

**TEST CONDITIONS**

# Despite protests, govt may change IIT exam pattern

**Vanita Srivastava**


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**NEW DELHI:** Notwithstanding strong opposition from IIT senates, the government may go ahead with its plan to change the selection pattern for the premier institutes from 2013.

Though the government is tight-lipped about its plans for the examination, it is likely to make an official announcement in that regard on May 28. Sources said the dominant view of the government was still to have a two-tier exam of JEE (main) and JEE (advanced) on the same date. It was, therefore, trying to convince various stakeholders on the utility of changing the exam pattern by putting more emphasis on school. However, if the stakeholders are not convinced, there is a possibility of the government rolling back its plans.

The JEE (main) could be a multiple-choice examination, followed by JEE (advanced), the format of which is yet to be decided, sources said. Though all candidates can appear for the JEE

**HARD ROAD TO SUCCESS**



- The JEE (main), a multiple-choice examination, would be followed by the JEE (advanced) – the format of which is yet to be decided
- Though all candidates can appear for the JEE (advanced), only the papers of the first 50,000 students on merit list will be checked
- The final merit list will be drawn based on the performance of students in the JEE (advanced).

(advanced) exam, only the papers of the first 50,000 students on the merit list — prepared by placing 50% weightage on board marks and 50% on the JEE (main) score — will be checked. The final merit list will be drawn based on the performance of students in JEE (advanced).

Opposing the government's proposal, IIT senates and alumni members had suggested that

there should be a "lean" period of at least one year before the final implementation, and the common exam should be used only for filtering candidates. The final exam, they held, should be theoretical and must be conducted by IITs — not an outside agency.

The minister will meet members of the All India IIT Faculty Federation on Friday.

# Why common engg entrance bothers IITs

ANUBHUTI VISHNOI  
NEW DELHI, MAY 24

THE HRD Ministry's ambitious proposal to replace multiple engineering entrance examinations including IIT-JEE with a single, common entrance in 2013, with weightage given to school board scores, has become a subject of debate not only between the IITs and the government but also within the IITs.

The directors of the 15 IITs are largely in agreement with the idea of the common entrance exam and percentile-based normalisation of scores across school boards. Faculty federations and senates in most IITs, however, are against it. Only one IIT — Guwahati — has unanimously endorsed the proposal. And the senates have nerved the introduction of the common entrance test in 2013.

Ahead of an IIT Council meeting next week, here are the proposal's varied aspects and the areas of conflict.

## THE TEST

Initially called the Indian Science Engineering Eligibility Test, the Common Entrance Test has been proposed



Candidates at an IIT joint entrance examination.

from 2013, replacing the AIEEE and the JEE. Under the proposal, the exam would be of two parts, Main and Advance, each of three hours. Main, which would be objective type, would test students for comprehension, critical thinking and logical reasoning, while Advance would test their problem-solving abilities in the basic science subjects.

A minimum of 40 per cent weightage to Class XII board exam scores has been proposed to determine admission; each state government or institute

would be able to decide the specific weight it gives to board, Main and Advance scores. A committee headed by Dr T Ramasami, secretary in the Department of Science & Technology, has demonstrated with the help of the Indian Statistical Institute that school scores across various boards can be normalised through a statistical process.

## FOR

The HRD Ministry and supporters of this proposal including IIT directors point out that students coming into the

IIT system through JEE are now no longer as exceptional and talented as before. Pointing fingers at the coaching lobby, they say students clearing JEE are doing so on the basis of rote learning and with little "raw intelligence".

This, they argue, is also because students are so focused on their coaching classes that they neglect their school lessons. With a new common entrance exam, they argue, not only will the stress of appearing in multiple entrance exam disappear but school-level teaching and learning will also get back its due attention and, consequently, bring in students with a well-rounded intellect into the IIT system.

## AGAINST

The IIT senates across institutes are not convinced that scores across several state boards can be normalised effectively by the statistical methods cited. They refuse to accept the 40 per cent weightage given to school boards.

The senates have instead proposed that the JEE/common entrance exam be converted to a two-stage exam: Main should be used to screen appli-

## IITs' TAKE

### NORMALISATION OF BOARD

**SCORES:** Normalisation using percentile approach should be researched further with data available for other boards and 2012 results of all boards.

**ON 40% WEIGHTAGE:** Percentile marks should be used as an eligibility criterion or admission to IITs should be strictly based on JEE. JEE, in turn, should be as decided by JAB. Board marks in percentile form may be used as an eligibility criteria along with the Main paper marks of a common national test.

**MAIN:** IITs would like to use the Main results as a screening criterion. However, this process may begin from 2014 and not 2013.

**ADVANCE:** No, IITs should have their own JEE paper. This paper may be subjective in nature. Eligibility for JEE should be restricted based on Board marks in percentile form and Main marks.

**2013:** Retain JEE in present form.

cants for those who should appear for the JEE test to seek admission into IITs. This JEE test and its nature, they say, must be the sole prerogative of the Joint Admission Board, provided the number of students screened to appear for JEE is small enough. A subjective format should be followed for it, they have insisted.

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### DATE-A-GEEK@INTERNET

# IITians go global with online dating website

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**NEW DELHI:** Brand IIT is in great demand, whether it is for jobs, marriage or sperm. But that shouldn't make you give up your dream of hooking up with an IITian, because a date with one of these exalted geeks is now just a mouse-click away.

DateIITians.com, a social dating portal launched by IITians four months ago, has decided to go global — in view of the huge demand from

youngsters. "We wanted to provide a social platform where the techies and geeks could express their feelings. And here in India, who can be a better nerd than an IITian? In fact, before launching the website, we conducted a survey in Kolkata and found that most girls wanted to have an IITian boyfriend," said Layak Singh, a 2011 graduate of IIT-Kharagpur who co-founded the portal.

Though the portal was

initially launched for IITians, the high demand spurred site moderators to open it for others from IIMs, BITS Pilani, AIIMS and NITs too, Layak said. "There are more than

7,000 registrations, of which around 3,000 are IITians. Around 35% of those registered are girls," he added.

To register, one has to produce an ID proof stating that he/she belongs to IIT or a similar institute. "The account is activated only after the submitted information is thoroughly verified. We try our best to ensure that no fake profile creeps through. The account holder can send three kinds of requests — flirt, crush and propose. If

the other party does not accept the flirt request, the former is not allowed to proceed further."

So far, the site has facilitated over 1,200 flirt requests, over 700 crush requests and 56 proposal requests. "DateIITians.com was a testing phase limited only to India. Now we are going to take it to a global platform, targeting the top 500 universities. The new site, Cogxio, aims to bring together like-minded persons from across the world," said Layak.

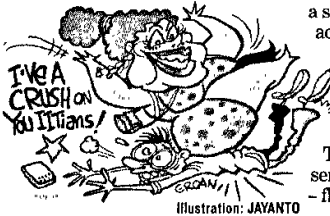


Illustration: JAVANTO

# A dollar-driven spaceflight

Successful blast-off of the Falcon 9 rocket marks the beginning of a new era for NASA

DAVID USBORNE

**T**HE era of privately-funded space travel was born this week with the launch from Cape Canaveral of a rocket developed by the Space X corporation, complete with an unmanned capsule. Destination: the orbiting International Space Station.

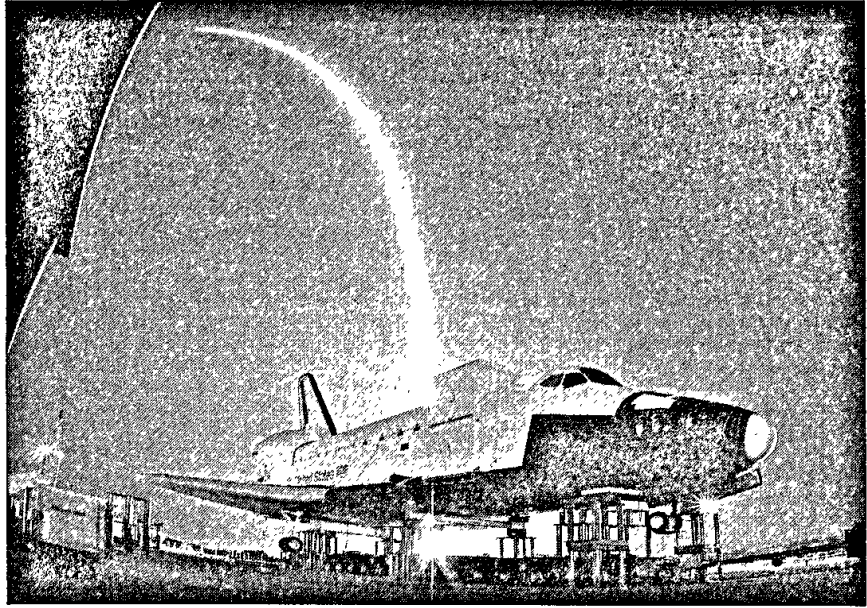
The successful blast-off of the Falcon 9 rocket marks the beginning of a new era for the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), which retired its own fleet of space shuttles last year and has been counting on private companies to fill the breach with vehicles capable of taking goods and eventually humans into low orbit.

Still considered a test flight, the capsule on the Falcon, named Dragon, bears 1,000 lbs of cargo for delivery to the space station. If all goes to plan, it will manoeuvre to within a mile of the station today before moving alongside on Friday, when astronauts on board will attempt to tether it with a robotic arm.

Hitching a ride also were the ashes of more than 300 people, including those of actor James Doohan who played the role of chief engineer "Scotty" in the original Star Trek television series. Rather than been "beamed up" all the way to the space station, his and all the other human ashes were consigned to a weightless oblivion with the jettisoning of the launch rocket.

"Falcon flew perfectly!!" SpaceX's billionaire founder, Elon Musk, also a co-founder of PayPal, said via Twitter minutes after the lift-off. "Dragon in orbit... Feels like a giant weight just came off my back." A first attempt last week was abandoned one second before lift-off after a faulty valve was detected. Musk later told reporters: "I feel very lucky... For us it's like winning the Super Bowl".

Also applauding was NASA itself, which for now relies on the Russian Soyuz vehicles to ferry astronauts to and from the space station. "The significance of this day cannot be overstated," said Nasa administrator Charles Bolden.



The Falcon 9 streaks over a model of Nasa's Space Shuttle at the Kennedy Space Center

"It's a great day for America. It's actually a great day for the world because there are people who thought that we had gone away, and today says, 'No, we're not going away at all.'"

That NASA must now turn to private firms has not been welcomed by every one, with critics decrying the loss of America's own shuttle capacity as a national scandal and questioning the safety of capsules developed by profit-seeking corporations. Those dismayed by the retirement of the shuttle fleet have included the former astronaut John Glenn who has called it a "drastic error".

NASA contributed \$381m to the development

of the Dragon programme, while Musk has supported it with a part of his PayPal fortune. The company is said to have spent a \$1bn altogether. However, if this week's test run is successful, the company can be expected to be contracted by NASA to start a cycle of 12 delivery missions over the next several years for which it will receive \$1.6bn.

"It demonstrates what we said was the future of American space exploration and it's actually using private industry to provide for access to low-Earth orbit while NASA goes off and does what Nasa does best, and that's exploring," said Bolden. —*The Independent*

## NEXT-GEN GMAT TO INCLUDE INTEGRATED REASONING

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**NEW DELHI:** GMAT is all set to include the nuances of contemporary business in its ambit, with a new format being implemented from June 5. This has resulted in a surge in the number of candidates, with many wanting to take the exam before the change comes through.

The Next-Gen GMAT, as it is called, will include a section on integrated reasoning.

"With so much data coming to us and the nature of business changing with each turn, what we teach in the classroom is changing. Consequently, the test for management schools will have to change too. The new section will reflect the realities of today's global market, and the way we use multiple sources of data to make sound business decisions," said an official spokesperson of GMAT.

"The number of students who want to appear for GMAT has increased because they are apprehensive of the change," says Shyam Bahadur, director of a GMAT Coaching Centre.

The new section is the result of a survey conducted on more than 740 management faculty members, who identified emerging data analytic skills as a very important aspect of business. These skills include the ability to assimilate and evaluate information available in different forms and formats, such as graphs, charts, tables and spreadsheets, to solve complex problems.

There will be 12 questions in the Integrated Reasoning section. They will be of four types, including graphics interpretation, table analysis, multi-source reasoning and two-part analysis.

One of the two essays in the Analytical Writing Assessment section will be dropped. Candidates will receive a score based on their performance on the verbal and quantitative sections as they do now, besides the total score derived from their performance on verbal reasoning and quantitative reasoning sections on the 800-point scale.

**THE NEW FORMAT WILL  
COME INTO FORCE FROM  
JUNE 5. IT IS TARGETED  
TO TEST DATA ANALYSIS  
SKILLS OF STUDENTS**