

Newspaper Clips

April 13, 2011

Deccan Herald Bangalore 11.04.11 p-5

IIT-JEE threw up few surprises this year

4.85 lakh candidates vie for 9,600 seats in 15 IITs

BANGALORE: Nearly 4.85 lakh students appeared for the Joint Entrance Examination (JEE) for admissions to the prestigious Indian Institutes of Technology (IIT) on Sunday.

This year, candidates are vying for 9,600 seats at 15 IITs across the country. There has been a 6.5 per cent — 30,000 students — increase in the number of students appearing this year in comparison to last year.

While there were no significant surprises in the question paper pattern, many candidates told *Deccan Herald* that the papers were much easier than earlier years.

Manjula S, who took the examination at St Joseph's Arts College, said: "Usually, everyone dreads the mathematics paper in JEE, since it is one of the toughest papers across all examinations. However, this year, the paper was easier than most years."

Arjun K, who also appeared at St Joseph's, said both mathematics and chemistry were easier than usual, while Physics proved to be tougher than last year's paper.

This year, the examination was held in two sessions — from 9 am to 12 noon and from 2 pm to 5 pm — across 1,051 centres in 131 cities in the country.

BASE Director H S Nagaraja said: "Compared to previous years, this year's papers were quite easy. What this means is that the cut-offs — both subject-wise and aggregate — would be much higher than last year."

Gaurav Goyal, Centre Head, FIIT-JEE Bangalore said this year's pattern stuck largely to last year's. "Paper I carried 36



MAKING A POINT: Candidates who appeared for IIT-JEE discuss a point in Bangalore on Sunday. KPN



pages with 69 questions, while last year there were 32 pages with 84 questions. Paper 2 carried 32 pages with 60 questions when compared to 32 pages with 57 questions last year," he said.

The results will be declared on May 25. For the first time, students will get to see scanned

answer sheets online after the results are declared. Model solutions of the paper will be put up on May 15, according to the IIT-JEE website.

Error in Math?

An erroneous question was reported by T.I.M.E.

According to a release, in Paper I, question no 54 (Paper Code: 0), was reportedly an error.

The question read: "Let M & N be two 3×3 skew symmetric matrices"

But according to T.I.M.E, "a skew symmetric matrix of odd order is singular, and therefore the inverse does not exist."

DH News Service

Learning How To Teach

Getting the governance model for our universities right is a must for boosting the education sector

Pankaj Jalote and Gautam Barua

There has been considerable discussion and debate on autonomy of educational institutions. But very little attention has been paid to governance in these institutes. There are two main governance models that are prevalent – one is what we will call the IIT model (IM) which prevails in all IITs, IIMs, and many other institutes, and the other is the university model (UM), which is employed in most universities.

First, it should be clarified that institutions under both these models are universities in that they can give degrees, etc, and a university can adopt IM and an engineering institute can follow UM.

In both models, there is a chief executive, called director in IM and vice-chancellor in UM, who is supported by deans, heads, registrars, etc. There is a board which is the principal executive body – the board of governors (BOG) in IM and the executive council (EC) in UM. There is an academic body which looks after academic governance, often called the academic council in UM and academic senate in IM.

A sound principle of governance is that in critical matters, the recommending body and accepting body are separate. This separation is important to keep some form of check on the recommending body. In an educational institute, for most administrative

matters, the recommending body is often the executive, and the final accepting body is the board/EC. And it is here the two models differ fundamentally – in IM, the board is chaired by an external person while in UM, the EC is chaired by the vice-chancellor himself.

With the EC and the executive both headed by the VC, the VC has far more in his control than in the IIT system. This is perhaps a legacy of the British Raj, which works well if the VC is visionary, as was the case in early times when we had towering VCs like Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan. However, it can seriously damage a university if the VC is malleable or

“ In modern India, the governance of universities should adopt modern and tested systems. The IIT model is more robust and can better handle occasional bad appointments at the top position ”

incompetent. In our country we can be sure that appointment of VCs will sometimes be political which can put people not competent for the job in the top position. In other words, if we take the university over a period of multiple decades, we can be almost sure that there will be some periods in which it would be headed by a not very competent VC who is a



What are their degrees worth when the standards of universities are dropping?

political appointee.

One crucial area where this can show up is in faculty selections. In both the models, recommendation for faculty selection is generally made by a selection committee, which has experts as members, and is chaired by the director/vice-chancellor. However, the power to actually make appointments rests with the board, which it often delegates to its chairman for speedy acceptance. This weakness opens the VC to political pressure for faculty appointments, as it is the VC who effectively decides on appointments. In IM, as the recommendations have to be accepted by the chairman, political pressure is harder to apply. And nothing hurts an academic institution more than appointment of poor quality faculty – even a few

appointments can help mediocrity to set in, as a faculty member may be with the university for 30 years. The negative message it sends out will dissuade good candidates from applying, thereby creating a snowball effect, from which it can be very hard to recover. This is one of the key reasons why good faculty candidates simply do not apply to universities that are perceived as supporting mediocrity (despite the fact that the salaries across institutes are the same in India). And in a 10-year period, a VC can easily appoint a quarter of the faculty to fill vacancies created by retirement, and new posts. This system also creates problems in other areas such as awarding contracts, etc.

Interestingly, this aspect also encourages internal politics in UM, which can make it

harder for well-meaning VCs to implement desired changes. For example, a VC, as the chief executive, is usually the best person to defend a proposal before the EC, which is the final accepting body. But since he is the chairman also, he often cannot do so strongly, and, in fact, has to often rely on the registrar to defend the proposal. As the VC is himself not making the proposal, EC members, many of whom are internal faculty members, are able to lobby against the proposals more easily (and in the process indirectly criticise the VC himself to his face!).

It is not an accident that over the last 50 years, the institutions that have enhanced or preserved their reputation are mostly the ones that follow IM – IITs, IIMs, IISc, etc. Examples of institutes that were once great but have declined in stature over the years are often universities, including many which were once highly reputed temples of learning.

In modern India, the governance of universities should adopt modern and tested systems. The IIT model is more robust and can better handle occasional bad appointments at the top position. As India increases the number of its universities, to prevent them from becoming mediocre, it is important that they are created with this model, rather than the university model.

Jalote is director, IIT-Delhi and Barua is director, IIT-Guwahati. Views are personal.

Soon, you can be in two places at same time

Within 5 Yrs, Your 3D Avatar Will Interact With Others In Virtual Environment As You Sit At Home

John Tierney

If Jim Blascovich and Jeremy Bailenson are right, here is what's in store for you and your avatar very soon, probably within the next five years:

- Without leaving your living room or office, you'll sit at 3D virtual meetings and classes, looking around the table or the lecture hall at your colleagues' avatars.

- Your avatar will be programmed to make a better impression than you could ever manage.

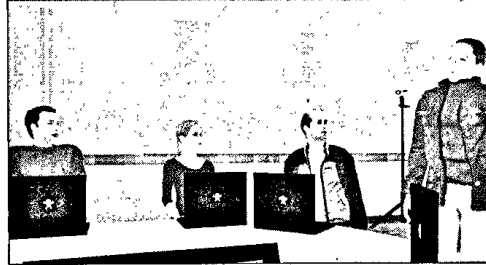
- While your avatar sits there at the conference table gazing alertly and taking notes, you can do something more important: sleep.

Does this sound like future

hype? In their new book, "Infinite Reality", Blascovich and Bailenson insist that 3D conferences with avatars are nigh because consumer technology has suddenly caught up with work going on in virtual-reality laboratories in academia.

These psychologists point to three developments in the past year: the Microsoft Kinect tracking system for the Xbox, the Nintendo 3DS gaming device, and the triumph of "Jeopardy!" of IBM's Watson computer. "These events have been paradigm-shifting for avatar conferences," says Bailenson, the founding director of Stanford's Human Interaction Lab.

"Virtual reality scientists have been waiting for these events for decades – and faster



DOUBLE TAKE: An image of avatars in a business meeting. New technology will allow you to programme how you want your avatar to behave

than most of us predicted. The technology is finally ready for the living room and cubicle."

The Kinect tracking device shows that it's now practical for

you to control your avatar simply by moving around the room – no more need for special suits or elaborate sensors in a lab. Nor do you have to wear special

glasses to see in 3D, thanks to the "autostereo" display on the Nintendo 3DS, which beams a 3D image to the naked eye.

With these technologies – and tricks that have already been done in labs – you can sit at a virtual conference table and exchange glances with the avatars of other participants. Unlike the 2D avatars that are already convening on "Second Life", your avatar would appear to be 3D, and you'd feel immersed in the scene as you looked around at other participants from your avatar's eyes.

The avatars would be computer-generated, and in that sense they'd be less photo-realistic than the images from webcams that are already available on phone calls and teleconfer-

ences through services like Skype. But looking at webcam images of talking heads isn't as satisfying as sitting around with 3D avatars, says Blascovich, the director of the Research Center for Virtual Environments at the University of California, Santa Barbara.

By building an avatar based on your photo and tracking your movements, a computer could give a fairly accurate rendering of you and of your reactions. But why let everyone know what you really think of them? In a virtual classroom, for instance, you might want to programme your avatar to appear to sit up straight and look intently at the professor – even as you slouched or looked around the room. NYT NEWS SERVICE

DU's men in a hurry with half-baked ideas

Successive VCs have precipitated one crisis after another, says Pankaj Butalia

The new vice-chancellor of Delhi University plans to scrap honours courses, offer new subject combinations to students, wants movement across courses, would like colleges to award their own degrees, wants lecturers to create courses and, like various 'vice regal' reformers before him, wants all this implemented yesterday. What he does not acknowledge is that he is merely implementing the UPA government's 'vision document'. Academic autonomy has given way to a centralized, techno-functional vision.

The university's vice-chancellors have precipitated one crisis after another in the past decade. A monolith with over 75 colleges, 2.5 lakh students and almost a hundred academic departments, the university displays a diversity that is mind-boggling – from sophisticated, highly urbanized students to those from humble backgrounds with no exposure to the city. Different tranches of reservations have strained this already creaking 'metaversity'.

However, educational administrators have been loathe to engage with it in any serious way, nor have they identified its strengths – after all it has produced economists, historians, sociologists and students of literature comparable to the best in the world.

A monolith with over 75 colleges, 2.5 lakh students and almost a hundred academic departments, Delhi University displays a diversity that is mind-boggling. However, educational administrators have been loathe to engage with it in any serious way, nor have they identified its strengths

Frustrated by their inability to think through this complexity, administrators take recourse to quick-fix solutions in their belief that a step taken, any step, is better than



UNIQUE PROTEST: A teacher holds a class outdoors to protest against semesters

none. The VC, who set the ball rolling about nine years ago, introduced the internal assessment system in undergraduate education. Now, it is not an altogether bad idea to have more than a single assessment per year as was the then norm in the university. But as important as introducing this system was working out the modalities of its imple-

upon it as a tool with which they can increase leverage for their students. Principals haul up teachers who are strict in evaluation. Teachers seek populism from students in exchange for generous marking. The few colleges that take internal assessment seriously end up penalizing their students for inadequacies that are overlooked elsewhere.

The calendar for tutorial submission is not observed. Tutorial groups range in size from eight to 16 and classroom sizes vary from 35 to 110! A cynical university acknowledges this fraud by regularly 'moderating' or 'neutering' internal assessment marks with formulae reminiscent of Yossarian in 'Catch 22' who had mastered the art of censoring letters by blacking out "all but the salutation Dear Mary" from a letter.

The next VC did nothing of note till the end of his term when he ran into a newly-appointed HRD minister who

had decided that the panacea for higher education was to implement a 'vision document', the basic intent of which was to rid the government of its responsibility in higher education.

His scheme of things is like this: standardize systems all over India in the first instance and shift to autonomous colleges in the next. The semester

REALITY CHECK

system was the easiest standardizing device, and central universities like Delhi University became the guinea pigs of this experiment. No effort was made to discuss whether this scheme had any merit, and if it did, whether a large university like Delhi University could benefit from it without losing the advantages the annual mode offered.

The university takes in over 75,000 students every year. Colleges, except minority ones, do not have the right to turn down

eligible students and admissions are determined by cut-off percentages set by different colleges. There is a process of elimination which takes up to four rounds before some settled picture emerges.

Admissions for the various categories of reservations take longer – as many students come from remote corners of India and a centralized process of admissions is monitored by various university cells. As reservations are a proportion of total admissions, these cannot even begin to settle till the main admissions are over. So, admissions

democratic standards of the masses do not taint those of the chosen few.

Meanwhile, expansion of the OBC quota two years ago has resulted in an additional 5,000 admissions per year. There was a need for more classrooms but in most colleges this process has not even begun. This expansion as well as introduction of the semester system will now dramatically increase the number of examinations a student takes every year and tax an already creaking examination system.

Another casualty of a rushed calendar will be reme-

From this year, there will be no centralized admissions and colleges will admit students on the basis of cut-off marks fixed by them. This is nothing but an abandoning of a system that the university had adopted after facing flak from courts for its failure to control admission malpractices

were dragging on till mid-September.

Overnight, a clumsy solution was found on Monday and college principals were told that from this year there would be no centralized admissions and that colleges would admit students on the basis of cut-off marks fixed by them. This was nothing but abandoning of a system the university had adopted after facing flak from courts for its failure to control admission malpractices. There might be chaos in college admissions this year, but by passing on the responsibility to colleges, the university brass has conveniently washed its hands of the problem.

Washing its hands of other problems is already on the agenda. The next one is the establishment of autonomous colleges where institutions will be allowed to award their own degrees. This will allow the elite to be separated from the *hoi polloi* so that the ac-

admission classes for weaker students which will not be possible now. Nor will there be any space for reevaluation of scripts which was one of the progressive steps conceded by DU to its students over two decades ago.

The reformers are men in a hurry. But what happens to learning as a result of implementing half-baked ideas? Given a rote system of learning at the school level, the university is the only place where some familiarity with concepts is possible. The writing skills of most students entering higher education are so abysmal that sometimes three years are not enough to rectify this.

With a tighter packaging of terms followed by over-zealous bureaucrats dictating academic priorities, it is only a question of time before one of the last sane systems of learning in India degenerates into a quasi-vocational training institution.

Times of India ND 13/04/2011

P19

Future farm: Crops to grow in sunless, rainless rooms

AP

Den Bosch (Netherlands): Farming is moving indoors, where the sun never shines, where rainfall is irrelevant and where the climate is always right. The perfect crop field could be inside a windowless building with meticulously controlled light, temperature, humidity, air quality and nutrition. It could be in a New York high-rise, a Siberian bunker, or a complex in the Saudi desert.

Advocates say this, or something like it, may be an answer to the world's food problems. "In order to keep a planet that's worth living on, we have to change our methods," says Gertjan Meeuws, of PlantLab, a research company. Meeuws and three other Dutch bioengineers have taken the concept of a greenhouse a step further, growing vegetables, herbs and house plants in enclosed and regulated environments where even natural light is excluded.

In their research station, strawberries, yellow peppers, basil and banana plants take on an eerie pink



INDOOR HARVEST: Yellow peppers are illuminated by LEDs at a research facility in Den Bosch, Netherlands

glow under red and blue bulbs of LEDs. Water trickles into the pans when needed and all excess is recycled, and the temperature is kept constant. Lights go on and off, simulating day and night. The researchers say they envision growing vegetables next to shopping malls and supermarkets. AP

Trapped in sham-ester system?

TROUBLED START A controversial new system and teachers' strike took away from students their first experience of college life

Mallica Joshi and Joyeeta Ghosh
■ htreporters@hindustantimes.com

NEW DELHI: Attending continuous classes and yet struggling to finish their syllabus, science students of Delhi University are not very happy with the way their first year of college is proceeding.

A controversial new system, frequent strikes and dharnas by teachers and empty classrooms took away from them their first experience of college life.

"For the first two months we had no clue what was happening. We would go for class but teachers would not teach," said Kanika Gupta, a chemistry honours student from Hindu College.

"Our seniors couldn't help us as their course structure was different," she added.

It was only after the Delhi high court's order that upheld the implementation of the semester system and directed teachers to go back to classes that teaching started.

Even now, many students find themselves ill-prepared to take on the exams that start in the first week of May. "I am very worried as I don't think I will be able to revise for the exams. We are still trying to finish the course," said Kaveri Gupta, a first-year chemistry student from Kirori Mal College.

"I don't care about the annual or the semester system. I just want time to revise and also to have some fun, which I did not get," she added.

For these students, the guinea pigs for the new system, the timetable has become intense with no free time and continuous classes throughout the day.

Co-curricular activities also took a back seat for students as they were busy worrying about the exams during the months of November and December, when the season of cultural activities begins. "I couldn't be part of the western dance group as I did-

STUDENTS FIND THEMSELVES ILL-PREPARED TO TAKE ON THE EXAMS THAT START IN FIRST WEEK OF MAY. TEACHERS SAY THERE ARE BASIC FLAWS IN THE COURSE STRUCTURE.

n't know when my exams would start. My schedule was different from that of the others," said Vinay Bhalla, a student of Hansraj College.

Many teachers, meanwhile, feel that there are basic flaws in the course structure. "The new course in physics, just like other subjects, was prepared in a hurry and it took a toll on the quality of content that was produced. No one was opposed to the semester system per se, but the hurry displayed by the university administration in passing a sub-standard course was not needed," said professor Shobhit Mahajan of physics department. Mahajan was a part of the course committee.

Teachers feel that students are the biggest losers in the whole process as they have to bear the brunt of the controversy. "They first missed out on classes and were then forced to study a course that was half-baked and ill-conceived. We had the best science courses in the entire country but the hurry in passing courses has ruined most of them," said a teacher, who teaches Botany in Miranda House College.

But not all teachers are opposed to the new system. "The course got revised because of the semester system. Also, the new system broadens the horizons of the students and makes them at par with global standards," said Amit Pundir, associate professor, electronics, Maharaja Agrasen College.

TALK TO US

■ What is your take on semester mode and its implementation in DU? Write to us at htreporters@hindustantimes.com



■ Already one-semester-old, students and teachers of 13 undergraduate science courses are still unhappy with the new system.

SONU MEHTA/HT FILE

hardlife

STUDENTS SPEAK

No life outside classroom

Mallica Joshi
■ mallica.joshi@hindustantimes.com

NEW DELHI: Mitali Arora, a first-year student of chemistry at St Stephen's had never thought college would be so rigorous. She has classes from 9am to 4.30pm and has to stay back for practical work at times. This Rohini resident wonders what the Delhi University culture, which her seniors spoke about, is.

"The only culture I know is continuous classes. I have seen my seniors get free time. They have time to do other things but we have not had that opportunity," says Arora.

Since the syllabus for many courses was revamped and new topics

introduced, the first-year students did not get help from their seniors.

"There are some topics in the course this year that even our senior did not study. We can't get notes from them. Sometimes, even our teachers seem a little stumped by the course," she said.

Though teachers at St Stephen's College taught students in the semester mode for the whole of last year (unlike many other colleges), the students feel they are not comfortably placed when it came to syllabi.

"During the first semester, we just managed to finish the course at the 11th hour. I hope we are able to finish it in time for the second semester," she says.

TEACHER TALK

Disastrous, half-baked idea

HT Correspondent
■ htreporters@hindustantimes.com

NEW DELHI: Last year, the university implemented the semester system in 13 science courses. After teaching them for one semester, some science teachers said the course structure was faulty and didn't help the students as it proposed to do.

MH Frank, associate professor of chemistry at St Stephen's, said the new system was disastrous for the students. "It is nothing but a half-baked idea. This was a very good opportunity to revise the syllabus properly but the kind of revision that has been done is not really helping the students," he said. For example, there is organic and inorganic chem-

istry in one semester and then there is a break of one semester in between when they go back to it. "So there is no continuity in the course. Students are examined on a certain part of the courses vis-a-vis the whole syllabus. This will not help them in the long run," added Frank. With such a time-bound schedule, teachers will be left with no time to do research and the interaction between students and teachers will also go down, he said.

He also countered the university's claim that students did well and the results were declared within a very short period. "The standard of the question papers was diluted so that students could score well. Moreover, the evaluation process is also questionable."

Where is the time for co-curricular activities?

Mallica Joshi
■ mallica.joshi@hindustantimes.com

NEW DELHI: Students who came to the Delhi University to be part of its famed co-curricular culture are a worried lot. The proposed semesterisation of the university has brought the fate of current co-curricular activities under a cloud.

For many years now, cultural activities such as dramas, dance, choreography and music used to kick-off towards the end of September and go on till December after which students would take their mid-term exams in January. Only a handful of college festivals used to take place after December, as this was a time to get serious about studies with exams approaching in April.

"Once the semester calendar is implemented, this system will get destabilised. There is going to be very little time left for activities as students will start preparing for exams in October itself," said Mahima Pathak, a member of the debating society at Sri Ram College for Commerce.

"Co-curricular activities are taken very seriously. Once the semester system is imposed, students will not get enough time to devote to such activities. In theatre, for example, students prepare the play till September. Only after that it is ready to be staged. Also, one can't break the performance season into parts. It affects the performance badly," said Keval Arora, who is in-charge of Players, Kirori Mal College's famous theatre group.

For first-year science students, participating in co-curricular activities proved to be an uphill task this year.

AND CHAOS ENSUED...

- **June 5, 2009:** Academic council passes semester system amid charges that the vice-chancellor was trying to forcibly implement the system
- **November 10, 2009:** The academic council approved the proposed structure of the semester system amid opposition from a few members
- **May 13, 2010:** As many as 12 science courses (one was added later, making it 13) were passed by the academic council.
- **November 15, 2010:** Delhi High Court steps in to break the deadlock. The implementation of semester system is upheld.
- The opposition from teachers had forced the university to postpone the exams twice. Initially, it was scheduled to start from Nov 20, 2010 as per the original academic calendar and then it was postponed to Dec 6, 2010.
- **January 4:** First semester starts and ends on January 13. Results were declared within two weeks.
- **May 3:** Second semester to begin

"Our time table is very intense. We have no time or energy for any co-curricular activities," said Tayyab Hussain, first-year student of physical sciences, Kirori Mal College.

Even though science semester exams were postponed to January after a lot of confusion last year, students were unable to participate in other activities.

For sports persons, the situation was worse. Inter-college competitions did not take place till March, almost six months late.

Hindustan Times ND 13/04/2011^{P-3}

MISSION ADMISSION

New policy: Many Ayes, a few Nos

V-C SPEAK No pre-admission forms huge help; over-admission worries unfounded



Mallica Josh/Joyeeta Ghosh
#htreporters@hindustantimes.com

NEW DELHI: Students hoping to get admission to Delhi University (DU) this year will not have to run around to fill multiple forms. The university's decision to do away with pre-admission forms altogether is set to change the admission process drastically.

"The university will first declare the cut-off and only then will students have to go to colleges for admission," said Dinesh Singh, Vice-Chancellor, DU.

Singh said reservations about over admission, expressed by some college principals, have no credibility. "The hysteria over a huge number of students asking for admission in a particular course is unfounded," he said.

Meanwhile, the university's decision to do away with OMR forms has garnered positive response from most principals.

"It's going to save time and



■ Students, who had to fill a pre-admission OMR form earlier, can now go to desired colleges and get admission after DU declares college cut offs.

HT FILE PHOTO

resources," said VK Srivastava, principal, Hindu College.

Meera Ramchandran, principal, Gargi College said, "It is an applicant and environment-friendly initiative."

However, not all are happy. "The cut-offs can go really high and may prevent students from getting admission," said the principal of a north campus college.

HOW CUT-OFFS ARE ARRIVED AT

All these factors decide the highs and lows of cut-offs

- 1 Most colleges said that they primarily banked on past experiences to decide cut-off marks
- 2 The class 12 results of Central Board of Secondary Education also made up one of the determinants
- 3 Reputation of colleges as per subject
- 4 The number and kind of OMR forms received

ST STEPHEN'S SAYS NO TO NEW DU ADMISSIONS POLICY

Charu Sudan Kasturi
#charu.kasturi@hindustantimes.com

NEW DELHI: St Stephen's College will continue to follow its old admission policy this year, arguing that it does not need to follow the new admission blueprint decided on by Delhi University.

Principal Valsan Thampu told HT that since the Supreme Court had concluded that St Stephen's has a right to conduct its own admission process, it would not change its policy based on new DU plans.

"We do not expect the university to make rules and regulations with reference to St Stephen's College. But the university too must keep in mind the special character of the college in allowing us to conduct our own admission process," Thampu said.

Clarifying that the College was not looking for confrontation, Thampu, however, said that the new DU admission policy "appears to not have been thought through properly."

He said, "To expect institutions to announce cut-offs based on past experiences is hard to understand. Scores vary significantly from year-to-year in specific subjects."

Under the new DU admission policy — decided at a meeting of Vice Chancellor Dinesh Singh with college administrators — colleges are required to announce their cut-offs based on earlier experiences. Students then apply to colleges and courses they are eligible for.

Colleges, under the new policy, may have to admit more students than the seats they have, if these students clear the cut-offs set by the institution.

But Thampu made it clear St Stephen's will not admit all students who clear their cut-offs, but will instead continue to conduct interviews for students to finalise their selections.

"You cannot bring institutions under an obligation of that kind," Thampu said. "We are committed to taking the very best. While marks are one indicator, we believe they are not the sole indicator of a student's aptitude."

Low-cost IT training boosts education tourism

Divya Trivedi

New Delhi, April 12

Mr Wayne Nelson, an IT professional from Liverpool with 15 years of experience, has travelled to New Delhi for training and certification in Cisco systems. Mr Matus Vido of Slovakia and Mr Charles Burr of Virginia are also in town to get trained in similar IT systems by qualified Indian trainers.

These people are part of an increasing trend of what is being called off-shoring of education or education tourism. The trend is slowly picking up with 100 players offering IT offshore training in India.

Companies such as Coca Cola Bottling, ING Amsterdam, Etisalat, UNDP, McKinsey and Microsoft are

sending their employees for short-term training and qualifications in IT systems – including Microsoft, Oracle, Cisco, Linux, Java – to India.

Cost advantage is a big reason why international companies are making a beeline for India, according to Mr Rohit Aggarwal, Co-founder and Director of Koenig Solutions Pvt Ltd.

For instance, a student has to shell out €5,000 for a Microsoft Certified Systems Engineer course in Europe, whereas the same course would cost €2,250 including training charges, course material, travel, and accommodation for a international student coming to India.

“The huge cost advantage,

Training Ground

One-on-one coaching cheaper in India.

Market is worth \$30 million now.

Estimates put market to cross \$1 billion in few years.

along with one-on-one personalised training, which is rare or simply too expensive abroad, draws the students and companies to India,” says Mr Aggarwal.

Koenig trains more than 200 international students a month at its centres in Delhi, Dehradun, Goa and Shimla.

The dotcom bust triggered Koenig’s shift from domestic to off-shore

international training. The move has paid off – as revenues have upped from less than \$100,000 in 2002 to \$7 million in 2010.

TIPPING POINT

Mr Aggarwal estimates the off-shore training market will cross \$1 billion in the next few years from the current \$30 million.

He claims Koenig commands 25 per cent of the market share and has plans for an initial public offering in 2014.

As prices in offshore training fall, he said, the industry will take off and mature in four to five years.

“There are several small players in the industry and collaboration rather than competition within the

industry will help grow the pie,” says the Director of Koenig. “Going forward, there may be a need for a uniform quality standard.”

To grow the market further, it is important to package the education programme with travel related assistance, he said.

Koenig plans to start centres in Bangalore, Kerala, Sikkim and a near-shore centre in Dubai this year. It is also in talks with Mongolian and Rwandan governments to set up local centres powered by Indian trainers.

The company has an arrangement with the Belgian and the Dutch governments who send their unemployed youth to Koenig in India for training.