

Newspaper Clips

November 28, 2012

The Tribune ND 28/11/2012

P2

Single engineering entrance test process kicks off

TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 27

The process for selection to IITs and other central technical institutions through a common entrance test replacing the erstwhile IIT-JEE and AIEEE has kicked off.

The CBSE is now accepting online applications for rechristened JEE Main, with HRD Minister MM Pallam Raju fully backing the new format that his predecessor Kapil Sibal had mooted.

The IIT alumni is still opposing the move and had met Raju a fortnight ago in this connection.

The minister has, however, clarified that JEE Main (for admission to all central technical institutions, except IITs) and JEE Advanced (for further admission to IITs) would be held in 2013.

Top 1.5 lakh scorers of JEE Main would qualify to take

JEE-2013 DATES

■ **Main test:** Offline: April 7; online: April 8 to 23, 2013; result: May 7, 2013

■ **Advanced test:** Registration: May 8; test: June 2; result: June 23

■ **Architecture test:** Registration: June 24; test: June 28; result: July 23

JEE Advanced test which the IITs would design. Other institutions such as the National Institutes of Technology will admit students depending on the merit list of the JEE Main. The JEE Advanced would be exclusively held for admission to IITs.

The process of online application for the JEE Main commenced on November 8 and would end on December 15, the CBSE said. The result of the JEE Main-2013 would be announced on May 7 and

the website for eligible candidates to register for the JEE Advanced would become functional on May 8, 2013.

The CBSE today said several aspirants for the JEE Main-2013 had committed mistakes while filling their online registration forms.

“The board will display particulars of the candidates on the JEE (Main) website in the second week of January, 2013, so that these candidates can rectify their incorrect particulars, except the change of examination cities and option for change of mode of examination from computer-based examination (online) to pen-paper-based examination (offline),” the board said in a statement.

The CBSE said, “It is notified for information of JEE Main aspirants that they should periodically visit the website www.jeemain.nic.in for rectification of particulars.”

Hindu ND 28/11/2012 p-10

Two-in-one lessons

Aarti Dhar

Keeping in mind the importance of English communication skills, Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Delhi, has collaborated with EnglishEdge to provide a holistic learning experience to its students, where language enhancement goes hand in hand with providing state-of-the-art technical knowledge.

IIT Delhi gives a language edge to technical education

Four learning modules of EnglishEdge --- Basic, Inter-

mediate, Advanced and Personality & Soft Skills Development --- have been set up on the Central Server of the IIT, Delhi campus. Traditionally, the language labs were set up in particular rooms with computer systems allotted to each learner. This, to an extent, restricted mobility. Now course content is accessible to students at any given time and place,

as long as they are on campus.

Students can gain access to the content via the use of the Common Central Login Platform. The faculty at IIT has also undergone training in order to be able to utilise the technology to its best. According to Rajiv Mahto, English language instructor at IIT-Delhi, the software, delivered through tablets and mobiles, is user friendly and has the flexibility to be available on a Local Area Network.

Hindustan Times ND 28/11/2012

p-10

Stung by admission fraud, IITs block online hole

ht FOLLOW-UP

Charu Sudan Kasturi
charu.kasturi@hindustantimes.com

NEW DELHI: Stung by audacious, almost Bollywood-style attempts at admissions fraud in 2012, the Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) are dumping an online tool that helped fake students get into the institutes without clearing the entrance test.

Now, the IITs will insist on students coming to campuses

in 2013 for verification of their identities before seats are finally allotted to them, ending online counselling, after two students used digitally doctored admit cards to cheat their way into the institutes.

The two students, who got seats using the online counselling facility, were caught. But the fraud attempts - reported first by HT on November 25 - have sparked a never before move to scan identities of first-year students across the 16 IITs, amid fears that other unqualified students may have also sneaked in. About 10,000 stu-

TO AVOID A REPEAT OF FAKE CANDIDATES GETTING ADMISSION, IITs TO INSIST ON PHYSICAL VERIFICATION OF STUDENTS' IDENTITIES

dents were admitted to the IITs and the Indian School of Mines (ISM), Dhanbad, on the basis of Joint Engineering Examination (JEE) 2012 scores.

"With online counselling, people look for wrong methods to

get into the IITs," professor HC Gupta, the organizing chairman for the 2013 IIT JEE (advanced), told HT. "That's why we have decided to change the counselling process this year."

In 2013, the IITs will ask students to come to campus for a seven-day physical counselling process, Gupta said. Though students will fill in their choices online, these will not be confirmed - unlike now - till they undergo the physical verification.

The IITs moved from physical to online counselling in 2010 to save students the hassle of

travelling to an IIT to pick seats, allotted to them based on their rank in the JEE and their preferences.

Two students - a boy who claimed admission to IIT Bhubaneswar and a girl who joined ISM Dhanbad - procured admit cards of students who had actually cleared JEE 2012, secured seats online, and digitally doctored the admit cards to try and get admission.

JEE MOCK TEST IN JAN MUMBAI: Candidates appearing for the newly announced Joint Entrance Exam (Main) will be able to appear for a mock version of the computer-based test in January.

The JEE (Main), which will be held in April, has replaced the AIEEE and will be the first stage for admission to the IITs. "(A) mock test specially made for JEE(Main)-2013 examination will also be made available to JEE (Main) 2013 computer based exam candidates in the first/second week of January 2013," said the official website.



Times of India Chennai 27-11-2012 P-8

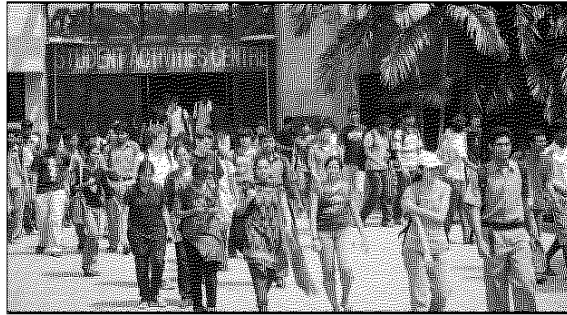
IITs to drop online counselling soon

Applicants Have To Visit IITs In Person From 2013, Move To Prevent Frauds

M Ramya | TNN

Chennai: In addition to a new entry test, the Indian Institutes of Technology are set to introduce another change in the admission process from the next academic year. The country's premier technical institutions have decided to do away with online counselling for admission, which was followed for several years. From 2013, all applicants will have to go to the respective IITs in person for admission.

The decision was made after two candidates impersonated others in JEE 2012 to secure admissions into IIT-Bhuvaneshwar and ISM-Dhanbad this year. A girl had sought admission to ISM-Dhanbad by manipulating another candi-



CURBING DECEPTION

date's IIT-JEE 2012 admit card. She had bought the other candidate's scores, and doctored the photographs, but the institute caught her out when they compared her likeness with photographs available with them, and checked her thumbprints.

Officials said ISM-Dhanbad could have been misled during the spot admission process. A boy who sought admission at IIT-Bhuvaneshwar fled the scene when the institute called his bluff, JEE 2013 officials said. Each year more than five lakh

candidates take the test to qualify for around 10,000 seats in the 15 IITs, Banaras Hindu University and Indian School of Mines in Dhanbad. IIT administrators say that a few aspirants occasionally try fraudulent means.

"Online counselling is one of the factors facilitating such incidents. Students will only be allowed to fill the options online, and will have physical counselling at the seven IITs," H C Gupta, organising chairman of 2013 JEE (Advanced), told TOI. All candidates will have to produce original certificates for verification during counselling. "Unless the candidate comes in person we cannot identify fake students," he added.

After the fake students were identified, JEE 2013 officials sent a communication to all IITs

to check whether any other students had manipulated the JEE 2012 admit cards. On November 20 when the first year students sat for their first semester exam, IIT-Madras faculty verified the identity of its first year students with photographs obtained during JEE 2012.

Academics dean of IIT-Madras K Ramamurthy said the institutes had come across instances of students trying to gain admission through fraudulent means in the past.

He said the IITs had pulled up such candidates before they gained admission by verifying their photographs when they came for the test. "Efforts are also on to verify the students' identities biometrically," Ramamurthy said.

ramya.m@timesgroup.com

Virat Vaibhav ND
28/11/2012 P-3

जेईई के गलत भरे फार्म को सुधारने का मौका

■ वैभव न्यूज।

नई दिल्ली। केंद्रीय माध्यमिक शिक्षा बोर्ड के तहत ली जाने वाली जेईई की मुख्य परीक्षा के लिए कैंडिडेट्स द्वारा फार्म भरने में हुई गलतियों को सुधारने का मौका दिया जा रहा है। कैंडिडेट्स फार्म को डाउनलोड कर अपनी गलती को सुधार सकते हैं। केंद्रीय माध्यमिक शिक्षा बोर्ड द्वारा एक नोटिस जारी कर सूचना दी गई है कि एनआईटी और आईआईटी के लिए आयोजित होने वाली जेईई परीक्षा में कैंडिडेट्स द्वारा फार्म भरने के दौरान कई गलतियां की गई हैं।

उन्हें सुधारने के लिए बोर्ड ने 15 दिसंबर तक का समय दिया है। गौरतलब है कि छात्र फॉर्म में हस्ताक्षर, अंगूठे का निशान, माता-पिता के हस्ताक्षर, एड्रेस में गलती की गई है। इसलिए उन्हें सलाह है कि वे डुप्लीकेट कॉपी डाउनलोड की गई गलतियों को सुधारकर फार्म को दोबारा

कैंडिडेट्स को मिला गोल्डन चांस, फार्म को डाउनलोड कर सुधार सकते हैं अपनी गलती

से जमा करें। वे बोर्ड द्वारा जेईई मैन की वेबसाइट पर जनवरी 2013 के दूसरे सप्ताह में छात्रों को उनके रजिस्ट्रेशन फार्म दिखाने का निर्णय किया गया है।

बोर्ड ने छात्रों को सलाह दी है कि दिखाए गए रजिस्ट्रेशन फार्म में छात्र अपने परीक्षा केंद्र एवं परीक्षा मोड को छोड़कर अन्य गलतियों में सुधार कर सकते हैं। परीक्षा मोड के तहत छात्र ऑनलाइन से ऑफलाइन में नहीं जा सकते।■

Indian Express ND 28/11/2012

P-4

Boy who qualified for IIT course found to be 'fake'

DEBABRATA MOHANTY

BHUBANESWAR, NOV 27

A BOY from Bihar who had qualified the IIT JEE 2012 and was subsequently selected for admission to IIT Bhubaneswar for a B Tech course is one of the two fake students identified by the IIT authorities. His fake identity was established during the admission process in June when he failed to convince the IIT officials that the photo on the admit card was his.

"The boy had already deposited Rs 40,000 and had come here for document verification when he found that there was quite a mismatch between him and the photo on his admit card. He was evasive

and said it was an old photograph. But we insisted that he bring in some old ID card of his college days. We let him go when he said he would come to us soon with an old ID card," said IIT Bhubaneswar registrar B K Roy.

However, who had brought his belongings with him disappeared and never returned. The IIT authorities waited for him and also sent letters to his home in Bihar. There was no reply. "We have now cancelled the seat," said Roy.

The four-year-old IIT Bhubaneswar currently functions from several rented buildings and has 120 seats for its B Tech course.

The registrar said authorities don't insist on more proof

if there is a slight mismatch. "But this looked different," he said. Meanwhile, an inquiry has revealed that the photo on the admit card was somebody else's and it was digitally altered. "Now we are insisting that the photographs have to be the latest with date on it," said the registrar.

Earlier a girl who had qualified for admission to Indian School of Mines, Dhanbad, was caught in a similar incident when she had come for admission. She first denied any wrongdoing but decided to quit when threatened with arrest by police.

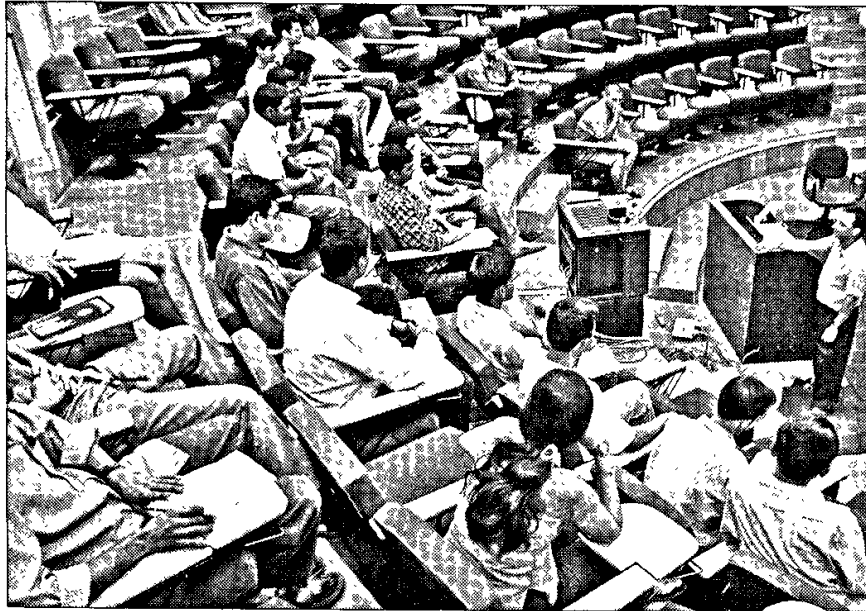
The IIT officials are now busy doing background check of all 119 students who have been admitted this year.

Pushing reforms in higher education

A NEW team of young brigade took over the agenda of making reforms in education sector, almost a month ago. M M Pallam Raju, the newly elevated minister for human resource development formally took over at his Shastri Bhawan office on October 31. In his first interaction with the reporters, the minister said that he would consolidate the achievements of his predecessor, Kapil Sibal and complete the unfinished tasks left by him. He stressed on the need for a value-based education system so that the younger generation does not lose sight of the country's rich cultural heritage and lamented on the poor quality of engineering pass-outs. On several bills of the HRD ministry pending in Parliament, he was confident that with the support of his colleagues — ministers of state Shashi Tharoor and Jitin Prasada — they would bring all parliamentarians from different parties on mutual understanding and get the pending bills passed.

Kapil Sibal, when he took over in 2009, said in an interview with a prominent newspaper, "I hope to do to education, what the PM did to economy in 1991". His exit from the MHRD deprives him of fulfilling his dreams to liberalise the education through various bills such as bills to allow foreign education providers; set up universities of innovation, educational tribunals for out of court settlement of educational disputes and a national accreditation authority; a bill to prevent unfair practices, including capitation fee in colleges and create a national academic depository for electronic storage of academic records; and a bill to establish an overarching regulator, the National Commission on Higher Education & Re-

Arun Nigavekar



WAY FORWARD: A professor addresses students at the Indian Institute of Technology on the outskirts of Mumbai in 2004. The process to initiate major reforms requires wide-ranging consultations to gain acceptance among stakeholders

search (NCHER) that would subsume the UGC, the AICTE and all other present regulators.

Human resource development minister M M Pallam Raju had a smooth sailing, probably being the first meeting in just one week after taking over as a minister, in the 60th meeting of the Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE) held on November 8 and truly, no major decisions were made in the meeting. The minister categorically said on November 21 that the proposed all India engineering admission test will come in force from 2013, thus rejecting the demand to review the joint entrance examination for admission to undergraduate engineering courses in centrally funded engineering institutions.

Higher education system in India has suffered enormously because of no firm policy decisions that cut across the very structure and operations in the education system. The reasons are many, but prominent ones are the non-coherence of legal and operational policies both at the central and state government levels, complete stay-away approach from creation of a flexible legal structure to ensure academic mobility amongst youth across the country, undervaluing the public education system, total "shut-your-eyes" attitude for the "we care least" approach of those evolved in creation and running of deemed-to-be and state private universities for governmental rules and regulations; and not addressing the issues related to search for "out-of-

the box" solutions for funding of higher education.

Our society and almost every family in a big nation like India are now fully aware that it is good quality education, alone that would bring respectability to our graduates in a very globally competitive world. They also are aware that the government on its own would not be in a position to expand the system beyond its financial resources and there is a need to allow private education and foreign education providers to come in the domain of higher education. But, they are equally aware that the private education providers that operate under deemed and state private universities labels, are making enormous compromises in quality of education. They feel that the gov-

ernment is unwarrantedly protecting these institutions, who are least bothered even about the governmental regulations of 2010 and are stalling bills that are connected with the expansion of accreditation entities to meet pressures from expansion of institutions and their teaching programmes, malpractices in academic, administrative and financial operations, tribunals for fair justice on grievances of various stake holders, entry of foreign universities and NCHER with an affirmative action strategy. The society is equally worried about the immune thought processes that are now engulfing the entire academic, research and governance mechanisms in public universities.

The process to initiate major reforms requires wide-ranging consultations to gain acceptance among the stakeholders. Any ad-hoc or piecemeal reform tends to invoke suspicion, scepticism and resistance. The opposition to reform measures is sometimes out of well meaning concerns. However, in India, it looks that it is articulated by vested interests. Some of it can be politically motivated. Unfortunately, whether it was the UPA 1 or the UPA 2 government, higher education always got low priorities and government as a whole never took it as a national agenda. The new team in MHRD must be aware of the wrong history in this respect and they should use its larger skills and wisdom to push the reform wagon on the accelerated mode.

(The writer is former chairman of UGC, former vice-chancellor of University of Pune and founder director of NAAC)

arun.nigavekar
@mydigitalfc.com

Business Standard ND 28/11/2012

P-9

Aakash's Chinese inheritance

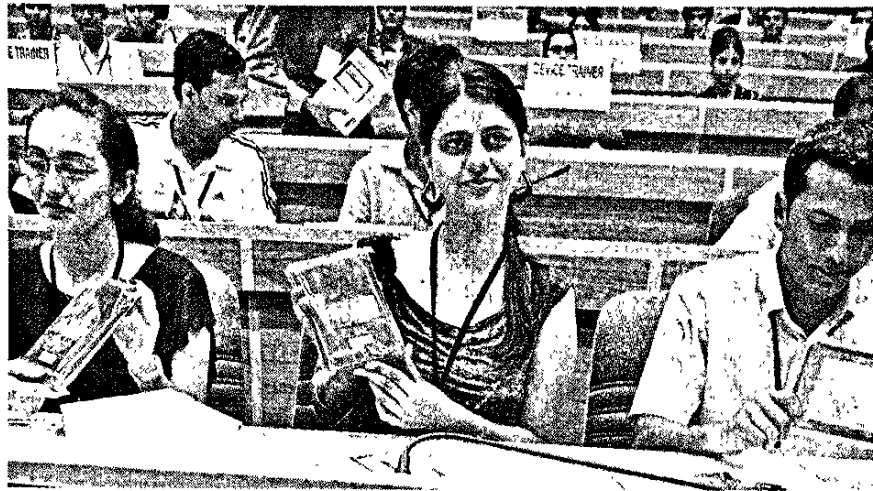
Revelations about the origin of the motherboards have cast doubts about its India tag

PRIYANKA JOSHI
New Delhi, 27 November

Hardeep Singh Puri, India's Permanent Representative to the United Nations (UN), had earlier announced that Aakash 2 will be showcased as an example of "frugal innovation" at the UN headquarters on November 28. That pride of place for the world's cheapest tablet now appears doubtful, as questions are being raised on its 'Made in India' tag.

In an emailed response, Suneet Singh Tuli, CEO of Datawind, the maker of Aakash, did not exactly deny the 'Made in China' theory, while at the same time emphasising that Aakash 2 was assembled and programmed in India and that qualifies it as an Indian innovation. "We don't know what document proof is being shown or misinterpreted. We do not need to defend purchase of Chinese components or motherboards — or collating the kits in China. Our position stays the same — the final assembly and programming was done in India. No legal or contractual obligation is violated by doing so," he says. For the first 10,000 units for IIT-Bombay, Datawind had the motherboards and kits manufactured in its Chinese subcontractor's facilities, says the company.

Devang Khakhar, director, IIT-Bombay, which had the responsibility of developing and testing the tablet, says: "As far as we are concerned, we have placed an order with a company that is based in India. Now, how they outsource is neither in our control nor is it a part of the purchase order or agreement. They only have to give us the products to the



QUESTIONABLE CONTENT? Students with the Aakash tablet

specifications. We don't insist they be made in India."

Tuli says part of the work for Aakash 2 was outsourced to China because it has a better manufacturing ecosystem. In its present form, the low-cost tablet has about 800 components from 60 vendors and Datawind had the boards made and tested in China for the initial stages of production. This will shift to India over time, he says. "We also had small tablet manufacturers kit together the parts of each unit (using motherboards, and touchscreens from Datawind's Montreal facility). The Chinese manufacturers source the components (including the ones we've designed) from our nominated subcontractors — which then are brought to India for final assembly and programming," Tuli says in the email.

The much heralded Aakash project is part of India's ₹4,612-crore National Mission on Education through Information

"Part of the work for Aakash 2 was outsourced to China because it has a better manufacturing ecosystem"

SUNEET SINGH TULI
CEO, Datawind



& Communication Technology (NME-ICT), launched in 2009, with an aim to eliminate digital illiteracy by distributing the tablets to students at subsidised rates. Under NME-ICT, the government aims to increase the "enrolment in higher education" and take delivery of education to "citizens' doorstep" through creation of a national digital knowledge repository which can be freely accessed by anyone and everyone over the internet. To this effect, the human resource development (HRD) ministry

has allocated 60 per cent of its total budget to connect 400 universities and almost 20,000 colleges, across the country.

Under NME-ICT, colleges and universities are given 50 per cent subsidy for procuring Aakash devices, which could then be borrowed by financially weak students from the library just like books are borrowed at present. Thus, doing away with the need for subsidy to poor students to buy the tablet. Last year, Kapil Sibal, Union HRD minister, unveiled the first version of Aakash, manufactured by Datawind that mostly received poor ratings for performance from experts. After much delays, Datawind then introduced Aakash 2 tablet that sports a 7-inch touch screen with 800x480 pixels resolution and runs on an upgraded Android 4.0 operating system.

The tablet will be procured by the government at ₹2,263 per unit and will be provided to students for a subsidised ₹1,132.

While the government is subsidising the cost of the tablet, none of the Aakash 2 components is subsidised by the government to encourage local manufacturing. "There are no directions prescribed by the government for how or where Aakash 2 is to be manufactured. Thus, no legal or contractual obligation is violated by doing so," Tuli says. Datawind further details that initial devices of Aakash 2 were assembled and programmed at its facilities in New Delhi and Amritsar. "We finished this batch of 10,000 units and delivered them to IIT and will be starting another batch of 20,000 units for them in two weeks. The media is welcome to visit when we do this batch. We also have four partner manufacturers across India that will work on the deliveries to the government but we just couldn't get them started to assemble our Aakash 2 units in time, but they will start to ship early in December," he added.

In the first phase, 100,000 tablets will be distributed by IIT-Bombay by early next year. "All our tablets will be received by the end of this year. Then it is a matter of doing projects of various types, loading software, developing software and so on and so forth," explained Khakhar.

What's next for Aakash? Sources in HRD ministry say they are already thinking in terms of the next version of Aakash that will be based on a chip concept. The efforts of the ministry are now directed in two directions: achieving the same functionality at a lower cost and added functionality at the same price.

(Kalpana Pathak contributed to this article)

Dainik Bhasker ND 28/11/2012 D-9

अब ऑनलाइन जांची जाएंगी बोर्ड की कॉपियां

- 2013 से दसवीं की सीबीएसई परीक्षाओं से होगी शुरुआत
- बारहवीं में 2014 से लागू होगी यह व्यवस्था

शैलेन्द्र सिंह | नई दिल्ली

सूचना का अधिकार कानून, 2005 के तहत छात्र-छात्राओं को उत्तरपुस्तिकाओं की कॉपियां जल्द से जल्द उपलब्ध कराने के उद्देश्य से अब सीबीएसई ऑनलाइन कॉपियां जांचने की योजना लेकर आया है। आगामी वर्ष 2013 से लागू हो रही इस योजना के तहत मार्च 2013 में होने जा रही दसवीं की परीक्षाओं में कॉपियों की जांच ऑनलाइन होगी। जबकि बारहवीं में यह योजना 2014 से लागू की जाएगी।

सीबीएसई के आला अधिकारियों के अनुसार मार्च 2013 में होने वाली दसवीं की परीक्षाओं से इस योजना के पहले चरण की शुरुआत हो रही है



गोपनीयता बरकरार रखने के लिए कड़ी व्यवस्था

ऑनलाइन उत्तरपुस्तिकाओं की जांच के दौरान प्रक्रिया व नतीजों को लेकर गोपनीयता बरकरार रखने के लिए स्कैनिंग व मूल्यांकन हेतु सीबीएसई द्वारा नियुक्त एजेंसी द्वारा नोडल सेंटर निर्धारित किए जाएंगे। बोर्ड ने यह तय किया है कि नियुक्त की गई एजेंसी परीक्षाओं के नतीजे किसी भी हालत में किसी भी व्यक्ति व एजेंसी आदि से साझा नहीं करेगी। इस तरह गोपनीयता बनी रहेगी। यदि ऐसा होता है तो इसे आईटी एक्ट का उल्लंघन मानते हुए दोषियों के खिलाफ आवश्यक कार्रवाई की जाएगी।

जबकि बारहवीं के लिए दूसरा चरण अगले सत्र में अंजाम दिया जाएगा। बोर्ड के देशभर में करीब 13 हजार स्कूल हैं, जिसमें 21 देशों के 150 स्कूल भी इसमें शामिल हैं। बोर्ड कंप्यूटर आधारित स्कैनिंग

व मार्किंग स्कीम में विशेष कंपनी की सेवाएं लेना चाहता है और इसका निर्धारण जल्द कर लिया जाएगा। फिलहाल बोर्ड की ओर से ऑनलाइन कॉपियों की जांच के लिए विशेष टैंडर प्रक्रिया

अंजाम दी जा रही है।

पहले चरण में 3 लाख तो दूसरे में 15 लाख कॉपियां होंगी स्कैन : ऑनलाइन उत्तरपुस्तिकाओं की जांच के लिए तैयार योजना के तहत बोर्ड आधारित दसवीं की 3 लाख कॉपियों को पहले चरण में स्कैन किया जाएगा। बोर्ड की इस योजना के दूसरे चरण में वर्ष 2014 में दसवीं व बारहवीं बोर्ड की लगभग 15 लाख कॉपियों को स्कैन किए जाने का लक्ष्य है। स्कैन से जुड़ा यह कार्य बोर्ड के दिल्ली (पटपड़गंज) स्थित क्षेत्रीय कार्यालय में अंजाम दिया जाएगा। इसके बाद उत्तरपुस्तिकाओं की जांच बोर्ड से संबद्ध स्कूलों के शिक्षक करेंगे। शिक्षकों द्वारा उत्तरपुस्तिकाओं का मूल्यांकन भी ऑनलाइन होगा।

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P25

Shell out \$500,000 & you can settle down in Mars

SpaceX Founder Plans A Colony Of 80,000 People

London: SpaceX founder Elon Musk has announced detailed plans to send 80,000 people to colonize Mars by ferrying explorers to the Red Planet for \$500,000 per trip.

Musk, the first private space entrepreneur to launch a successful mission to the International Space Station, said what would begin by first sending less than 10 people could blossom "into something really big". "At Mars, you can start a self-sustaining civilization and grow it into something really big," Musk told the Royal Aeronautical Society in London.

Laying out precise details and figures to his "difficult" but "possible" plans, the space pioneer says the first ferry of explorers would be no more than 10 people, the Daily Mail reported. "The ticket price needs to be low enough that most people in advanced countries, in their mid-40s or something like that, could put together enough money to make the trip," he said.

Instead of lounging around on an interplanetary vacation, the passengers would be sent to work, carrying with them equipment to build sustainable housing on the dusty and barren soil for future generations, the report said.

Immediate ground work would focus on building transparent domes pressurized with carbon

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MAN'S NEW HOME?

dioxide while possibly covered in a layer of water to serve as protection from the Sun.

Musk, founder and CEO of private spaceflight company SpaceX, claimed with the help of carbon dioxide, Martian soil would be capable of growing crops for food.

Equipment carried over could also produce fertilizers, methane and oxygen using the atmosphere's natural elements of nitrogen, carbon dioxide and its surface of ice water. One person out of every 100,000 people would be interested in making the journey with 8 billion expected on Earth by time his plans become reality, Musk said.

He expects the mission to the Red Planet to be completed in the next 15 to 20 years. PTI

A year in space: US astronaut eyes new record

Washington: A veteran Nasa space commander is set to make an out-of-this-world record by spending the most consecutive days in space by any American in a single mission.

Scott Kelly and Russian cosmonaut Mikhail Kornienko will launch aboard a Russian Soyuz spacecraft from the Baikonur Cosmodrome in Kazakhstan in spring 2015 and will land in Kazakhstan in spring 2016. This mission will include collecting scientific data important to future exploration of our solar system, Nasa said.

The duo already has a connection, Kelly was a backup crew member for the station's Expedition 23/24 crews, where Kornienko served as a flight engineer.

The goal of their yearlong expedition aboard the orbiting laboratory is to understand better how the human body reacts and adapts to the harsh environment of space.

Data from the 12-month expedition will help inform current assessments of crew performance and will validate counter-measures to reduce the risks of future exploration as Nasa plans for missions around the Moon.

They will begin a two-year training programme in the US, Russia and other partner nations starting next year. PTI