai/Bangalore: After chipping in for the country's educational system for a decade, the Azim Premji Foundation (APF), run by the third richest Indian on his own money, is all set for a generous initiative. The foundation plans to start 1,300 schools across the country—two per district—which will be free, impart education in the local language and be affiliated to the state board.

If the idea succeeds, it could shame India's dysfunctional public education system — and perhaps inspire other wealthy tycoons to look beyond their personal status-building.

Times of India ND 30/10/2011 P-1

First of the 1,300

Karnataka will get the first two Azim Premji Foundation schools—one each in Yadgir and Koppal districts, which have the poorest literacy rates in the state. Work is also on for schools in Tonk and Sirohi in Rajasthan, Uttarkashi and Rudrapur in Uttarakhand and Dhamtari in Chhattisgarh. These are expected in a year and half.

The APF schools, from preschool to class 12, will be on the lines of government ones. The difference will be in quality. "Quality education is fundamental to our becoming a developed nation. And the final crucible of learning is the classroom," says Azim Premji.
If Aakash can help level the playing field for the poor, that’s the biggest motivator

Montreal-based company Datavind designed and developed the $35 Aakash tablet that was launched earlier this year. In this Idea Exchange on Campus held at Delhi Technological University, Suneech Singhal, CEO of Datavind, explains how Aakash “serves the purpose of a phone, a computer and an entertainment device”. This session was moderated by Nandagopal Raman of The Indian Express

MIRJALI VOSVRD ORBA, IIM Raipur, 1st year

Aakash, the big talker you always hear about in the media. But there are places in India where students or their parents don’t know computers. Believe me, we face one with this technology. And yes we have some training programs for these too.

There are two things to be kept in mind. First, it’s the positioning of these tablets. Despite all the advancement in the area, there are students who are not at all interested in this. The government gives only 12 tablets, for instance, only 6 students at a time. The idea is to train the students to make them interested in the subject. The second point is the cost. If we give all the students a tablet, it would be a very good idea. But if we can choose the right students, everybody else can also be trained.

The government needs to work towards making the students more interested in the subject. The tablets have to be given to the right students. The government also needs to work on the infrastructure. The government needs to focus on the quality of education. The tablets have to be given to the right students. The government also needs to work on the infrastructure. The government needs to focus on the quality of education.

TANYA SINGH, IIM Indore, 1st year

People relate price-quality without literacy there. It’s a fact that it costs money to buy a product. So the lesser the price, the better the product. But there’s a catch. The quality of a product also matters. The better the quality, the more it costs. So, it’s a balance. Today, people also want a feature-rich product. They don’t want just a simple product. They want a product that has all the features they need.

The Aakash tablet is a very good product. I have been using it for the past 3 months. I have not faced any issue with it. The battery life is also very good. I can use it for about 6-7 hours on a single charge. The keyboard is also very good. I can type very fast on it. The tablet is also very easy to use. I can use it for all my needs. I can use it for work, study, and entertainment.

The government’s noble initiative to bring education to all is commendable. The Aakash tablet is a great step in the right direction. I hope the government will continue to invest in this project and make it available to all. The Aakash tablet is a great product. I hope the government will continue to invest in this project and make it available to all.

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B-school curriculum in India needs to be redesigned

Our Bureau
Chennai, Oct. 29

The B-school curriculum in India needs to be redesigned, and "we must infuse innovation and creativity into it", said eminent business leaders and B-school professors from across the country on Saturday at a national level workshop here.

The workshop, titled Rethinking Management Education with Innovation and Creativity, was organised by IIM-Ahmedabad Alumni Association's (IIM-AAA) Chennai Chapter and Anna University with IIM-Ahmedabad and IIM-Calcutta as knowledge partners.

Based on the bestselling book 'Rethinking the MBA; Management Education at a Crossroad' by renowned Harvard Professor Srikanth Datar (who was present at the event), the workshop saw some of the country's top academic personalities such as Professor Samir Barua, Director, IIM-A, Prof Sukhraj Chaudhuri, Director, IIM-C, Mr Mannar Jawahar, Vice-Chancellor, Anna University, besides other business executives.

In his inaugural speech, Mr Mannar Jawahar said the time is ripe for changing the curriculum for management education in India. And the perspective should include not only that of creativity and innovation from a student's perspective but that of the various educational institutions as well.

Mr Muralidharan, President, IIM-AAA Chennai Chapter, said the global recession with the exception of a few emerging economies and the growing uncertainties across the business spectrum calls for newer skill sets. "The whole thinking and pedagogy need to be redesigned," he said.

Only 2 firms in fray for CBSE tender

PRAVEEN BOSE
Bangalore, 29 October

TCS, India's largest IT services company, and Department of Electronics and Accreditation of Computer Classes or the DOEACC are said to have emerged as the only two entities that have responded to a tender notification of the Central Board for Secondary Education (CBSE) for conducting the All India Engineering Entrance Examination (AIEEE).

The stiff conditions put forth in the tender document are said to be the reasons for lack of response from the companies to participate in the tender.

This has left the examination itself in a limbo as the process has to begin on November 1 when the tender would be opened. According to rules there needs to be a minimum of three contenders for the bid. The CBSE's 'tender document for computer-based test delivery, administration and processing for Professional Entrance Exam (Pee) - 2012' has evoked some consternation among some prospective participants in the tendering process. This resulted in the fate of thousands of students who planned to take up the AIEEE this year hanging in limbo.

The schedule of the activities of the AIEEE 2012 too is now in jeopardy. The examination process which is supposed to start on November 1 too is now in doubt.

The ministry of human Resource development had declared that, 50 per cent of the seats in NITs will be filled from AIEEE eligible candidates of states where NITs are located and the remaining 50 per cent will be filled on all India merit basis. Whereas for IITs all of the seats are being filled through all India merit basis.

The main firms from the testing and assessment industry that have conducted 90 per cent of the examinations in the country like Eduprivate, Merit-Trac, Pearson, Attest and Prometric did not participate in the tender process. What seems to have raised the hackles of these companies is that some of the technical qualifications mandated by the tender document left them ineligible even before their applications were made.
Set young minds free, or new ideas will wither

Debashis Mondal

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he issue of what ought to be taught in our universities is easy to assess. Differences in preferences are really not so troubling despite the fact that much subjective goes into the framing of syllabi. We all have our ideas and desires, and submit to different masters for assessing what is relevant and what is not. As long as the criteria for inclusion is academic and argued on that basis alone, one’s judgment would be as unexceptionable as it appears. What is tricky is what ought not to be taught in our universities, and why.

The fight over what a university should teach begins at the beginning — at the level of etymology. Derived from Latin universitas, the word "university" shares its origins with the word "universe." The point of contest is this: given the etymology of the word, what is it we wish to achieve through the university system? Do we wish to turn all into one, a homogenized mass of educated individuals who serve functions predetermined by the workplace? Do we, in a sense, wish to universalize our educated youth? Or, quite differently, are we willing to allow students mamaled with the university system to expand their thoughts and ideas and individuality, much in the way the universe expands, without limits?

It cannot be denied that the university is a place where students enroll to acquire knowledge and qualifications. To argue that much knowledge has nothing to do with the larger world outside would be silly. It is even sillier to argue that knowledge imparted in the university must necessarily be tailored to suit the exigencies of society. The point is this: ever since the advent of modernity and organized knowledge systems, it is the university that has, by and large, fueled society with new ideas and possibilities. In a sense, therefore, it has to be resigned from the immediate demands of the larger collective. In fact, the larger collective can benefit best if ideas are allowed to proliferate unhindered within academia.

Higher education is one arena where things that are perhaps taboo outside can be debated, argued, hypothesized, and, after all of that, either adopted or rejected. Censorship at the outset means nothing new to contribute to society. The world of ideas will wither and atrophy (in the absence of intellectual nourishment). The challenge in the university system, pedagogically, is to develop a habit of questioning. Great ideas spring from questioning minds. If you set limits to the range of questions you allow students to ask, you are already limiting the creative potential of the university system. They say a good teacher is one who has all the answers, a great one who asks all the right questions, and the ideal one who teaches his students to ask all the right questions. The habit of seeking answers is a lifelong gift, one that a student carries with him when he leaves the university.

Why do we have top-ranked universities in India? The answer lies not in peripheral issues (funds, semester system versus annual system, application of modern technology and so on), but in the fact that we lack imaginative academic administrators. The less imaginative you display the higher you are likely to climb in the administrative hierarchy of the university system. People with true imagination are seldom allowed to act as agents of higher education. The politicking and the narrow manoeuvring within universities is not dissimilar to what goes on in the bureaucratic apparatus. To give shape to a modern and progressive society that produces the required energy for social reform and inclusiveness, we need to foster liberal questioning of ideas and discourses within our universities. That alone can produce the academic and other types of leadership we will desperately need in the years ahead to meet the myriad challenges and opportunities this country will inevitably face.

Debashis Mondal is an academic and commentator
Tough Lessons in Australia

Over 6,500 Indian students have been deported from Australia in 2010-11 for visa irregularities. Experts, however, say the cleansing of the immigration system will benefit genuine students in the long run

:: Ishani Duttagupta

A recent report in Australian media about the cancellation of a whopping 15,066 visas of foreign students has caused a furore in India. The largest number of students – around 6,500 – who now face deportation, are Indian.

While the media report, which appeared in Australia’s The Daily Telegraph, is based partly on annual figures for 2010-11 published by the Australian government’s Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC), educational consultants and experts in India are not pressing the panic button yet. Most of them feel that genuine Indian students who comply with the requirements of their visa have no reason to be concerned about deportation. The crackdown by the Australian government, which resulted in a 37% increase in student visa cancellations over the previous year, are part of series of steps being taken to benefit international students and weed out low-quality education service providers.

Many Cases of Visa Expiry

"The visa cancellations have primarily hit Indian students in vocational education training (VET) in Australia who have violated their student visa terms. In some cases, the visas have expired rather than being cancelled. Many Indians joined courses only as a means of getting permanent residence in Australia and were not genuine students," says Harmeet Pental, regional director (South Asia), IDP Education, the largest organisation representing Australian universities. It appears that around 8,000 of the cancelled student visas were cases of visa expiry when the time period ran out. "Students need to ensure they don’t get into such a situation. Among the visas which were genuinely cancelled by DIAC, over 2,200 occurred because the students withdrew from their courses," Pental adds.

Even as the DIAC is trying to spruce up the student-immigration process, reforms are also targeted at making things smooth for genuine students. A recent review by former New South Wales minister Michael Knight focuses on a easier visa policy for foreign students. The Australian government has accepted all the recommendations of the Knight panel that will kick in from the first half of 2012. These include the end of mandatory cancellation of student visas for unsatisfactory attendance, unsatisfactory progress and working in excess of hours allowed. This will allow DIAC to decide cases on individual merit.

Indians Hit Hard

While the cancellation of student visas for the last financial year seems to have hit Indians the hardest, this is also seen as a fall-out of a sudden hike in numbers of people who went to Australia from India in the two previous years. "A large number of non-students entered Australia on student visas, largely through VET courses, looking for residence options. Now with the Australian government stepping up vigilance, many have been caught on the wrong foot. This will lead to a cleansing of the system. In fact, those going to the degree and university courses will now have post-study work options ranging from two to four years. The Australian government is also likely to review the visa norms for the vocational educational sector sometime next year and provide some benefits," says Ravi Lochan Singh, MD of educational consultancy Global Reach and president of Association of Australian Education Representatives in India.

While a lot of the visa offences have been in the vocational training sector, not everyone believes that VET is not a good option for Indian students. "VET courses in Australia are the best in the world. The training and further education institutions in Australia, in fact, offer degree courses," says Dipen Ragland, president of Australia India Business Council’s New South Wales chapter.

The Federation of Indian Students of Australia has, meanwhile, raised questions on the larger implications of the visa cancellations of Indian students. "Most of these students are innocent victims of an unfair system. In 2009-10, following immigration reforms by the Australian government, more than 200 colleges collapsed. Many Indian students were victims of these fraud institutions. The government of India should intervene to help them to remain in this country and get a return on their huge investments," says Gautam Gupta, founder of FISA.

WHY ARE STUDENT VISAS CANCELLED

- If students miss more than a maximum number of classes allowed, they are reported to the DIAC by their respective colleges for non-compliance due to non-attendance.
- Some institutes have been reporting students only on unsatisfactory course progress (students who fail more than 50% of enrolled modules in two consecutive semesters).
- A lot of institutes identify students who have failed more than 50% in one semester and consider cancelling their enrolments.
- These students are sent letters at the end of the semester and asked to contact their international student coordinators who put them on a learning agreement and monitor their progress.
आईआईटी जेईई में आवेदन हुआ महंगा

ऑनलाइन के लिए 1600 और ऑफलाइन के लिए 1800 रुपये

महिलाओं को ऑनलाइन आवेदन करने में कोई भुगतान नहीं

ऑनलाइन आवेदन प्रक्रिया 31 अक्टूबर से शुरू हो जाएगी