

## **Newspaper Clips**

### **May 4, 2017**

#### **IIT-Delhi to rework its syllabus to ease pressure**

<http://indianexpress.com/article/education/iit-delhi-to-rework-its-syllabus-to-ease-pressure-4639790/>

**IIT Delhi is focusing on the practical aspect of education, steering away from theories as it has conventionally been taught**

More than a month after a student of the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Delhi allegedly attempted suicide, the institute is in the process of reworking its first-year curriculum to reduce pressure on students.

The institute is focusing on the practical aspect of education, steering away from theories as it has conventionally been taught. While the curriculum for first-year courses would remain the same this academic session, the revamped curriculum could come into effect from next year.

The move comes after last week's meeting of the IIT Council (coordination body for 23 IITs) chaired by Human Resource Development Minister Prakash Javadekar. The council had decided to introduce non-academic induction programmes for freshers as well as establish wellness centres for their mental health.

"We are looking at modifying the first-year curriculum to help students cope with stress. We're trying to introduce a more hands-on module and understand from students' point of view what they will find interesting after hectic JEE preparations," IIT-Delhi director V Ramagopal Rao said.

"When they come to IIT, everyone wants physics, chemistry and mathematics. They're tired of studying so much and want something different, but we don't have such an avenue. So we're trying to figure out what we can do differently. This is all based on our experience. We're also undertaking a study to understand the student's point of view," he added. Rao said changes were being made to first-year courses because a setback at this stage affects academic performance of students in the following years. However, he said, "Not just first-year courses, but overall all courses need to become more hands-on with time."

#### **Seats for girls set to lower IIT quota cut-off**

[https://www.telegraphindia.com/1170504/jsp/nation/story\\_149711.jsp#.WQq8NvmGO00](https://www.telegraphindia.com/1170504/jsp/nation/story_149711.jsp#.WQq8NvmGO00)

The extra seats the Indian Institutes of Technology will create for girls will follow the existing reservation norms for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and the other backward classes, raising the possibility of a further dip in the already lower cut-off for reserved-category students.

The IIT Council, the top decision-making body for the 23 premier tech schools, had last week cleared the proposal to start the supernumerary seats in BTech courses for female students to ensure that they accounted for 20 per cent of the total student strength by 2020.

The human resource development ministry will soon issue the modalities for implementing the decision, starting from 2018.

Top council sources told The Telegraph that following specific queries from a few IIT directors, senior HRD ministry officials had explained that the reservation formula would not be diluted while creating the additional seats.

According to the decision, the additional seats would be created to the extent that girls constitute 14 per cent of the total number of students in 2018. This means if around nine per cent students admitted on merit happen to be girl students, another five per cent seats would be created.

Similarly, additional seats will be created to ensure that the percentage of girl students is 17 per cent in 2019 and 20 per cent in 2020.

According to the discussions held at the council meeting, the enhanced seats cannot violate the established reservation formula of 15 per cent for SCs, 7.5 per cent for STs and 27 per cent for OBCs.

At present, there are about 10,000 BTech seats in the 23 IITs that admit students who clear the IIT Joint Entrance Examination (JEE) Advanced test.

Once the existing seats are filled up, each IIT will start the process of admission for the supernumerary seats. To ensure that there are adequate candidates in every category, the cut-off may be fixed accordingly, which may be lower than what the cut-off otherwise would have been, two IIT directors said.

"The cut-off for SC and ST students is almost half of that for the general category now. The number of girl students in the reserved categories is also less. If reservation is implemented in the supernumerary seats, the cut-off in reserved categories may be brought down further," a director said.

Nearly 3,000 to 4,000 girl students get into the JEE-Advanced merit list. But the number is skewed in the case of SC/ST students.

Sources said HRD ministry officials were thinking of getting the decision to create seats exclusively for students of one gender vetted by lawyers. The Constitution does not provide for reservation on the basis of gender.

An IIT Council official, however, said the supernumerary seats didn't amount to reservation but a "temporary arrangement to attract more girl students".

### **1st student exchange between IIT-Gn, TAMU**

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/ahmedabad/1st-student-exchange-between-iit-gn-tamu/articleshow/58485926.cms>

Students from Texas A&M University (TAMU) will take part in the Summer Internship Research Program at the Indian Institute of Technology, Gandhinagar (IIT-Gn) this summer. This will be the first student exchange between IIT-Gn and TAMU.

The Summer Internship Research Program at IIT-Gn aims to create research opportunities for students from IIT-Gn and other institutions. Fellows of the programme work on research projects for eight weeks during the summer term with a faculty member at IIT-Gn, said statement from the institute.

Seven students from each institute will visit the other institute to pursue their summer internships. The students from

TAMU will visit for two months in the month of May. The visiting students will work on various projects with IIT-Gn faculty in the areas of biomedical engineering, computer science, civil engineering, mechanical engineering and physics.

IIT-Gn faculty, Prof Shanmuganathan Raman, who is the coordinator of internships at the institute, said, "This exchange of students between IIT-GN and TAMU is taking place for the first time between the two institutes, and could be the beginning of a number of such exchanges in future."

### **New stadium opened at IIT-Madras**

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/chennai/new-stadium-opened-at-iit-madras/articleshow/58499718.cms>

Fairfax Holdings chairman Prem Watsa inaugurated the Manohar C Watsa Stadium at IIT-Madras on Wednesday.

"I was a very keen sportsman during my student days. It really was a great source of pride for me that IIT-Madras started winning the inter-IIT trophy during my tenure as sports secretary. I was the first sports secretary of Jamuna Hostel and later of the whole institute. Apart from hockey, I was also pretty keen on table tennis," said Watsa, a 1971-batch chemical engineering graduate from IIT-M.

Prem Watsa, who is one of the 150 alumni to be designated as a "distinguished alumnus" by the institute, has helped renovate the institute's stadium for 400-meter, 8-lane synthetic track in memory of his father Manohar C Watsa.

The track area is around 5,300 square metre with provisions for long jump, triple jump and a pole vault platform. Two warm-up practice steps have also been constructed adjacent to the track and facilities for other sports such as shot put, football and cricket have been provided inside the inner bowl of the track.

In addition, the spectators' gallery has been renovated with a new flooring and an entrance gate with access for the differently-abled. A walker pathway, with a width of 3m, has also been constructed along the periphery of the synthetic track.

The track has been awarded with "Class II Athletic Facility Certification" by the International Association of Athletic Federations (IAAF) and will not hinder movement of wildlife on campus.

"The inauguration comes in time for the 52nd Annual Inter-IIT Sports Meet, scheduled to be held on the IIT-Madras campus during December 2017. It is worth noting that for nine consecutive years from 1972 to 1980, IIT-Madras has won the general championship more than any other IIT," said Bhaskar Ramamurthi, director, IIT-M.

### **Break the chains: Javadekar admits higher education regulators like UGC are stumbling blocks, so subdue their powers**

<http://blogs.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/toi-editorials/break-the-chains-javadekar-admits-higher-education-regulators-like-ugc-are-stumbling-blocks-so-subdue-their-powers/>

The All India Council for Technical Education has told institutions under it to involve NSS and NCC in a campaign to end spitting. This is a telling sample of the micromanaging mindset of India's education regulators, whose top-down whimsies choke bottom-up innovation. With more than 10,000 engineering and technical institutions and more than 20 lakh students under it, the big picture before AICTE is an uphill global jobscape. Infosys for example plans to grow more jobs in the US in response to the rising protectionist tide there. Also, the newer IT jobs require higher levels skills in cloud analytics, robotics, artificial intelligence, etc. The need to promote excellence in Indian higher education is paramount.

But as HRD minister Prakash Javadekar acknowledges, far from doing this regulators like AICTE and UGC have become “stumbling blocks”. Along the same lines Association of Indian Universities secretary general Furqan Qamar points to data proving the unhealthiness of regulatory cholesterol. For example none of the 16 central universities established since 2009 feature in the HRD list of top 100 universities but various IIMs, IITs and other institutions set up with greater autonomy fare much better.

So it’s commendable that in a bid to encourage excellence in higher education, government plans to grant top ranked colleges and universities full autonomy in framing curriculum, hiring faculty and other academic matters. The same kind of thinking is being seen in the scheme to set up 20 world-class universities. But the puzzle is that although all the evidence shows that heavy-handed regulators like AICTE and UGC are obstructing rather than advancing first-class education outcomes, they continue to roam free among the masses. Why are only elite institutions being provided shelter from them? This will only widen inequality of outcomes of different institutions.

Perhaps today’s regulatory snarl is too labyrinthine to be sorted out quickly, but government must at least make that a goal and a priority. In the interim it should promote special educational zones, where institutions can formulate independent policies on everything from admissions and fees to conducting exams; where for-profit and not-for-profit institutions are both welcome and so are international ones. The important point is that excellence and quality cannot be made to order through government or regulator fiat, but grow in free and competitive environments.