

Newspaper Clips

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CAT scores of 80 examinees doctored

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Bangalore: Even CAT scores are tampered with. The official website of the Common Admission Test — considered the most competitive exam in the country and acknowledged for its unblemished image — is showing inflated scores of 80 students.

According to an alert sent by the CAT convener on behalf of all the IIMs, the scores of 80 students were tampered with and appear inflated on www.catiim.in.

This is how it happened. The conduct and evaluation of the test is entrusted to Prometric, a global testing agency. As is the practice, the test results are published on the website www.catiim.in, which is hosted and managed by Web Weavers.

However, a comparison of CAT 2012 scores available on the website with a master database of the scores (those received from Prometric) showed that scores of 80 examinees were altered. The new scores were higher. The rest of the examinees' scores on the website were found to be intact, and match the master database.

The authorities, finding the discrepancies, filed an FIR on June 15, 2013, and an investigation is on. The IIMs are reviewing the process by

The IIMs have alerted non-IIM institutes which use the CAT score for admissions. They have also been given the original scores



which data is managed and published externally, they said in a statement. However, there will be no issues in the admissions already completed in the IIMs, as they've used information from Prometric's master database for short-listing. "The admission process has in no way been compromised in any of the IIMs, as a result of the tampering," an official said.

But the IIMs have alerted non-IIM institutes which use the CAT score for admissions, as they rely on the official website. They've also been given the original scores.

Charging an arm and a leg for medical seat

MBBS course in a private college in TN costs Rs. 45 lakh, excluding hostel fee

Ramya Kannan

CHENNAI: Students aspiring for a medical seat have, by now, a fair idea which slot they will fit into. Those unable to get into a government medical college are looking at private self-financing medical colleges – and their government quota or management quota seats. And their parents have started looking furtively* at their savings, and getting application forms for bank loans.

Getting into a self-financing medical college means a huge financial outflow for the family. The sums involved will have a middle class family tussling with every known and unknown source of income. Beginning with capitation fees (for management quota seats) and going on to the annual spending for the next five and a half years, it is going to be a very expensive haul.

Every year, it gets a little more expensive. This year, the going rates in Tamil Nadu are: capitation fees Rs. 45 lakh to Rs. 80 lakh; annual fees Rs. 5.5 lakh to Rs. 9 lakh.

In comparison, the cost of education in a government medical college is not in excess of Rs 12,000 per annum.

This, despite the existence of a committee to regulate fees in the State! The Justice Balasubramanian Committee fixes the fees for private self-financing medical colleges in the State every year and the colleges are bound to follow these rules. Last year, the committee fixed the fees at Rs. 2.5 lakh. This year, the fee is supposed to have been raised by Rs. 10,000. "But the

committee only fixes the tuition fee," explains a parent, whose daughter has landed a seat under the state quota of a private medical college in the city. "The college specifies that sum as tuition fees, but over and above that, they charge other fees, under heads such as infrastructure, lab fees, and uniform. The receipt is only for the legitimate sum of Rs. 2.6 lakh and Rs. 75,000 towards hostel expenses. My expense, however, is upwards of Rs. 4.5 lakh," he laments.

And therein lies a big problem. Many parents depend on a bank loan to cough up the fees. "If they give a receipt only for the basal sum of Rs. 2.6 lakh, the family has to somehow mop up the remaining amount of nearly Rs. 2 lakh," says J.P. Gandhi, educationist. In rich families, it is not a problem, but there are many students in these colleges whose families have saved for their education, and their nest egg has fallen far short of these charges.

"Banks want to know the commitment for the next five years. But the college prospectus only mentions the "legal fees" and loans are sanctioned accordingly," he explains.

Coming up with Rs. 2 lakh every year for five years is very tough for most middle class households. "Many parents who come for a consult say they have to pledge their property or take personal loans. Some have even borrowed from money lenders at exorbitant interest rates," he said.

In government medical colleges, one needs to pay an-

SHOW ME YOUR MONEY: PRIVATE MEDICAL COLLEGES

COST FOR STUDENTS

- ◆ Capitation fees
Rs. **45** lakh - Rs. **80** lakh
- ◆ Annual fees
Rs. **5.5** lakh - Rs. **9** lakh

COST OF COLLEGE/HOSPITAL

1 INITIAL INVESTMENT

Average cost of setting up a private self-financing medical college: Rs. **100** crore + land

2 RUNNING COST

- ◆ Average payments per faculty member per month
Rs. **1** lakh
- ◆ Average number of faculty members in a college -
180-200
- Total cost for faculty per month = Rs. **2** crore (200 x Rs. 1 lakh)
- ◆ Average cost per support staff per month
Rs. **8,000**
- ◆ Average number of support staff in a college -
140-150
- Total cost for support staff per month = Rs. **12** lakh (150 x Rs. 8,000)
- ◆ Average cost per nurse per month = Rs. **10,000**
- ◆ Average number of nurses in a college - **100**
- Total cost for nurses per month - Rs. **10** lakh (100 x Rs. 10,000)

3 HOSPITAL COST

Varying daily expenditure for running/maintenance of hospital attached to college, including free treatment



All values are estimates

nual fees only four times, since the last year is counted as the period for house-surgery. On an average, students in a government medical college pay under Rs. 50,000 for their five-and-a-half-year course (hostel expenses are extra) and they are paid a stipend by the government in the final year.

In a self-financing college, students pay fees five times, and the total runs up to about Rs. 45 lakh (extra for hostel) for a student who has not paid capitation fees. If you count capitation fees, the student may be spending up to Rs. 1.2 crore on an MBBS degree.

"Even studying in Russia or China will be cheaper, though not advisable. A student completes the five-year course in Russia or China within Rs. 20 lakh," says Mr. Gandhi.

As per rules, no private self-financing medical college can deny a meritorious candidate a seat simply on the basis of his or her ability to pay. A government health official explains, "No college can give a seat to a student who has say, 194.25 marks cut-off, if a student with 195 marks too has applied, in principle." It is the practice of this rule that is in question.

Why do colleges charge so much? R.Gunasagan, Dean, Saveetha Medical College, attempts to explain the costs involved. "There are huge running costs in setting up, and running a medical college. The initial expenditure for setting up a college itself requires Rs. 100 crore at the least, and there is additional cost for buying land," he says.

Average emoluments for

faculty, nursing and other support staff every month are huge. In addition, there is the cost of running a hospital attached to the college (mandated by MCI).

"These hospitals will be required to treat patients free of cost to attract patients. If there are say 750 patients a day, there will be at least 500 patients who will be treated free or will get a concession. There is no profit in running a hospital unless it becomes a super-specialty unit. But there is a gestational period for becoming a super-specialty hospital; it could take up to 10 years," he says.

A logical argument, perhaps. Except that, the recovery of cost sometimes puts an MBBS seat completely out of the financial reach of a deserving student.

Tech Firms Look to Seize Opportunity in Education

Rising govt spending, opportunities in rural areas encourage tech firms to take the plunge

JOHELLE MENDONCA

MUMBAI

Indian technology companies are flocking to the education sector, seeing in it a rare promising market created because of liberal government spending. Providers of computing hardware, education-related software and content are eager to tap into business as the state and central governments prepare to step up spending to take education beyond cities and towns to villages.

"India is spending ₹2.5 lakh crore on learning at a macro level. It's a market that continues to have a double-digit growth year after year. At present, only about 5% of that is technology-enabled," HCL Infosystems CEO Harsh Chitale said.

According to technology market researcher IDC, about 5% of the \$40 billion (₹2.4 lakh crore) IT market in India, including hardware, software and IT services, was in the education sector. The market is expected to grow at nearly 12% through 2017.

The Indian government's education programmes already have some technology component, but that is tiny compared to the overall spending. In 2013-2014, the government allocated more than ₹27,000 crore to the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, with a provision to spend ₹50 lakh in every district on computer-aided learning. This will grow in the coming years.

"A large part of our school or education infrastructure is in the public sector and so far most of the effort was around improving enrolment and infrastructure. But there is a greater focus now on delivering quality education. And that is where tech-

On a Learning Curve

\$2 billion

The size of the education-related business in the \$40-billion IT market in India

₹50 lakh

Budget for computer-aided learning in every district under the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan

India is spending ₹2.5 lakh crore on learning at a macro level. It's a market that continues to have a double-digit growth year after year. At present, only about 5% of that is technology-enabled

- **HCL Infosystems** acquired content company Edurix in July last year to tap the growing market for digital content-based learning.
- **Cisco** has launched the Cisco Education Enabled Development Solution earlier this year at a monthly fee of \$1
- **Intel**, which has an education product that is sold through computing devices, is also looking at this market

HARSH CHITALE
CEO, HCL Infosystems

nology will play a role," Nilaya Varma, management consulting lead for public services at Accenture, told ET.

Maharashtra has some projects running in pilot phase, and is also seeking proposals for education-related projects, Varma said.

Last July, HCL Infosystems acquired content company Edurix to tap the growing market for digital content-based learning. Chitale hopes that the market, which is now limited to city schools, will reach all of India as some of the technologies have demonstrated improvements in teaching outcomes.

Cisco, which provided remote learning services to schools in Raichur in rural Karnataka as part of a corporate social responsibility programme, is now offering similar services for a price as part of its inclusive business division. The division launched the Cisco Education Enabled Development Solution earlier this year at a monthly fee of \$1 (₹60) for every student.

Arvind Sitaraman, president of Cis-

co's inclusive growth division, said the intent is to help government bring inclusive growth to rural areas using the latest technology at affordable prices.

Intel, which runs a teacher training programme in villages and has an education product that is sold through computing devices, is also looking at this market.

"I think the interest in the government is high. India has a vast geography and you can't go everywhere to provide facilities, so this will happen through internet broadband and remote learning," said Sandeep Aurora, director of market development at Intel South Asia.

Some Indian companies are already running for-profit digital learning models in the villages. SREI Sahaj of the Kolkata-based Kanoria group, runs an e-learning portal provided through government's common service centres that have been created at the panchayat level. The learning on the systems is certified by the Indira Gandhi National Open University.

Falling rupee to hit foreign-bound Indian students' education plans

SOUMONTY KANUNGO

Mumbai

THE falling rupee may not have a major impact on outbound leisure travel since the season is in its last leg. However, Indian students going abroad for studies from July onwards may feel some pinch in their budgets.

According to industry experts, students going abroad for higher studies will now be in a tough spot, since their budgets will now become 10-15 per cent more expensive.

On Wednesday, the rupee breached the 60-level against the dollar and closed at an all-time low of 60.71. On Thursday, the currency showed some improvement before closing at the 60.19 levels. Foreign exchanges are traditionally bought 7-10 days ahead of one's journey.

"It is going to have a major impact on students since foreign exchange has now become more expensive. They now have to

shell out more rupees to buy dollars. There will be an increase in their budget by 10-15 per cent," Keyur Joshi, co-founder and chief commercial officer, MakeMyTrip, told *Financial Chronicle*. The company does not look after the forex requirements of outbound students, only the ticketing part.

Since most outbound students take educational loans from banks to fund their tuition fees and living expenses abroad, the depreciating rupee will have a significant effect on their plans. A student's budget usually comprises three components: travel expenses, living and food expenses and tuition fees along with other ancillary expenses.

"The rate of interests on loans is not coming down. And to top it, the depreciating rupee is like a double whammy for outbound students. If someone has bought his forex at 54-55 level, which is generally not the case, he is in a better situation. But those who will

be making the purchase now will be in a tough spot. It may force some prospective students to re-work their budgets," Joshi added.

According to recent estimates of Associated Chamber of Commerce and Industry of India (Assocham), nearly 65,000 students went to the US in 2012-13, while 55,000 went to the UK in 2012. On an average, tuition fees in the US vary between \$20,000 and \$40,000, depending on the programme. Students will now have to pay Rs 2-4 lakh more due to the depreciating rupee, as overall expenses will rise.

According to Ajay Prakash, past president, Travel Agents' Federation of India (TAFI), "For students and business travel, there is no other option. Businesses have to happen, so it is for students who have got admissions in foreign universities. However, there will be some impact on spends as travellers will tighten their purses. There is a straight 12-13 per cent

jump on the earlier planned expenses for those going abroad now."

Since May, the rupee has depreciated over 10 per cent against the dollar. However, Thomas Cook is upbeat on its student business. "Since the tickets are bought in Indian currency and this is a pre-determined travel done well in advance, we see no impact on the same. We believe it will not impact our growing student business and we shall continue to see an upside this season," said Mahesh Iyer, senior vice president & head - foreign exchange, Thomas Cook (India). The company has a scheme called "U-Special" for students which looks after the needs of outbound students, such as air ticket packages, university fee remittances, foreign exchange for personal maintenance, overseas student insurance and future money transfers for maintenance from the family.

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आईआईटी दाखिला होगा मुख्य फैक्टर

डीयू के साथ ही देश की सभी 16 आईआईटी में दाखिले के लिए प्रक्रिया शुरू हो गई है। इस बार जेईई एडवांस में 21 हजार से ज्यादा छात्र चुन गए हैं। करीब 21 हजार में से चार हजार ऐसे हैं जिन्होंने डीयू में बीटेक के लिए आवेदन किया हुआ है। डीयू में 29 को पहली सूची का दाखिला समाप्त हो जाएगा और आईआईटी में 30 को काउंसलिंग की प्रक्रिया पूरी हो जाएगी। ऐसे छात्रों की निगाहें दोनों ही संस्थानों के दाखिले पर हैं। जो छात्र आईआईटी में दाखिला पाने में कामयाब होंगे वे डीयू की सीट रद्द करा देंगे। सीट रद्द होने का असर दूसरी सूची पर पड़ेगा और कटऑफ कम होगी।