

Newspaper Clips

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Dailybhaskar.com

IIT-JEE (Advanced) 2013: Now admissions as per Supreme Court's ruling

The Supreme Court in a recent statement has said that admissions to centrally funded engineering colleges would be subject to its ruling on a writ petition challenging the system of admitting students.

As per the statement, student admission under the current rankings by CBSE is not final till the time the apex court announces its final verdict.

This is the result of after some students appealed to the court asking for the stay in JEE admissions. The petitioners argued that the process was false and could spoil the career of many students.

The exam of JEE Main was conducted in April. The JEE is the common entrance test for admission to all the 30 National Institutes of Technology (NITs), half-a-dozen Indian Institutes of Information Technology and other top technology schools, except the Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs).

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Meet on climate change at IIT

The Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs), Madras and Delhi, the Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore, and the Centre for Science and Environment (CSE) organised the fourth National Research Conference on Climate Change at IIT Madras from Oct. 26 to 27.

Sudhir Chella Rajan, Professor and Head, Humanities and Social Sciences, IIT Madras, Bhaskar Ramamurthy, Director, IIT Madras, M. S. Swaminathan, visionary agricultural scientist and founder and Chairman, M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation, and Chandra Bhushan, Deputy Director General, CSE, spoke at the introductory session. Papers were presented on topics such as "Climate Change Mitigation" and Renewable Energy." At the event, the CSE launched its "Climate Talkies" exhibition. Climate Talkies tracks the journey of climate change negotiations since 1992 through a humorous and satirical depiction of key climate meets.

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Deccan Herald

HRD ministry formula to assess IIT directors

Prakash Kumar NEW DELHI: Nov 2, 2013

Dissatisfied with annual performance report of some of the directors of the Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs), the Ministry of Human Resource Development (HRD) plans to suggest specific parameters to evaluate their contribution to the progress of the institutions.

Annual performance review of the IIT directors began earlier this year, after the council of the premier technical institutes approved a proposal of the HRD Ministry.

The chairmen of the board of directors of the respective institutes were given the responsibility to carry out the exercise and submit their report to the ministry.

“We have received annual performance report of some of the IIT directors but we are not satisfied with them. The evaluations were sort of general and subjective in nature while they should have been more specific and objective,” a senior HRD Ministry official told Deccan Herald.

The annual performance review should mention what efforts the director took to strengthen academic processes of the institute including hiring and retaining faculties, improve the quality of education, research and innovation, general resource, develop linkage with industry and other factors distinctive to the institutional goals.

It should also be annually evaluated how satisfied were the students and employees of the institutes with their respective directors.

“The reports we received, however, just indicated that the performance of the directors concerned were satisfactory in all respect. This would not serve the purpose,” the official added.

IIT-Madras student hangs himself

TNN | Nov 4, 2013, 03:49 AM IST

CHENNAI: A first-year student of chemical engineering committed suicide in his hostel room at Indian Institute of Technology-Madras on Friday night.

The 18-year-old student, [Akshay Kumar Meena](#), from Kota in Rajasthan, was found hanging himself from the ceiling fan in his room in Pampa Hostel, IIT officials said. They said it was not immediately clear what provoked Meena to commit suicide as he did not leave behind a suicide note.

This is the third suicide of a student in an IIT Madras hostel in the past two years.

Meena joined the institution in July 2013. His friends and hostel-mates said they did not notice anything out of the usual in Meena's behaviour and they could not think of any reason why he would kill himself.

"He was very active in student groups and participated in events in the hostels," a friend said, requesting that his name not be revealed. "He was not bad at studies."

Meena made a call to his father at 8.30pm. "His father said there was nothing unusual about the call and his son did not indicate that he had any problem," an IIT-M official said.

Meena's friends found him hanging in his room when they returned to the hostel at 10.15pm, after Friday's weekly movie screening at the institute.

"His room was locked from inside. When he did not open the door even though we knocked on it for several minutes, we stood on a stool and peeped through the ventilator of his room," Meena's friend said. "We were shocked to see a rope tied to the ceiling fan."

He said the immediately informed security officers and the medical department in the campus. "But he was dead by the time they forced open the door," the friend said.

Meena was supposed to see the movie with his friends but he left the venue at 8.30pm, even before the film was screened. "His last Facebook post, along with his picture, said, 'I am alone, but I am happy'," another friend said.

"Police are still investigating the case," IIT-M dean of students L S Ganesh said. "We are shocked," he said. "He joined the institution barely three months ago. His friends did not observe any change in him and he was a fairly good student."

Police sent the body Royapettah Government Hospital for postmortem. Meena's father, Nanda Kishore, arrived in Chennai on Saturday. He will take the body back to Kota on Monday morning.

HT Mumbai

TAKE JEE MAIN FOR ADMISSIONS TO STATE COLLEGES

MUMBAI: Aspirants to non-IIT engineering colleges in Maharashtra will, for the first time, appear for the first level of the Joint entrance examination, JEE Main, on April 6, 2014.

A press release issued by Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) has asked candidates seeking admission to colleges in the state, which previously carried out admissions through their own state-level exams, to fill in the JEE (Main) 2014 application form online.

The Directorate of Technical Education (DTE) also issued a notification instructing students to study for the exam. "The aspiring candidates are hereby informed to prepare for the All India JEE Main (Paper 1). The Score of JEE Main (Paper 1) and HSC Marks (as per the government resolution dated October 31, 2012) shall be considered for preparing the merit list," said the DTE website.

The JEE (Main) exam is conducted by the JEE apex board for admission to undergraduate engineering programmes in NITs, IITs and other centrally funded technical institutes.

Earlier, Maharashtra had refused to join the JEE main system citing differences in syllabus and patterns of the test from that of MHT CET, the state level exam.

The announcement has left students worried. "The JEE main is based on CBSE syllabus. Our board syllabus is very different, so cracking this exam will be difficult," said Ashish Haridas, a Class 12 student from Thane.

HTC

35 cluster universities planned by MHRD

Author: Express News Service

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The Union Ministry of Human Resource Development is mulling the creation of 35 new cluster universities in the country by pooling the resources of three to five existing government and government-aided colleges under the Rashtriya Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA) programme.

The Union Ministry of Human Resource Development is mulling the creation of 35 new cluster universities in the country by pooling the resources of three to five existing government and government-aided colleges under the Rashtriya Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA) programme.

This is in addition to the Ministry's plan to upgrade 45 autonomous colleges into degree-awarding institutions. Teachers' organisations had opposed the move to create stand-alone degree awarding institutions.

According to RUSA draft guidelines, which have been released for consultation, the 35 cluster universities will receive `55 crore each (a total of `1,925 crore) in the current plan and another `65 crore in the next plan. All the participating colleges will be converted into constituent colleges of the newly created university.

As a prerequisite, the colleges should have adequate academic, physical and technical infrastructural facilities, been in existence for 15 years, should have an existing combined enrolment of 2,000 students and should ideally be within a radius of 15-20 km from the lead institution.

"Both the proposals - on cluster universities and conversion of autonomous colleges into degree-awarding institutions - are in the preliminary stage of discussion," UGC Vice Chairman H Devaraj told Express. "Without holding talks with state governments, vice-chancellors and teachers bodies and getting their opinions, we cannot take a final decision," he added.

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Panel on UGC reforms mulls over fine for errant institutions

NEW DELHI, Nov 4, 2013

A government panel is people's suggestions to amend the 57-year-old University Grants Commissions (UGC) Act in order to make the higher education regulator more "effective and professional".

Though the committee has invited all the stakeholders in general to participate in the exercise, it wants teachers, students and parents in particular to suggest changes to the law to make it more "relevant and comprehensive".

"We want people like students, teachers and parents to participate in the exercise and help improve the legislation so that the UGC can serve better the cause of uplifting higher education system in India," higher education secretary Akhilesh Gupta told Deccan Herald.

The committee, headed by former higher education secretary R P Agrawal, has been examining various issues for several months now to suggest changes to the UGC Act.

Malpractices in the higher education sector like charging of capitation fee and false promises by many institutions to attract students are among the major issues that drew the attention of the HRD Ministry to initiate the move.

“The committee, which has so far held several meetings, has outlined broad issues to be covered in the exercise. We could have gone ahead with them but we want more suggestions from people from different walks of life to make the legislation more comprehensive and effective to deal with the emerging issues in higher education sector,” Gupta said.

He said that many provisions of the legislation need to be amended as they had become irrelevant.

“For example, penalty for violation of regulation is still Rs 1000. It was not a small amount when the legislation was enacted. Now, this is no more a deterrent. So we need to amend this provision and raise the amount of fine,”

UGC nod mandatory for twinning programmes

R. Ravikanth Reddy

Offering twinning programmes with foreign institutions or entering into any academic partnership will be no more an easy affair as the approval of the University Grants Commission (UGC) for all such activities has been made mandatory for all the Indian institutions.

The existing collaborative programmes between the Indian and foreign institutions will be honoured only if the institutions meet the new guidelines issued by the UGC within six months. The new guidelines came into effect from September 21, 2013, said the UGC Secretary Akhilesh Gupta in a public notice posted on the UGC website. The guidelines will be applicable to all degree programmes and post graduate diploma courses.

Quality is paramount

The regulations are quite stringent to ensure that quality is not compromised. Only those foreign institutions recognised for quality in their country and graded by the concerned institutions only will be allowed to have academic tie-ups and offer collaborative programmes with Indian institutions. Twinning programmes are those wherein students get to study a part of the course in both the main campuses of the respective institutions in India and abroad.

Even the Indian institutions preferring tie-up with foreign institutions have to be accredited by the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) with not less than ‘B’ or its equivalent grade.

The UGC has said that it has not approved any proposal for collaboration under the new regulations so far.

Lack of clarity

At present, as many as 15 institutions in the State have twinning programmes with institutions abroad and these include the State universities as well.

Questions were raised by the student unions on the twinning courses but officials have expressed lack of clarity on the issue for taking any action. Some institutions have been escaping arguing that their courses were not covered by the university rules.

A major complaint has been the huge fee charged by these institutions for a programme that may not even be recognised at all.

“It’s time all such programmes are reviewed and the UGC should come out with a maximum fee limit to safeguard the students’ interests,” said ABVP national secretary, Kadiyam Raju.

‘The new guidelines came into effect from September 21, 2013’

Business Standard

IANS | Shimla November 03, 2013 Last Updated at 13:56 IST

Court notice to UGC over private varsities

Taking suo motu cognisance of a media report, the Himachal Pradesh High Court has issued notice to the University Grants Commission (UGC), asking it about the steps it has initiated to implement regulations pertaining to establishment and operation of private universities in the state.

From the news item that has appeared in The Tribune, it transpires that the UGC is abdicating its authority bordering on non-performance and disregarding the violations committed by the private universities, a division bench of Chief Justice A.M. Khanwilkar and Justice Kuldeep Singh observed last week.

The court observed that "this is polluting the environment of quality education to be imparted by the universities".

The high court Oct 19 set aside the State Private Educational Institutions (Regulatory) Act of 2010 that empowered a government regulatory commission to monitor universities.

The court also directed the state through the chief secretary and the principal secretary (education) to file its reply on the issue. It also sent a notice to registrars of all private universities to file their response pertaining to irregularities mentioned in the news item.

The UGC, the state and the universities have been told to file their respective replies by Nov 13.

It was mentioned in the news item that the UGC seemed to be unconcerned about enforcing its regulations pertaining to the establishment and operation of private universities and till date it had conducted inspections of only five universities.

After the judgment, Chief Minister Virbhadra Singh has made it clear that a regulatory body was required to maintain quality of education.

"We are considering to file an appeal against the high court judgment. We are taking legal opinion. A final decision in this regard will be taken only after that," he told reporters here.

The judgment to quash the State Private Educational Institutions (Regulatory) Act came on the petition of the Himachal Pradesh Private Universities Management Association, which was seeking setting aside of the act and quashing of notices issued to them.

The bench of Chief Justice Khanwilkar and Justice Kuldeep Singh had declared the act unconstitutional on the ground that the state legislature was incompetent to enact such a law on a subject covered by the field occupied by Entry 66 of the Union List.

Entry 66 of the Union List stipulates that a teaching university will not come within the purview of the state legislation on account of the specific nature of determination of standards in institutions for higher education being in the Union List for which parliament alone is competent to legislate.

"Accordingly, we may have to declare the Act of 2010 ultra vires and void ab initio," they ruled.

Official sources told IANS that the regulatory commission had played a crucial role in pointing out irregularities by the universities.

These were: enrolling students even before the institution came into existence; admitting students even without fulfilling minimum qualification; filling more than approved number of seats and registering research scholars to Ph.D courses without UGC approval.

India-origin scientist explains how life began on earth

PTI



Dr. Sankar Chatterjee. Picture courtesy: Texas Tech University

Palaeontologist Sankar Chatterjee claims he has found the answer to how life began on earth

An Indian-origin scientist claims to have solved the mystery of how life on earth exactly began about 4 billion years ago after studying three sites containing the world's oldest fossils.

According to Sankar Chatterjee, a Texas Tech University palaeontologist, meteorite bombardment left large craters on earth that contained water and chemical building blocks for life, which ultimately led to the first organisms.

How life began on earth has baffled humans for millennia.

Dr. Chatterjee, who was born in Kolkata, believes he has found the answer by connecting theories on chemical evolution with evidence related to our planet's early geology. "This is bigger than finding any dinosaur. This is what we have all searched for — the Holy Grail of science," he said.

Thanks to regular and heavy comet and meteorite bombardment of earth's surface during its formative years 4 billion years ago, the large craters left behind not only contained water and the basic chemical building blocks for life, but also became the perfect crucible to concentrate and cook these chemicals to create the first simple organisms. Dr. Chatterjee's research suggests meteorites can be givers of life as well as takers. He said it was likely that meteor and comet strikes brought the ingredients and created the right conditions for life on our planet.

By studying three sites containing the world's oldest fossils, he believes he knows how the first single-celled organisms formed in hydrothermal crater basins. "When the earth formed some 4.5 billion years ago, it was a sterile planet inhospitable to living organisms," Dr. Chatterjee said, going on to add: "It was a seething cauldron of erupting volcanoes, raining meteors and hot, noxious gasses. One billion years later, it was a placid, watery planet teeming with microbial life — the ancestors to all living things."

Dr. Chatterjee presented his findings at the Annual Meeting of the Geological Society of America in Denver.

Keywords: [Sankar Chatterjee](#), [palaeontology](#), [Indian-origin scientist](#), [Texas Tech University](#), [evolution](#)

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India Prepares to Launch Mars Orbiter in Space Race with China

India is preparing to launch a spacecraft to Mars tomorrow, striving to put a probe into orbit around the red planet before China and Japan.

A rocket is scheduled to blast off at 2:38 p.m. from southeast India, embarking on a journey of 423 million miles (680 million kilometers) that will take almost a year, according to the [Indian Space Research Organization](#). Only the U.S., Europe and Russia have successfully orbited Mars.



[Enlarge image](#)

Scientists and engineers work on a Mars Orbiter vehicle at the Indian Space Research Organisation's (ISRO) satellite centre in Bangalore on Sept. 11, 2013. Photographer: Manjunath Kiran/AFP/Getty Images

“There is an ongoing race for space-related power and prestige currently in Asia, although few officials will admit it,” said [James Moltz](#), a professor at the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, California, who has written books about the space race. “India is clearly concerned about China’s recent rise in space prestige and wants to minimize that damage.”

Prime Minister Manmohan Singh has rebuffed critics of the mission, who say India can ill-afford the project’s 4.5 billion-rupee (\$73 million) [price tag](#) when about two-thirds of the nation’s 1.2 billion people live on less than \$2 a day. He’s counting on the space program to yield technological advances that bolster the country’s development prospects.

“Questions are sometimes asked about whether a poor country like India can afford a space program and whether the funds spent on space exploration, albeit modest, could be better utilized elsewhere,” Singh, who served on the country’s Space Commission in the 1970s, said in a [speech](#) last year. “This misses the point that a nation’s state of development is finally a product of its technological prowess.”

Martian Experiments

The mission aims to map the Martian surface, study the atmosphere and search for methane gas, a sign that the planet can support life, according to the ISRO, a government agency. Earlier this year, India successfully launched a satellite that provides a space-based navigation system.

ISRO’s Chairman [K. Radhakrishnan](#) denied there was a space race with countries such as China, adding there would be a “trickle down” of technology from the research and design of the orbiter that will benefit the economy.

India spends about \$1.1 billion a year on its space programs, compared with \$3.3 billion in Japan and \$17.9 billion in the [U.S.](#) Japan failed in its 1998 bid to send a satellite to orbit Mars. China’s probe was destroyed about two years ago.

India and China have become competitors in the space industry over the past decade. China has taken the lead, putting its first woman astronaut into space as it strives toward goals such as establishing a manned space station.

Chinese Competition

“India is a major space power today, but it faces competition from countries such as China that have greater resources,” Moltz said. “It cannot expect to match China mission for mission. But it can develop a solid technical competency in space activities that will help its economy, military, and scientific potential.”

India’s Mars mission is much cheaper than a U.S. launch to the planet later this month, according to [Mayank N. Vahia](#), an academic at the Department of Astronomy and Astrophysics at the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research in Mumbai.

Unlike China, which has sent astronauts into space, India has focused on less costly missions that provide technology for the aerospace and pharmaceutical sectors, he said.

The space program amounts to about half what India spends providing free school lunches and nutrition programs for the country’s 160 million children under the age of six. India has the world’s highest percentage of malnourished children except for East Timor, according to the 2012 annual Global Hunger Index.

Averting Disaster

Whether it’s right for a country with substantial poverty to invest in space exploration remains an emotive issue, said [Satish Misra](#), a political analyst at the Observer Research Foundation in New Delhi.

India launched its first space rocket in 1963 and its first satellite in 1975. An unmanned mission to the moon ended in August 2009 after scientists failed to restore contact with the Chandrayaan-1 craft. Data from the probe showed water formation may be an ongoing process on the moon.

The country’s [satellites](#) form one of the largest communications systems in the world. Last month, they tracked a cyclone heading for Odisha state in eastern India, giving the government time to evacuate a million people, according to Vahia.

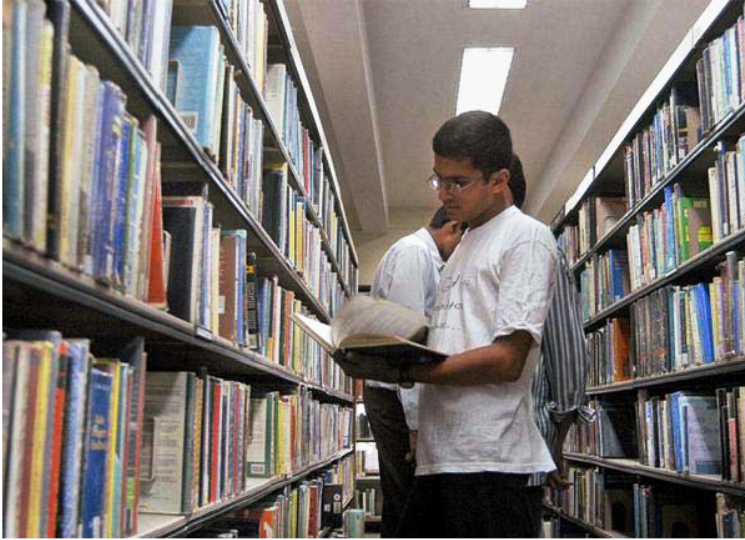
“We invested in satellites that gave us the exact details of the way the weather was going,” Vahia said. “As a result, we have saved hundreds or thousands of lives.”

For Related News and Information: India’s \$82 Million Mission to Mars Orbit Planned for 2013 Water Discovery on Moon’s Surface Spurs India’s Lunar Ambition

(<http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2013-11-03/india-prepares-to-launch-mars-orbiter-in-space-race-with-china.html>)

Why start-up sector research is stunted in India

Jessu John



In India, accessing quality data for research is difficult.

Identifying the challenges in telling a comprehensive story on Indian innovation

Institutions such as the IIMs and other well-established business schools are best positioned to carry out sound research in this country. But indigenous research here is hugely challenging, and not just in the start-up sector.

“The lack of trained researchers for conducting rigorous research is a challenge. Institutions in India do not have an incentive system that is geared towards either requiring or rewarding quality research. For instance, in the West, there is a tenure system where they give you six years to establish research. What we have instead is a short probationary period followed by permanency. There are no real benchmarks to promote research. There is neither carrot nor stick! In China and in Singapore, the systems have been revamped to mandate research,” says Devanath Tirupati, Dean at IIM-B.

The hardly exciting publishing environment in India coupled with an obvious dearth of quality journals makes it tougher for even commendable research efforts to make an impact. “We have to look to the West to publish our research. And until recently, Western quality journals had no interest in Indian problems,” underlines Tirupati.

A WIDESPREAD CHALLENGE

“Access to quality data for research is a concern. For instance, if one is researching the real estate sector in India, getting access to data in such an opaque sector is a huge challenge,” he adds.

Director of Research and Policy at Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation, Dane Stangler observes it’s a problem just about anywhere in the world. “Data collection is always a challenge. It doesn’t sound like it’s helpful for entrepreneurs, but how can policymakers make good decisions on behalf of entrepreneurs without good data? To help entrepreneurs, we need to understand them better, and that requires much improved data than we have now. This is also a challenge for programmes. Agreement on common standards or methodologies will help – doesn’t have to be anything complicated, just standard so there can be sharing and comparability,” he says.

SYSTEMIC ROADBLOCKS

The general ecosystem for start-ups in India leaves much to be desired according to professor Tirupati. Emphasising that formidable red-tape and the inefficiencies of single-window processes are to blame, he reasons this is why India has been ranked 134 (out of 189 countries) in the World Bank’s last Ease of Doing Business index. India scored lower than even the regional average of 121, as per the report.

“Finance is one part of the problem: while established companies have access to capital and, the new ones find it much harder. But government support or lack of it is the other part. It’s like as long as you are a scientist working in a lab,

you are respected but once you say that you want to use your ideas to start a business of your own, you are treated with suspicion,” says Tirupati.

While mindset issues seem to underlie the lack of government support, it may be worth considering that no amount of support can create entrepreneurship.

“Entrepreneurship is a natural human inclination and has been around since the dawn of human civilization; humans use scarce resources to solve problems and create something new.”

SEIZING THE OPPORTUNITY

“Governments need to recognise that entrepreneurship is happening, in one form or another, in their country – they need to figure out how to do no harm and how to create a solid macro-environment conducive to free competition and entry. India is high on entrepreneurship, but policy must help build the proper supporting structure,” concludes Dane Stangler.

Tirupati agrees that the start-up sector will bring in new ideas, practices and products into India. According to him, along with entrepreneurship, innovation is critical for India.

“Entrepreneurship makes us competitive and innovation keeps us ahead,” he declares. So then the fact remains that if we do not carry out comprehensive research on accomplishments in the start-up sector, we’re simply not telling a good story even if there is one.

(This article was published on November 3, 2013)