

Newspaper Clips

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IIT boys get down to boxers at fest

Abhinav Verma

The crowds at Crossroads, the annual festival of Shri Ram College of Commerce in DU were left pretty amused and cheering loudly on Thursday, when the students of IIT Delhi took to the stage in formal shirts and neckties, and colourful boxer shorts.

As soon as the boys started grooving to LMFAO's hit number, Sexy And I Know It, and the title track of Akshay Kumar and John

Abraham starrer Desi Boyz, at the Western Dance Competition, the crowd went mad, hooting and whistling. The girls in the crowd couldn't stop raving about the fusion dressing and declared them winners even before the judges announced it. While all the boys wore boxers with quirky colourful prints, what got everyone talking the most was lead dancer, Parth Nayati's red superman boxers.

HT Youth Nexus, too, sizzled >>Pg6

Last week's Metamind article, titled 'Why IIT grads love to sell shampoo?', drew responses from IIT students, alumni and many others. Some offered fresh insights, others gave the counterpoint and yet others went venomous. In line with the practice at *FC* as we take the debate forward, we publish below four letters that more or less sum up their viewpoints...

Their side of IIT story

It's global trend, not India-specific

THE trend of IITians turning entrepreneurs is in line with an increasing number of Indian startups coming up, not just by IITians. Economic growth has created opportunities within India, and a number of entrepreneurs have identified these market needs and capitalised on them. It is not easier for ventures by IITians to raise funds — it is the experience of the startup team that matters more. A number of entrepreneurs spend time in some of the best private sector employers before starting their own ventures. That experience and relevant skill set is valued when a funding decision is being made more than the degree one holds.

The trend of IITians leaving the technology domain for other pursuits is a broader institutional issue. IITs typically serve as a conduit for some of the best talent in the country, purely as a result of their standing within the Indian educational space, not just in the technical domain. In fact, a very high percentage of IITians pursue technical careers in India or advanced technical degrees in India and abroad. Engineers turning to entrepreneurship is a global trend due to the fact that field itself develops problem-solving skills — a prerequisite for a new business. These businesses create jobs and contribute to the economy and the community in a big way. If you look at our venture, it has been innovative in centralising and distributing information about the restaurant space in India. It has, for the first time in India, introduced accountability into the space — a kind of free market system if you will.

Deepinder Goyal,
IIT Delhi alumni and
CEO, Zomato.com, New Delhi

Did we want to be engineers?

I AM a fifth year undergraduate at IIT Bombay. There's not a simple answer to it. To find an answer to



Research environment is broken

I GRADUATED 11 years ago from IIT Bombay. I don't have a single batchmate selling soap, so I think the statistics you are citing are not correct.

The environment for scientific research in India is fundamentally broken. It is not right to ask IITians to do public service for a few years once they graduate because that does not serve any purpose. We should in fact advocate that as many of them go overseas and learn from the best scientists and refine their trade in the best laboratories, while the Indian government fixes what is broken —

that you will have to look at the background of students who enter IITs. Did we really want to be engineers or society forced us to be engineers? When we entered IIT, were we given the choice to choose a branch of our interest? If we never wanted to be engineers, were we capable enough to reject the IIT admission, just to pursue our interests? These are the questions that need to be answered before making any conclusion about IITians.

the scientific infrastructure of the country. If this happens, then at least in 10 years we can have these talented and by then experienced people come back to the country. If India is not able to fix infrastructure, we cannot expect IITians or any other talented people to do any worthwhile work.

IITs remain centres of excellence in spite of the government and politicians and their efforts to break a system that has worked for many decades. We need to police these guys and ask them some hard questions as compared with deflecting some

blame on IITians.

Taxpayers' money is not being wasted on the IITs. We have created an aspirational brand and even if all IIT aspirants spend an hour extra in their formative years struggling with Irodov and Resnick, we have earned back the money we spend as taxpayers by the overall improvement in mathematical ability of the country. Of course, taxpayer's money may be wasted getting to the IITs. On this I have no further comments.

Roshan D'Silva
IIT Mumbai alumni,
CEO, Trivillas.com, Singapore

job with low growth instead of a high-paying, interesting and high-growth job? Although there are hardly any technical jobs in India, not even PSUs come to campus to hire IITians.

I completely admire IITs for providing us the opportunity to explore ourselves. If we never wanted to be engineers, it let us to do that. IITs are very different from society; here we find what we really wanted to do in life. We build our hobbies here,

we live our life, we get to understand ourselves. Don't force us, like society did, to do things we never wanted to do.

I completely understand the emotion of the nation that we are supposed to be technocrats. We definitely owe to the nation for paying our fees. But trust me, wherever we are, whatever we are doing, we are excelling in it. Be it a CEO job or that of a scientist. We are and will pay back the nation (even if it is by selling shampoo). On the positive side, IITians are taking a lot of technical jobs too; a lot of them are going for higher education and many return to contribute to research organisations and institutes. In a nutshell, we are doing what we wanted and want to do. We are paying back the nation in whatever work we are doing.

Arpit

Shampoo sellers too create jobs

I SEE YOUR point — that IITs are not producing what was expected of them. Though mostly correct, there are a few things I wish to point out. It is a narrow and limited view that engineers are supposed to only solve 'technical problems', which is grossly understood as working in a lab with electronic and genetic circuits (in your own words). A lot of jobs that they eventually take require solving complex problems (Yes! selling shampoos ain't easy!). Else these companies wouldn't have hired them or, worse, the students would leave the jobs since they were less rewarding. Having said that, it is true that IITs are not producing as many 'scientists' as they were initially thought to be.

On a national scale, it is important that this problem be fixed. But remember, we could create other institutes with different models and change the initial objective of IITs. In so far as the quantum of funding is concerned, it is these 'shampoo-sellers' who have largely elevated India's image globally, besides creating several jobs and opportunities. It might not be that bad an idea thus to fund 'shampoo-sellers'!

Vivek Agarwal

HRD min plans to launch 1,000 education channels

New Delhi, Feb 17: Aiming to give a boost to education, the Union human resources development ministry is turning to television in a big way and intends to launch as many as 1,000 channels.

It has already initiated steps to launch the first 50 round-the-clock channels at the earliest and approached the Information and Broadcasting ministry for permission, sources

told PTI.

The HRD ministry has also started the process for appointing a consultant for setting up the infrastructure for the 50 Direct-To-Home (DTH) channels.

The country's premier educational institutions have been asked to prepare lectures and educational material that can be telecast, the sources said.

Content for these channels is being prepared

by premier educational institutes, they said.

The HRD ministry initiated steps to launch the 50 channels after clearance of a major technological hurdle with the Department of Space assuring the use of two 36 MHz KU Band transponders in satellite GSAT 8 spacecraft for the channels.

The channels are a part of the National Mission of Education through Infor-

mation and Communication Technology (NME-ICT) initiative.

"While the HRD ministry wanted to start the 50 channels at the earliest, the permission from the information and broadcasting ministry may take a little time as the latest guidelines specify that formation of a company is one of the requirements to start a channel," a source said.

PTI



Govt to rejig financial schemes to promote higher education

Kirtika Suneja & Subhash Narayan
New Delhi, Feb 17

THE government plans a major restructuring of schemes governing provisions of financial assistance to students in a bid to encourage them to pursue higher studies and reduce drop-outs.

The ministry of human resource development is giving final touches to a policy which will encourage institutions, especially universities, to become one-stop shops for student-financing while the government would stand as guarantor for a host of education loans. This, sources said, would encourage banks to increase disbursement to this segment. In addition, the quantum of loans on offer for students would also be raised, they said.

The central principle of the new policy is that no student eligible to be admitted should be deprived of high-

er education for financial reasons.

The trigger for the new policy is the high rate of students dropping out after the secondary education stage. The rate is as high as 40% in classes IX-XII. As per a government analysis, nearly one-fifth of the population cites financial problems as one of the main reasons for not pursuing education beyond the secondary level.

"Without demand-side financing, the government's efforts to enhance gross enrolment ratio (GER) for higher education may not succeed.

Through the new initiatives, we propose to cover a minimum of 50% of the students who reach the secondary level in one way or the other," said an official source privy to the development.

The new policy will benefit as many as 3.2 million students who are enrolled for higher education every year under student loans. That apart, another 400,000 students will be covered through scholarships and free-ships and 2 million will get access to student internships and vocational apprenticeship programmes.

HRD MINISTRY IS GIVING FINAL TOUCHES TO A POLICY THAT WILL ENCOURAGE INSTITUTIONS, ESPECIALLY UNIVERSITIES, TO BECOME ONE-STOP SHOPS FOR STUDENT FINANCING WHILE THE GOVT WOULD BE THE GUARANTOR FOR A HOST OF EDUCATION LOANS



The plan is in line with the government's target of increasing the GER from 15% now to 20% by 2017 and 25% by 2022.

The changes have already been endorsed in a report by a high level committee headed by senior officials of the ministries of human resource development and finance and the Planning Commission. The proposal is also expected to be part of the long-term policy initiative being finalised by the Planning Commission for inclusion in the 12th Plan document.

The total outstanding loans of public sector banks for education in March 2011 stood at ₹43,074 crore in more than 2.23 million accounts.

"The problem (of lack of financing for higher education) is far more acute today since 80% of the technical and professional education is in the hands of private self-financed institutions where cost is the biggest factor," the high-level government panel on education has said in its report.

Affordability continues to be one of the biggest constraints deterring students from pursuing higher education. This also skews the demand for education since many bright students evaluate courses on the fulcrum of cost rather than aptitude. There is a recognition that the demand-side is to be addressed through several strategies — one way is encourage varsities to become one-stop-shop for financing.

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Answer keys must be shared under RTI

Bosco Dominique | TNN

Puducherry: The Central Information Commission has directed Jawaharlal Institute of Postgraduate Medical Education and Research in Puducherry to provide the question paper along with answer key of an entrance exam conducted by it for admission. The landmark order that came on an RTI petition could bring greater transparency to the high-stress entrance test system.

► 'Serious action', P 15

Access to papers and answer keys would help aspirants, both current and future, understand what and why they were getting wrong and help prepare for such tests better.

Times View: Entrance exams in India make or break the future of lakhs of young people. This may be unfortunate, but it is a fact that we cannot ignore. Given this reality, it makes sense for the entire system of entrance exams to reach for the highest possible levels of transparency. It is in this context that the ruling of the Central Information Commission ought to be seen. Rather than be dragged kicking and screaming to enhance transparency, bodies that conduct these exams should willingly embrace it.

The order will apply to all entrance exams in India. The RTI application was filed by Puducherry Government Medical Officers' Association general secretary Dr K Sudhakar.

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'JIPMER case to bring transparency'

Bosco Dominique | TNN

Puducherry: The CIC's order directing JIPMER in Puducherry to provide the question paper and answer key of entrance exam is set to ensure greater transparency to the entrance test system.

Puducherry Government Medical Officers' Association general secretary Dr K Sudhakar filed an RTI application

with the JIPMER public information officer (PIO), seeking a copy of the question paper along with answer key of the entrance examination held in July 2011 for admission into MCh in urology. PIO James

Sekar denied the information on the ground that it was not the practice of the institute to share question papers of en-

trance tests. Sudhakar then approached the first appellate authority, which declared that it was "satisfied with the PIO's reply." Undeterred, Sudhakar moved the CIC. Central information commissioner

Shailesh Gandhi, after hearing the case through video conference, ordered the PIO to furnish a copy of the question

paper with answer key by February 10. Gandhi, in his January 23 order, pointed out that the right to information is a fundamental right.

When the PIO said there was a possibility that the information sought may have been destroyed, the commissioner warned that destruction of information sought under the RTI Act will have "serious repercussions".

ENTRANCE EXAMS

HindustanTimes

Title : 70,000 candidates to appear for CMAT

Author :

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70,000 candidates to appear for CMAT

NEW DELHI: A total of 70,000 candidates will appear for the common management admission test(CMAT) which is to be held for the first time in the country across 61 cities from February 20. Going by the numbers, the response is relatively lukewarm as there was an expectation that around 2.5 lakh candidates would register for the exam. "We have received a total number of 70,000 registrations for this online test which is to be conducted from February 20 to 28," S S Mantha, chairman of the All India Council for Technical Education(AICTE) told HT.

IITS to have common placement structure

Hindustan Times (Mumbai)

MUMBAI: The Indian Institutes of Technology (IITS) are mulling a “semi-formal structure” comprising placement heads across all IITS to help coordinate and collate all placement-related activities.

IIT placement heads across all IITS met at Iit-bombay (IITB) on Friday to discuss placement-related experiences for this season.

So far, the institutes coordinated on an informal level, though each follows its own placement policy.

The proposed body would meet twice a year. “We want to proactively ensure that students and recruiters have a similar experience regardless of which IIT they choose to go to,” said Ravi Sinha, who is in-charge of placements at IIT-B.

The semi-formal body would collect feedback and placement data from all the IITS to identify trends on changing student preferences, emerging corporate trends and opportunities in the economy.

The body would not impose a single, binding policy across IITS but would coordinate between them.

Placements at IIT-B began on December 1, 2011. Recruiters will be visiting the campus till May this year.

PU teachers protest over UGC recommendations

Hindustan Times (Chandigarh)

TEACHERS FROM PUNJAB, HARYANA AND HIMACHAL WILL COURT ARREST IN NEW DELHI ON MAR 14

CHANDIGARH: The Panjab University teachers staged a protest on the university campus on Friday.

More than 100 teachers took part in the protest. The call for the protest was given by All India Federation of University and College Teachers' Organisations (AIFUCTO) to press forward the implementation of the new UGC recommendations.

Many demands pertaining to pension, child-care leave, counting of past service, etc, have not been paid any attention.

In many colleges and universities of Punjab, teachers have not been given new pay scales, and where these scales are given, arrears have not been paid.

Jagwant Singh, vice-president, AIFUCTO, said they would intensify the protest if their demands were not met.

In the next phase of agitation teachers from the states of Punjab, Haryana and Himachal Pradesh would court arrest in New Delhi on March 14, followed by court arrest by teachers from other states on March 15 and 16.

PU lends helping hand to young researchers

Hindustan Times (Chandigarh)

The university will provide subsidy of and to faculty members researching in sciences and social sciences, respectively

CHANDIGARH: In an attempt to promote research among young faculty members, Panjab University has decided to provide financial assistance to those undertaking research projects.

Newly appointed dean (research) RK Kohli said subsidy grants of Rs 20,000 and Rs 10,000 would be given to young researchers in science and social science subjects, respectively. The varsity has already allocated a budget for the purpose.

The grant will be given to teachers at the level of lecturers and assistant professors. Aspirants will have to apply in a prescribed form and the authorities will disperse the sum after evaluating the applications.

"Young teachers face many problems at the initial stage. The idea is to help them get started, which is usually the biggest hurdle," said Kohli. The amount of the grant will be waived after the researchers submit a completion report of the projects within a stipulated time frame. However, in cases where teachers fail to show any results, the sum will be deducted from their salaries.

Kohli said the initiative had elicited a good response, as he received a large number of applications within just a couple of days after the scheme was announced. The authorities have also received requests from senior faculty members to cover the entire faculty under the scheme.

"At the moment, we are only covering young faculty members. In the future, we can consider senior faculty members as well, depending on the availability of funds," said Kohli.

Welcoming the step, dean (arts) BS Ghuman said the young teachers should avail the opportunity, as it would help in their personal development.

"Teaching and research go hand in hand. For any good teacher, writing projects is of paramount importance. It will also help enhance the quality of teaching in the university," said Ghuman.

Dean (science) Amrik Singh Ahluwalia said the initiative would motivate young researchers and was bound to deliver good results.

Besides financial assistance, the young faculty members have also underlined the need for holding orientation programmes to help them improve their researching skills.

"It's a step in the right direction and will give young minds the freedom and opportunity to explore," said assistant professor Davinder Kumar.