

Newspaper Clips

April 21, 2012

HT, Mumbai, April 20

IIT-B sets up a panel JEE reforms

MUMBAI: The Indian Institute of Technology-Bombay has formed an eight-member panel to finalise a fresh proposal for Joint Entrance Exam reforms by the end of the month. The panel has been set up following opposition from the faculty and senate across IITs on the proposed JEE reforms. JEE is the entrance criteria to the IITs

Indian Express Pune 20.04.12 p-2

IITs study changes mooted, to come up with solutions

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
MUMBAI, APRIL 19

WITH stiff opposition from faculty members and senates of the Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) to the proposed reforms in the Joint Entrance Examination (JEE), the institutes are now in the process of studying the changes mooted, while simultaneously formulating implementable solutions. The suggestions and views will be placed before the respective IIT senates for discussion.

"There is a large support for some reforms. We will

come up with a proposal for selection of students. The ball is in our court now," said IIT-Bombay director Devang Khakhar.

There has been discontent among several IITs over the manner in which the new system is being introduced, with faculty members even questioning its fairness. The proposed reforms say that 40 per cent weightage has to be given to a student's performance in the Class 12 Board exam. Many IIT faculty members have argued that this may dilute the quality of students being admitted to the

JEE
REFORMS

A recent meeting between the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) and representatives from several IITs on the proposed reforms had ended inconclusively. Now, the IITs are reviewing the reform proposals

IITs as normalisation of state board exam results is difficult and may not be foolproof.

A recent meeting between the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) and representatives from several IITs on the proposed reforms had ended inconclusively. Now, the IITs are reviewing the reform proposals and will submit their recommendations to the IIT Council in May.

While the Indian Science Engineering Eligibility Test (ISEET) was expected to be rolled out from 2013, faculty

members said owing to the current deadlock, it is not clear whether the new admission procedure can be implemented next year. "It depends on how big a change it is," said Khakhar.

Meanwhile, in a move to enhance industry collaborations, IIT Bombay will identify various sectors or themes and create a roadmap for research and development with the concerned industries. IIT Bombay, for the first time on Thursday, reached out to the industry by showcasing its research projects and current collaborations and brainstorming on ways in which

the interactions can be taken forward.

"We can look at existing initiatives like the health consortium or our centres in areas like photovoltaic research, aerospace and nanoelectronics to identify themes, set a roadmap for implementation and take yearly stock of developments. Further, we have a database of 350 industries and are looking at creating long-term, strategic associations with them," said Prof Rangan Banerjee, dean of research and development at IIT Bombay.

Times Of India Chennai 20.04.12 P-2

IIT head backs students on campus curfews

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Chennai: The Indian Institute of Technology, Madras, which is on a safety-cum-morality drive, is having trouble keeping its house in order.

At an open campus forum on Thursday, IIT-M director Bhaskar Ramamurthi said hostel wardens don't have the authority to impose curfews without his approval.

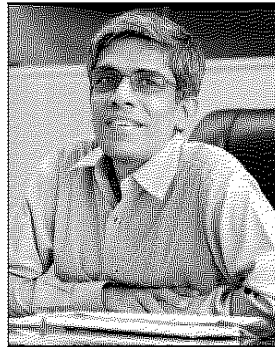
The director's statement comes in the wake of reports that a few wardens are imposing their own rules in hostels claiming that they have the rights to do so.

The open discussion held at the central lecture theatre, which attended by the undergraduates, postgraduates and executive council members, discussed the controversial re-

marks made by some senior faculty members and wardens.

Ramamurthi clarified that views of some individuals is not that of the institution. "Individual views are immaterial and they depend on how that individual was brought up. But, just because the students are adults, we cannot evade rules," the director reportedly told the students as an introduction.

A student, who attended the meeting, said the director was more democratic in his opinions. "The director listened to the complaints of students on the new rules imposed by a warden at Tapti hostel and he promised them that such complaints will be considered," said the student. During the discussion, the students raised the issue of a set of



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Bhaskar Ramamurthi
DIRECTOR, IIT-MADRAS

rules in Tapti hostel like the right of room cleaners to continuously knock student rooms until they open and strict restrictions to stay in the hostel rooms from 9am to 4pm. The director disagreed with them and said, "Any decision to be taken finally will be col-

lective."

Another proposal from the management—a declaration to be signed by all students—also invited protest from students. The declaration says, "The signatory is aware of the risks faced by wandering in the night outside safe zones

and of the potential consequences of taking these risks." A senior faculty said rather than admitting and publicizing dangerous zones, the administration should have taken measures to make them safe. The management's move to curb the freedom of students continues to get brickbats from several faculty members in closed-group email communications.

A department head told TOI that imposing any individual views and rules on the student community will make them apolitical. "Our students are better informed and are mature than many of us. Their source of information and ideas should be respected at any cost and the errors should be corrected in a democratic way," he said.

IIT-Jodhpur's conduct unethical: Datawind

ANUBHUTI VISHNOI
NEW DELHI, APRIL 20

THE row between Datawind and IIT-Jodhpur over Aakash tablets became public on Friday with Datawind CEO Suneet Singh Tuli saying the IIT's conduct was "unethical" and had "hurt the reputation of all IITs".

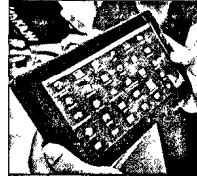
Stating that while he felt that the Ministry of Human Resource Development (HRD) had extended all possible support to keep the pro-

ject going, Tuli expressed "disappointment" over the way IIT-Jodhpur handled the project. He pointed out that the IIT's role was limited to procuring the tablet and there was no "technology input" in terms of design, creation or manufacture of the Aakash tablet from it.

The HRD ministry had authorised IIT-Jodhpur with a Rs 4,772-lakh contract for procuring 100,000 "low-cost access-cum-computing device" — better known as Aakash. While Canadian

company Datawind bagged the contract, no more than 600-odd devices supplied by it were found good enough by IIT-Jodhpur, which rejected around 7,500 devices as defective. This triggered a conflict between the two that also forced the ministry to intervene several times and ultimately led to the Aakash project being transferred to IIT-Bombay.

Tuli confirmed that a legal battle could be in the offing with IIT-Jodhpur claiming damages from



**AAKASH
TABLET ROW**

Datawind. Datawind has in turn shot off a notice to two of the IIT-Jodhpur faculty members for violation of the

non-disclosure agreement, as first reported by *The Indian Express*.

Detailing how IIT-Jodhpur had rejected all but 600-odd devices supplied to them by Datawind, Tuli accused the IIT of plagiarising military-type testing specification from HP and imposing them for the Aakash tablet and also secretly signing an agreement with Datawind subcontractor Quad Electronics for developing a 'convergence' device that could compete with Aakash.

Admitting that the quality of Aakash-1 may have been found wanting, Tuli pointed out that the specifications of that device were in keeping with those outlined in the government tender. "Later, we ourselves offered to upgrade the device at the same cost, replacing a resistive screen with a capacitive one and a faster processor as well," he said.

According to Tuli, it all goes well, Aakash will be available to students by May-June. "The transfer process

of the project — from IIT-Jodhpur to IIT-Bombay — is on. Devices will now be sent to IIT-Bombay for testing and hopefully after approval, the HRD minister will launch the upgraded Aakash-2 in May. By June 2012, Aakash 2 will be widely tested as students return to school. July onwards, it will be produced in huge numbers," Tuli said.

He added that Datawind would bid for developing 5 million Aakash tablets when the Indian government invites tenders.

No ban on filling DU posts: UGC

Over 4,000 Permanent Teaching Positions Are Vacant In DU

Manash Pratim Gohain | TNN

New Delhi: While more than 4,000 permanent teaching positions across colleges and departments of Delhi University are vacant, the University Grants Commission (UGC) has stated that 'there is no ban on filling up of teaching positions sanctioned by UGC'.

The UGC had written to the Delhi University Teachers' Association on April 13 stating the same. Meanwhile, university administration has said that once the recruitment committee — set up by DU — submits its report, the recruitment shall start.

With the implementation

On Feb 24, DUTA representatives met the UGC chairman to know if there is any ban on filling up of vacant teaching positions in central universities

of OBC reservation from 2007, an additional 2,600 plus post have been sanctioned by the UGC in 2008 to meet the increase in number of students. At present, around 40% of the teaching positions in colleges and departments are vacant and things may worsen as the teachers recruited in 1969 and

1970 are scheduled to retire by the next couple of months.

On February 24, DUTA representatives met the UGC chairman with a charter of demands that also sought to know if there is any ban on filling up of vacant teaching positions in central universities, specifically in DU. In its reply, A K Saroya, under secretary of UGC, wrote there is no ban on recruitment of UGC sanctioned teaching positions.

"The university is silent on the issue, which is why DUTA had to approach the MHRD and the UGC. There is no ban on recruitment, and yet DU administration is sit-

ting over the issue for nearly two years," said DUTA president, Amar Deo Sharma.

Meanwhile, DU vice chancellor, Dinesh Singh stated that the committee on recruitment is expected to submit its report soon. "There has been no adverse affect on the teaching process as we have as many ad-hoc teachers as the vacancies. Moreover, we have never claimed there is any ban on recruitment. But my first year went in putting the semester system in place. Reforms take time, and we can't do everything at the same time. We will commence with the recruitment parallel to the new session," Singh said.

Mint ND 21/04/2012 P-1

Tuli effort at clearing the air doesn't clarify much

BY SURABHI AGARWAL,
PRASHANT K. NANDA &
YOGENDRA KALAVALAPALLI

NEW DELHI/HYDERABAD

DataWind Ltd chief executive officer Suneet Singh Tuli's effort to clear the air over several controversies surrounding the production, procurement and quality of the much-discussed, low-cost Aakash tablet only served to complicate matters even further.

At a press conference in New Delhi, Tuli reiterated the company's disappointment with the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Rajasthan, and accused it of "getting engaged with other suppliers" through a "limited tender", thus breaching its agreement with DataWind for procuring Aakash tablets.

IIT-Rajasthan initially placed an order for 100,000 Aakash tablets with DataWind based on a tender. Till recently, IIT-Rajasthan was in charge of procuring the \$45 tablet for the human resource development (HRD) ministry. The mandate has now shifted to IIT-Bombay.

The DataWind-made Aakash was announced with much fan-

Tuli effort doesn't clarify much

► FROM PAGE 1

fare by the government as a tablet with a rock-bottom price that would help bridge the digital divide amid scepticism over earlier efforts at making cheap computers with the same intent. Aakash prototypes met with disappointment, persuading the government to seek a better device.

Tuli said he had sent a "legal notice to two professors of IIT-Rajasthan" for not honouring the agreement. He then clarified that what he had sent was a "legal warning" and that this was not directed against the institution or its director.

Tuli has accused Quad Electronics Solutions Pvt. Ltd, DataWind's erstwhile manufacturing partner, for breaching intellectual property (IP) rights by signing a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with IIT-Rajasthan for producing a so-called rival to Aakash, as reported by *Mint* on 13 April.

Quad has, in turn, accused DataWind of non-payment, a claim refuted by DataWind. Tuli promised on Friday at a press briefing to provide proof that the payment had been made, but wasn't forthcoming later. Quad has denied accusations about breach of IP rights.

In an interview in his office in Hyderabad recently, Quad managing director Raminder Singh Soin said his firm was building a smart communications device with IIT-Rajasthan and not a competing low-cost tablet as alleged by Tuli.

Quad has entered an MoU for five years (effective 14 January) with IIT-Rajasthan "to develop such computing and communications devices for the optimum cost" and "serve as enabler to bridge the digital divide of India", he said.

Mint has reviewed the MoU

signed with IIT-Rajasthan, but couldn't independently establish what the device is and whether it will compete with Aakash.

Soin said the MoU that Quad entered into with IIT-Rajasthan does not violate the manufacturing services agreement with DataWind. Under the Freedom of Action clause in the agreement, Quad can manufacture similar devices for other parties. He was referring to the clause that states, "Except as expressly provided, the article shall not prevent Quad or its affiliates from marketing, acquiring or developing materials, products or services which are similar or competitive to those of customer." It added, however, that Quad will not deal with those suppliers of DataWind that it hasn't had previous dealings with.

Tuli reiterated that Quad's agreement with IIT-Rajasthan for a so-called convergence device is, in fact, for a tablet. "What is a convergence device—is it a taxi, is it a toaster, what is it? It was a tablet. Using funny language to go around it didn't help" them, he said.

On the issue of delays in delivery to customers, many of whom have made advance payments, Tuli said that after DataWind's dispute with Quad, the company tied up with other sub-contract manufacturers and will launch the upgraded UbiSlate 7+ on 26 April, when product details and specifications will be disclosed.

"We expect to catch up on the delivery of products in the next two weeks," he said.

The number of people who have made advance bookings was very small compared with the overall number, he said.

DataWind's last stated number of pre-bookings was three million. Tuli said the company is receiving 8,000-10,000 more

bookings every day. He also said the company has received corporate and institutional bulk expressions of interest for around four million tablets.

Tuli, however, refused to give details of the total number of bookings and payments received so far or the line of credit with distributors. "We have now decided to not give out the details as it causes resentment among our competitors." But the company will provide the exact number of deliveries as "we catch up", apart from details of its government dealings, he added.

Can DataWind begin commercial sales of tablets with nearly identical specifications as the proposed upgraded Aakash before fulfilling its commitment to provide 100,000 tablets to agencies appointed by the HRD ministry?

Mint didn't receive a response to this question and on other issues either from HRD minister Kapil Sibal or IIT-Rajasthan director Prem Kalra. According to Tuli, though some of the specifications are identical, they are two different tablets.

Sibal had said earlier that delivery of the upgraded Aakash will start in May.

Some key executives have resigned recently from DataWind. One of them told *Mint* on condition of anonymity that he did so over reservations about collecting advance money before having a product.

Asked about the employee exits, Tuli said the company has 150 employees globally and "three-four leave every month as more people join". *Mint* has confirmation of at least two key executives who have left DataWind in India recently.

Meanwhile, DataWind has issued a legal notice to Pankaj Mohindroo, national president of Indian Cellular Association, for alleged defamation during the lobby body's interaction with the government. Mohindroo said that "whatever is alleged in the legal notice is not factually correct" and they will deal with it.

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Asian Age ND
21/04/2012 P-3

'Vibrant linkages between varsities, industries needed'

THUFAIL P.T.
NEW DELHI, APRIL 20

Union human resources development minister Kapil Sibal on Friday called for building "vibrant linkages" between universities and industry in order to shorten the gap between the demand and supply of skilled labour in the country.

Addressing the "India-UK Round Table on Innovation", Mr Sibal sought UK's cooperation to make India a "hub" of skilled human resource in the 21st century. "Improving the interface between institutions of higher learning and business as well as delivering a better environment for commercialising research are the common focal points for both the countries," Mr Sibal said.

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Agni V can hit Europe too: Chinese experts

Saibal Dasgupta | TNN

Beijing: Chinese experts on Friday claimed the range of India's Agni V missile was 8,000km and not 5,000km as cited by India. The experts included Du Wenlong, an expert at the PLA Academy of Military Sciences and Zhang Zhaozhang, professor with PLA National Defence University.

Zhaozhang was quoted by the Global Times, as saying, "According to China's standard, an ICBM should have a range of at least 8,000km. The Agni V's range could be further enhanced to become an ICBM." There were also signs that China will try to pressure the US and Russia into not selling their missile guidance systems to India.

"The missile brings whole of Asia apart from 70% of Europe and other re-

gions under its strike range and puts India in a select band of countries to possess ICBM technology," said the official Xinhua news agency. Global Times carried a map showing Moscow, Tehran and Jakarta among cities within the range of Agni V.

Zhang said Agni V will help India rise from a regional to world power. China must work on developing defence systems against the threat of ballistic missiles. "It's India's goal to possess an ICBM, as the country seeks to improve its status and become a major world player. Without it, India will remain a regional power," Zhang said.

Official People's Daily commented on "India's military buildup" saying Agni V shows its intention to seek a regional balance of power. "However, in the context of the eastward shift of global

economic power and the changing Asian geopolitical pattern, India should cooperate with neighboring countries and reduce its own persecution mania," it said.

China successfully conducted its first ground-based mid-course ballistic missile interception experiment in January, 2010, becoming the second country in the world to conduct this kind of missile defense test, the local media pointed out.

Other Chinese experts questioned India's ability to use the missile.

"India doesn't possess high precision guidance system. It has to buy it from the US and Russia. These countries may be reluctant to sell their most advanced technology," the official China Central Television quoted some experts as saying and even questioning India's infrastructure capabilities.

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DRDO's new target: Anti-satellite weapons

New Era For Space Defence In India, Says Top Scientist

Rajat Pandit | TNN

New Delhi: After testing the over 5,000km Agni V missile, which went up to 600km into space during its parabolic trajectory, the Defence Research and Development Organization (DRDO) now feels it can fashion deadly anti-satellite



DRDO chief V K Saraswat at a press meet in New Delhi on Friday

(ASAT) weapons in double-quick time.

"Agni V's launch has opened a new era. Apart from adding a new dimension to our strategic defence, it has ushered in fantastic opportunities in, say, building ASAT weapons and launching mini/micro satellites on demand," DRDO chief V K Saraswat said on Friday. The ASAT weapon would include marrying Agni V's propulsion system with the "kill vehicle" of the under-development two-tier BMD (ballistic missile defence) system that has been tested a few times to track and destroy hostile missiles both inside (endo) and outside (exo) the earth's atmosphere.

"An ASAT weapon would require to reach about 800km altitude... Agni V gives you the

boosting capability and the 'kill vehicle', with advanced seekers, will be able to home in to the target satellite," he said.

The top defence scientist was, however, quick to stress that the government had not given its nod for the ASAT programme. "India does not believe in weaponization of space. We are only talking about having the capability. There are no plans for offensive space capabilities," he said. The fact, however, remains there is a re-think on the entire issue ever since China shocked the world by using an ASAT weapon to destroy an old satellite in 2007.

Beijing has set a scorching pace in developing advanced ASAT capabilities with "direct-ascent" missiles, hit-to-kill "kinetic" and directed-energy laser weapons. The defence ministry in 2010 had even drafted a 15-year "Technology Perspective and Roadmap", which held development of ASAT weapons "for electronic or physical destruction of satellites (2,000km altitude above earth's surface) and GEO-synchronous orbits" a thrust area.

Consequently, apart from directed energy weapons, defence scientists are focusing on "space security" to protect India's space assets from electronic or physical destruction. Another spin-off from Agni V test is that the DRDO feels it can work towards launching mini-satellites for battlefield use if an adversary attacks the country's main satellites.