

Newspaper Clips

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'IIT? No, thanks!' say 274 students

Jhimli Mukherjee Pandey | TNN

Kolkata: Here's a reality check on brand IIT. At least 274 students who had enrolled for undergraduate tech courses in IITs have pulled out to study elsewhere in spite of paying the fees in full.

This is about 3% of the 9,885 IIT seats on offer but eight to 10 years ago, no one would think of quitting IIT, no matter what the stream. Withdrawals have been a rising trend for the past five years and this year has been the worst, say IIT sources.

The admission process got over on Friday, but on Thursday night, a stock-taking by the IITs revealed that many of them had decided to withdraw mostly because they didn't get a stream of their choice. Those who sacrificed the IIT brand chose IISc Bangalore, IIIT-Hyderabad, NITs and Birla Institute of Technology and Science in Pilani and Ranchi.

Thursday was the last date for candidates to withdraw from IITs. The pullouts started after the JEE-main results were announced in mid-June and admission to the NITs started. IIT-Madras has taken the biggest hit — at least 76 candidates have left for the two NITs in Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka, IISc-Bangalore and

Informal discussions between candidates and faculty members revealed that they do not mind giving up the IIT brand if they get a stream that will fetch them a prized job

IIIT-Hyderabad.

"We've had the maximum withdrawals because there are more options for tech studies in the southern states. Many students who had taken admission in streams like mining, metallurgy, architecture and biotechnology have opted for computer science, electronics or electrical engineering in the other institutes," said IIT-JEE chairperson from IIT-Madras, R Sarathy.

Informal discussions between the candidates and faculty members revealed that they do not mind giving up the IIT brand if they get a stream that will fetch them a prized job. Placement results for streams like mining and metallurgy have been poor in recent times, the students said.

IIT-Delhi lost 63 students, Mumbai 44 and Roorkee 35. "The trend is that everyone wants computer sci-

ence, electronics and communication and electrical engineering, keeping placements and a corporate career in mind. In some IITs, even core departments like civil and chemical engineering have suffered," said IIT-JEE chairperson from IIT-Mumbai, Tom Mathews.

IIT-Kharagpur fared comparatively better with 19 withdrawals, followed by Kanpur with 16.

"Most students want to get into engineering streams that are in demand and they don't mind sacrificing the IIT brand for this. Hence, this spate of withdrawals. Even the Indian School of Mining, Dhanbad, has become a preferred destination for many from the Kharagpur zone because it has started offering mechanical, computer science and civil engineering courses," said N K Panigrahi, IIT-JEE vice-chairman at IIT-Kharagpur. Guwahati had the least number of pullouts — 6, said IIT-JEE chairperson Senthil Velan.

"The tech education scene, even in 2005, was very different from what it is now. New IITs have come up. From 4,000-plus seats, there are now nearly 10,000 seats on offer. Naturally the withdrawal rate will be proportionately higher," explained P K Das, IIT-JEE chairman at IIT-Kharagpur.

Normalisation formula contributor criticises it in blog

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MUMBAI: The on-going JEE Main and 12th standard board marks normalisation case in Delhi and Hyderabad high court saw a twist when Dheeraj Sanghi, one of the contributors to the JEE

normalisation formula expressed his concerns over it.

An excerpt from a blog post written by him on July 10 about the normalisation process said: "Sadly, a large number of kids have to go through a new system which was not well thought of, for which there was no data,

no analysis was done, and it was imposed from top."

However, when Sanghi was called to the Delhi high court to provide a clarification on the normalisation process, he had given the court a detailed description of how simple the process was, say petitioners.

The Delhi high court has now deferred the petition till September. The hearing at the Hyderabad high court will take place on Wednesday. Its verdict will be final, ending the squabble over the process.

The petition challenges the process, which 'normalises' 50%

board marks by equating the respective boards' percentile with JEE main percentile of respective examining bodies. Petitioners had called the formula 'unfair' and appealed to the court for a stay on the entire admission process, which was rejected.

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■ ANUBHUTI VISHNOI

Ill-prepared JEE fails in first test

IT'S NOT SURPRISING that the normalisation formula for school boards governing entrance to IITs through the Joint Entrance Examination (JEE) now stands challenged in the Supreme Court as well as three high courts.

The Pallam Raju-led HRD Ministry, saddled with a public announcement dating from predecessor Kapil Sibal's time, had little choice but to press ahead with the plan starting this year even though it was keenly aware that the actual rollout of a test promising equal weightage to all state boards was a tall order.

JEE 2013 in fact came not because the new admission format, with weightage to school board results — in order to discourage the rote-style learning of coaching classes — was a big improvement over the previous exam systems. But because the ministry had stuck its neck out and announced last year that the new format would be brought in 2013.

JEE 2013 came not because it was a big improvement over the earlier system, but because ministry had announced last year that it would be brought in 2013

This is despite the fact that the normalisation formula that was to be agreed upon in order to give due weightage to board scores was not finalised. Even till May this year, hectic, desperate meetings were being held in the HRD Ministry to arrive at a workable, bias-free admission formula.

If top officials were reluctant about the idea, there were other red flags that should have put the ministry on guard. An independent global centre with expertise in standardisation of tests that was consulted by the HRD Ministry, the Australian Council for Educa-

tional Research, had strongly advised against any attempts at normalisation of board marks, saying it was not going to yield the desired results.

What appears to have still prompted the HRD Ministry to press ahead was fear of a huge embarrassment should they backtrack.

However, in the process, careers of lakhs of aspiring students have been subjected to an untested experiment.

Incidentally, JEE 2013 emerged from the larger idea of bringing in a single, national-level SAT-style common entrance exam for all undergraduate programmes.

Hopefully, that will be implemented after due homework and less haste. For as this year's example shows, bungled education policies don't just create confusion and invite litigation but these have far-reaching implications for students and eventually institutions.

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Won't interfere in IIT normalisation process, says Delhi High Court

ADITI GUPTA ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Friday refused to interfere in an appeal against the IIT 'normalisation procedure' which gives 40 per cent weightage to Class XII board exams for admission in the National Institute of Technology (NIT).

A division bench of acting Chief Justice BD Ahmed and Justice Vibhu Bakhru told the petitioners, "There is no fault in the normalisation procedure and we don't want to interfere with interim relief at this stage."

Counsel of the petitioner said, "The appeal stands withdrawn and it will be now heard by the single judge. A suitable date for the matter will be notified on Monday." After the single judge order dismissed the application on July 3 demanding an interim order on the registration of students till the final adjudication of the petition, the petitioner and IIT aspirant Arnav Ohri, appealed in the division bench on July 9, on which the bench had issued notices to the respondents—HRD Ministry, CBSE, JEE Apex Board and JEE Interface.

Contending that despite having scored excellent marks in IIT JEE entrance exam the petitioner and IIT aspirant Arnav Ohri, the petitioner had moved an application seeking reservation of a seat for Ohri and a direction to the JEE Apex Board and JEE Interface Group to "prepare a rank list based only on the JEE marks this year."

This application, against

There is no fault in the normalisation procedure and we don't want to interfere with interim relief at this stage
— HIGH COURT

the "normalisation" policy, was dismissed by Justice VK Jain on July 3, saying that "the petitioner participated in the examination procedure knowing very well that 40 per cent weightage will be given to Class XII examination. Hence it may not be open to the petitioner to question the said policy."

The normalisation procedure, introduced by former HRD Minister Kapil Sibal, gives 40 per cent weightage to Class XII Board marks while deciding the All India Rank for admissions in top engineering colleges, including the National Institute of Technologies (NIT). The result for the IIT JEE (Mains) was announced and the counseling is scheduled to end on July 15.

The petition maintains that the Government, while adopting the procedure, "has ignored the vital fact that students appear from several boards in India like the CBSE, ICSE, and State Boards like Bihar Board, UP Board and others, which have different curriculums, system of examinations and marking schemes. Therefore, giving 40 per cent weightage to the XII Board exams is arbitrary and unconstitutional."

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Supreme Court stays Andhra HC order on admission

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Friday stepped into the controversy surrounding the IIT admissions by staying an Andhra Pradesh High Court order that reserved four seats for students who had challenged the criteria by which the IITs would consider candidates who secured the top 20 percentile in the Class XII Board examination.

Surprised over the fact that seats of IIT would fall vacant on account of the AP High Court order, the apex bench of Justices KS Radhakrishnan and Pinaki Chandra Ghosh asked, "Is it happening in IIT?"

Senior advocate V Giri, who represented the Organising Chairman of JEE Exam 2013, said that he feared other High Courts to follow suit and prayed for stay of the HC order.

The apex court advised the lawyer who filed the petition for IIT, advocate Madhusmita Bora, to file a transfer petition after she informed that similar matters were pending before other High Courts as well. "It will unnecessarily lead to inconsistent orders," the bench remarked.

With just a day to go for IIT to prepare the final admission list, apex court's order has come as a huge relief. Following the announcement by CBSE on September 25, 2012 about the changed criteria under the joint entrance examination (JEE) for admission into IITs and other centrally funded technical institutions, IITs had published Brochure for admission which required candidates to first appear in JEE Main and successful candidates to later

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appear for JEE-Advanced.

One condition was introduced for getting into the JEE-Advanced list requiring the candidate to be in the top 20 percentile of successful candidates in Class XII examination conducted by the respective State boards.

Cut-off marks for each Board were published as per the data provided by the State boards. Based on this, a list of 9716 candidates for admission to various IITs was drawn of which 79 candidates were rejected as they failed to have the minimum qualifying marks as per the cut-off fixed for their Board result.

Four among the lot of 79 rejected candidates approached the AP High Court which passed interim orders on July 8. The IIT JEE Organising Committee had pointed out to apex court that due to HC intervention, deserving candidates would be unnecessarily deprived of their rightful seat. The apex court is expected to take up the matter after two weeks.

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The rot in IITs

This is with reference to the Times View/Counterinterview (July 11) on IIT seats going vacant. The policies of the government are ruining the educational system. The growing number of unfilled seats is only a reflection of the rot. Many IITs are busy launching new courses and programmes even as the quality of teaching is going down. The leadership to oversee and take stock of the situation is missing. Research activity has become almost non-existent in most of the institutes. In many cases this is happening because academics with hands-on experience are lacking. Enough teachers are not there in many departments and most of the labs do not have the necessary equipment. Important departments like physics and chemistry, where some important and original research is possible, are neglected. Similarly, interdisciplinary research is not encouraged. It is high time that the government appoints competent persons to look into IIT affairs and take steps to remedy them.

P S Dube, VARANASI

Tribune ND 13-Jul-13 P-4

750 PSEB students get into IITs

Mohali: As many as 750 candidates from the Punjab School Education Board (PSEB) cracked the IIT and JEE competition this year. The PSEB lagged behind only the CBSE and the AP School Board of Education. Dr HC Gupta, the JEE (Advanced) Chairman, said, "Out of 30 provincial boards in India, the Andhra Pradesh Board and the PSEB have taken the lead. This is for the first time that more than 750 students from the PSEB have got selected in the IITs." — TNS

IIT Madras launches live online course

T.E. Raja Simhan
Chennai, July 12

Are you a working professional with no time to pursue a Master's degree at the Indian Institute of Technology? Don't worry, the institute will reach out to you, virtually.

In a bid to attract personnel from the corporate world to pursue higher studies, IIT Madras will soon launch a live online classroom-based course, a first such initiative from the IITs.

Students will log on to the virtual classroom to attend the two-hour classes, which is scheduled to take place at the campus starting 5 p.m. said Bhaskar Ramamurthi, Director, IIT Madras.

We have made a list of courses to offer beginning with the automobile industry. The institute will get the industry's feedback before launching. A task force has finalised the report. Some logistics need to be worked out before launch, he said, without giving any timeframe.

Officials of leading automobile companies want some-

▶ At a time when companies are urging employees to go for extramural learning, the move by the premier institute is likely to be emulated by institutes in Mumbai and Delhi too.

thing like this very badly. They encourage their employees to pursue higher studies and research. Sectors like automobile, construction, telecom and networking have shown a lot of interest, he said.

Many companies have tied up with large private institutions to enable their employees go for higher studies. For instance, the software company Cognizant Technology Solutions has tied up with BITS Pilani and VIT University for post graduate courses. Employees access the course content online within the company, and visit VIT campus in Chennai during weekend.

"The initiative from IIT Madras is interesting. However, they need to customise the courses for each industry," said a Cognizant official who did not want to be named.

IIT Madras will launch the online education initiative but eventually others will join the network. If the expertise is in Mumbai or Delhi, they will also join the programme. IIT Madras will conduct regular exams and give certificates.

Ramamurthi said that the initiative will also help in spotting potential Ph.D candidates. Every year, around 15 'sponsored' candidates from the industry join the institute to do M.Tech.

The Anil Kakodkar Com-

mittee in its report on 'Taking IITs to Excellence and Greater Relevance' had even recommended an Executive M.Tech programme for about 10,000 working professionals from industry through live video classes to enhance the knowledge base in the industry.

The National Programme on Technology Enabled Learning - a joint initiative between the IITs and Indian Institute of Science - provides free lectures online and video courses in engineering, science and humanities as distance education programme. While they are recorded, the new initiative is going to be live streaming of classes, he said.

Each industry wants specific courses. But, the Institute has said that if the personnel do the course online for three to four years in a sequence and in a coherent way, they can actually earn a Master's, which will eventually pave the way for a Ph.D.

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