

Newspaper Clips

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IIT alumni want IIC-like centre, seek land from govt

ADITI TANDON/TNS

NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 11

They may be the best paid professionals at home and abroad, but IIT alumni now want the government to help them with land around Delhi so that they can set up a world-class centre to promote discussions and intellectual activities. In a request to the Human Resource Development Ministry, the umbrella body of IIT alumni has argued

for government land in or around Delhi at concessional rates so that they can build a centre of the order of Indian International Centre (IIC) and India Habitat Centre (IHC) to facilitate exchange of ideas.

The IIC and the IHC promote a culture of entertainment, intellectual exchanges, information and engagement through workshops and seminars. IIT pass-outs say they need such a centre considering the fact that there is none

where technical minds can gather and debate important issues in the interest of development.

In their request to the HRD Ministry, the Pan IIT Alumni Association has said, "We request you to grant us five acre of land in the National Capital Territory Region to enable us to set up a centre like the IIC and India Habitat where ideas can be exchanged and intellectual gatherings promoted."

Meta-university project misses its deadline, likely to take off in Jan

NAVEED IQBAL & ADITI VATSA
NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 11

META-UNIVERSITY project announced by the Prime Minister in 2011 and subsequently given shape by four of the country's top universities — Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), Jamia Millia Islamia (JMI), Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Delhi and Delhi University (DU) — will only take off in January 2013, nearly six months after its proposed deadline.

Although JMI and DU have taken the initiative in preparing the courses and getting them approved by their respective Academic

Councils, no dates have been fixed or announced for conducting admission tests.

The two universities have recently announced two courses under meta-university project — a diploma in public health and a masters in Mathematics Education.

The course is equivalent to MSc Mathematics Education, DU's Dean (Academics) Malashri Lal said.

Jawaharlal Nehru University and IIT-Delhi have not come on board for these courses.

IIT-Delhi Director R K Shevgaonkar said, "We (JNU and IIT) wanted more time to work out the details for conducting such courses and this is why we have stayed out of

it for now."

said the JNU and IIT-Delhi would be starting research in areas of common interest within the next six months.

Speaking to *Newsline* this year, JNU Vice-Chancellor S K Sopory had also raised similar concerns.

He had said that they would like to work out the modalities of sharing courses between universities.

"We need to discuss and ascertain who will give out degrees and how credit-sharing will work between universities," the Vice-Chancellor had said.

A joint admission committee of JMI and Delhi University is working on a schedule for conducting the

meta-university courses approved by the academic councils of both universities.

The total number of seats for the course has been fixed at 20 in the first year (10 each for JMI and DU).

Malashri Lal said the course title indicates a syllabus open to math-based communication and innovative teaching methodologies. "In a knowledge-based society, math capability offers several opportunities," she said.

The Cluster Innovation Centre (DU), Central Institute of Education (JMI) will be offering papers for the said course.

"Projects, which form a substan-

tial part of the course structure, will be guided by faculties in both universities. Mentors may be from other departments and from outside the university system," Malashri Lal said.

She said the course would be open to students from other universities. However, the applicants should have studied at least two papers in mathematics of 100 marks each.

The proposed day for conducting the entrance test for this course is December 2 and the course is set to begin on January 3, 2013.

Delhi is also hoping to announce research projects with JNU within the next six months as "it does not require a formal structure".

What Ails Higher Education?

Occasional Paper

MANOJPANT

In my article on this subject last month (ET, Sep 19), I had argued that the greatest collateral damage of a non-functioning Parliament is the lack of discussion of some important Bills pertaining to reform of higher education in India. In particular, I commented on the lack of an overall regulator for this sector. A crucial feature of reforms is the need to replace governmental control of activities with an independent regulator. Typically, in any reforming economy, the first regulators set up are those where consumer interface is immediate: the so-called sectoral regulators like Sebi, the power tariff regulator, the CERC, the telecom regulator, Trai, etc. Overall regulators of competition like the CCI tend to be set up at a much later date because the consequence of losses to any specific consumer are small though societal losses can be large.

This is what economists call the 'free rider problem'. The failure of an independent regulator to emerge in the higher education sector can be traced to this 'free rider' problem. It is not too much to say that the societal losses in this case are probably much larger than in almost any other sector.

The most important need is autonomy of institutions. Here, the main issue is political non-interference by the state. While non-interferen-

ce is largely true in central universities, state-run institutions are highly politicised, particularly in appointments. The process starts with the appointments of vice-chancellors who then ensure political correctness of subsequent appointments. This has serious long-term consequences. Wrong choice of faculty, for example, perpetuates mediocrity: an unqualified teacher will only replicate himself. One consequence, usually, is inbreeding: where faculty appoint their own students in junior positions and the process continues ad infinitum. It can take generations to undo the negative impact of such appointments.

The second issue is accountability. The problem is of definition. Higher educational institutions today face the charge of churning out 'unemployable graduates'. It is reasonable that not every student can (or should) go on for a PhD. The remaining must have sufficient skills to be absorbed in the private sector, in the burgeoning NGO sector and in specialised government departments. Why are the students 'unemployable'? Part of the

problem is the lack of self-improvement by teachers in courses/curriculum precisely because there was no system to ensure this. An apathetic government, unconcerned students and non-transparency in internal appointments in universities have combined to lead to this unfortunate situation.

Faced with criticism, educational institutions are responding in the worst manner possible: compulsory attendance. This is happening around the country and even in premier institutions like Delhi University. But accountability must be measured by teaching, research output and publications. So, one consequence will be (as in administrative work) adverse selection: those close to the chief administrators will show '100% attendance'. The new method of getting an autonomous body to bring in some accountability via the National Assessment and Accreditation Council seems to be the right way. No self-respecting university uses 'attendance' as a measure of accountability.

Many universities are also inflexible in their functioning. Here, it is unfortunate

that most are considered extensions of the ministry. So, rules applicable to government officials are often extended to them. For example, some time ago, the CAG castigated a major central university for misuse of funds. The misuse was of funds given for capacity building of teachers used for travel to conferences, etc. However, globally, one of the principal methods of faculty improvement is interaction with other institutions around the world precisely in such conferences! This inflexibility is then extended to other issues like rules of admission, leave, selection committees for faculty, etc.

What kind of role can the government play? Universities must be publicly funded as they are the principal source of research. It is well known that 95% of a country's R&D (public and private) is based on unmotivated research publications in universities. Particularly in a market economy, the role of government funding to ensure unbiased research is critical. It is also well known that while universities must charge a reasonable fee from students, there is no evidence (even from developed countries) that converting universities into 'for-profit' units leads to any improvement in their functioning. The opposite may well be true.

Many of these issues are dealt with in some of the Bills pending in Parliament. Let us hope they see the light of day and an autonomous regulatory body for higher education becomes a reality in the near future.

An independent regulator for the higher education sector is a crucial part of reforms. Political interference, lack of accountability and inflexible functioning dog universities. Parliamentary paralysis has stalled some Bills that address these vital issues.



5,000 IIM aspirants take CAT, no major glitches on Day 1

Mánash Pratim Gohain | TNN

New Delhi: Common Admission Test (CAT) 2012 started on a smooth note on Thursday barring a few late starts and low turnout on Day One. The questions were moderate in terms of difficulty, both candidates and experts said.

According to officials, around 5,000 aspirants took the test across the country. While no major glitches were reported, the test started late in

three centres in the Delhi-NCR region—two in Delhi and the lone centre in Faridabad. "It started almost 40-45 minutes late and in a few cases there were computer log-in problems. But once the test started, there was no problem," said a candidate from the morning session at Asia Pacific Institute of Management, Sarita Vihar.

Most centres in Delhi-NCR didn't see enthusiastic turnout with the Noida centre registering just 10 can-



An IIM aspirant comes out from an exam centre in Delhi on Thursday

didates in the first session and nine in the second against a total capacity of 140. This, experts say, is normal as candidates generally stay away in the initial days. The test will be conducted over next 21 days.

Aspirants found the section on quantitative ability tough as questions were time consuming. According to the director of MBAGuru and IIM-Kolkata alumnus, Deekshant Sahrawat, said: "According to my students, most of these questions

were time consuming."

There are no scheduled tests tomorrow, and exams will resume on Saturday.

The test will continue in a staggered format till November 6 and the results will be announced on January 9, 2013.

According to figures available, 2.15 lakh CAT vouchers were sold this year for admission to prestigious IIMs and other management institutes.

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Mo Yan makes history with Nobel

1st Chinese Citizen To Win Lit Prize

Saibal Dasgupta | TNN

Beijing: Writer Mo Yan, whose complex world of fiction often reminds readers of William Faulkner and Gabriel Garcia Marquez, pipped bookmaker's favourite Japa-

► 'Hallucinatory realism', P 24

nese Haruki Murakami to become the first Chinese citizen to win the Nobel Prize for literature. When contacted by organizers, Mo said he was

COWHERD TO WORDSMITH

► Born Guan Moye in 1955, Mo Yan's childhood was spent in poverty and hunger. Pulled out of school at 12, forced to graze cattle

► At 20, he joined the People's Liberation Army. Began to write in 1981 under the pseudonym



Mo Yan, meaning "don't speak"

► First success in 1987 with 'Red Sorghum'. Made into a film by Zhang Yimou, 'Red Sorghum' won top prize at Berlin film festival in 1988

► Other major works include 'The Republic of Wine', 'Life and Death Are Wearing Me Out' and 'Big Breasts and Wide Hips'

both "overjoyed and scared".

Mo, 57, is the author of renowned novels such as 'Red Sorghum' (later made into an acclaimed film) and 'Big

Breasts and Wide Hips'. In an interview to Granta, he once said, "Censorship is great for literature creation."

Reacting to the award, Mo

said, "I felt I was not very senior in terms of qualification (among Chinese writers). The Nobel Literature Prize is a very important literature prize, but not the top award. It represents the opinions of the jury."

"His prize is an affirmation for Chinese literature on the world stage," another famous writer, Er Yue He, told the state media.

The Nobel must be music to Beijing's ears because it's a rare case of a Chinese artist or writer, who is not a political dissident, winning the coveted prize.

CAT 2012: Nearly 2.14 lakh vie for 3,500 seats

Results to be declared on January 9

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 11

THE Common Admission Test (CAT) 2012, for gaining admission to the prestigious Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs), commenced on Thursday and will continue till November 6 this year.

The convener of CAT 2012, SSS Kumar, said 2.14 lakh applicants have registered for the online examination this year.

This is nearly 10,000 more than last year, he said.

Applicants will be competing for 3,500-odd seats in the 13 IIMs across the country.

According to IIM Khozicode, which is organising the CAT exam this year, the registration for the exam has gone up marginally by 4 per cent.

Also, this year, the IIMs have witnessed a marginal increase in the number of female candidates. Around 28 per cent of the applicants were female as compared to 27 per cent last year.

The exam is being held in 61 test centres in 36 cities across the country.

Kumar said no errors or hiccups have been reported from any part of the country.

"All applicants, even those from a non-mathematics back-

BELLING THE CAT

THIS YEAR, 10,000 more have applied for CAT when compared to last year

THE REGISTRATION for the exam has gone up marginally by 4 per cent

THERE IS A marginal increase in the number of female candidates. Around 28 per cent of the applicants were female as compared to 27 per cent last year

THE EXAM IS being held in 61 test centres in 36 cities across the country

MORE THAN 1.4 LAKH engineers are taking the exam this year

THE PATTERN OF the test includes two sections on quantitative ability/data interpretation and verbal ability/logical reasoning with a duration of 70 minutes each

ground, have a fair chance at scoring well this year as the math is of only high school level," he said.

More than 1.4 lakh engineers are taking the exam this year.

The pattern of the test includes two sections on quantitative ability/data interpretation and verbal ability/logical reasoning with a duration of 70 minutes each.

The result is expected to be announced on January 9, 2013.

The test will be conducted in five centres in Delhi and six centres across NCR.