

# Newspaper Clips

## October 30, 2011

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# IIT COACHING CENTRES PLAY A BOARD GAME

As IITs plan a change in their entrance examination, coaching centres tap schools to stay in business

KALPANA PATHAK  
Mumbai

With the Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) working out the nitty-gritty of the format of a new Joint Entrance Examination (JEE), IIT coaching centres are also firming up their course of action to ensure that their business does not suffer.

Kota-based Career Point Systems, for instance, will launch a school curriculum coaching division and also look at partnering with schools to train students on campus. "Seeing the kind of shift the regulatory framework might bring in, we are looking at incorporating some changes in our business model," says Pramod Maheshwari, the chairman and managing director of Career Point Systems. "We are gearing up to open a school curriculum coaching division by the next academic year. So far we have been preparing students for competitive exams, but now we have decided to partner with schools and prepare them for board exams too," he adds.

Coaching institutes say they prepare students for high-end examination and though the IITs' move will reduce the students' dependence on them, the impact will be short term. "The changes may impact the business for the initial two



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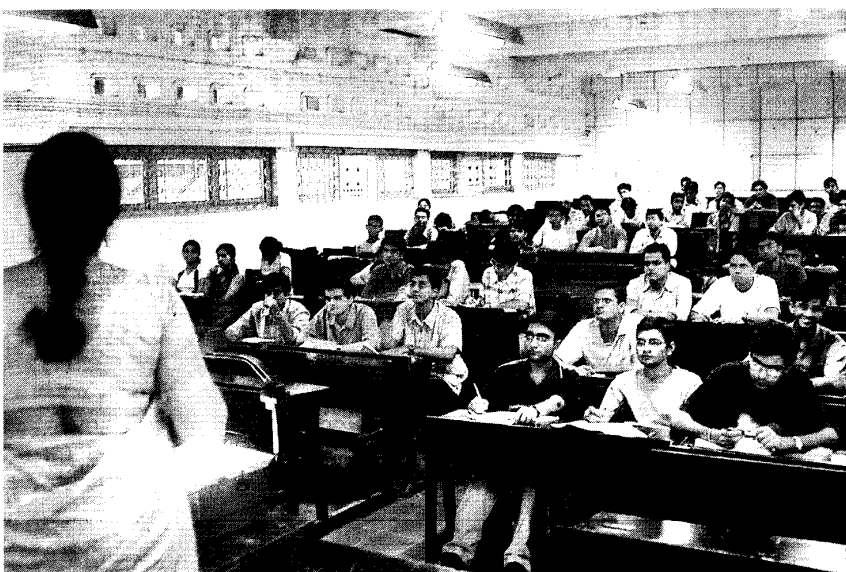
years, but things will be back to normal later," says Maheshwari. "Even today the majority of 12th standard students take tuition. Coaching institutes will now focus more on teaching students in a way that they secure more marks in the board examination as well as in the aptitude tests. Aptitude tests like SAT,

GMAT or CAT require a certain kind of training which coaching institutes have been providing," adds another director from an IIT-JEE coaching institute in Nagpur.

Last month, the IIT council accepted the recommendations of the T Ramaswami committee report on JEE reforms and also proposed a single entrance test for all engineering colleges, including IITs, National Institutes of Technology and private institutions.

The IITs say a notification will be issued in a couple of months which will give details of the format to be followed by the IITs while considering a student for a seat — whether to give 50 per cent or 60 per cent weightage to the board exams and the rest to IIT-JEE scores.

There is, however, a slight confusion and uncertainty about the new IIT-JEE pattern that will be put in place in 2013. "Two years down the line, IIT-JEE might be an aptitude test. The details, however, would be made available only after a formal notification in January 2012," says the director of an IIT who does not wish to be named. "We have also agreed that the weightage for the board exams would apply to all subjects and not a select few. We decided to implement the new system in 2013 because there will be logistical constraint and feasibility issues," he says, adding that they



File photo of IIT-Bombay. Industry experts feel that in the race to make it to these coveted institutes, students neglect school education

now have 15 months to get the new format in order.

Over a decade ago, English and engineering drawing, too, were part of the IIT-JEE examination. IITs would even accept state board toppers directly, informs an IIT director. Four IIT directors *Business Standard* spoke to said that the change in the IIT-JEE format is the need of the hour.

"The Chandy committee report had brought out the fact that there is a correlation between school performance and IIT performance," says a director. "Today, because of the culture of coaching classes, the schooling system has been thrown out of the window to such an extent that students are not even attending school because of the pressure of such training programmes. We

hope this will change that," the director adds.

IIT directors concur that when students graduate from elementary to secondary school, the elementary school performance is taken into account. And, when one goes from secondary to higher secondary, the performance in the secondary school is considered. Similarly, when one graduates from the secondary school system to the tertiary system, that score needs to be taken into account.

"The world over, admissions are based on your overall academic performance. Unfortunately, that logic has been reduced to lip service and this causes all kinds of aberration in the education system, which needs to be restored," says an IIT director.

Industry experts feel that exams like IIT-JEE have been causing difficulties at the school level because these have shifted the focus from school education. Students do not attend school and instead go to these coaching institutes.

"Today, school education and board exams are getting neglected due to the pressures of the coaching class," says Gautam Barua, director, IIT Guwahati. "Students focus only on physics, chemistry and biology and don't learn geography or English which are subjects taught in schools. The ministry has, therefore, convinced the IITs to consider school education in IIT-JEE," adds Barua.

While the IITs have given an in-principle approval for the change, the final decision will be taken by

the IIT-JEE Committee in January next year.

IIT-JEE, say IIT directors, has become a craze among students, largely because of the high-paying jobs one lands after an IIT degree. The directors say it will be an uphill task to bring in changes in the pattern. First, a mechanism will have to be put in place to normalise the school results by the numerous boards which the Indian education system follows.

While IITs believe that the changes in JEE will bring the focus back on school education, coaching institutes argue that with the standard of teachers in schools not up to the mark, that idea appears farfetched.

(With inputs from Vinay Umari in Ahmedabad)

# Of profits, bodyshops and bestsellers

## TOP OF THE MIND

ARNAB RAY



So here's what happened. Narayana Murthy complained that the standards of IIT students were going down and held coaching schools responsible. Nothing particularly earth-shaking about this pronouncement. In every generation, those that have grown old have complained — "When we were your age, things were so much better." Chetan Bhagat, a best-selling author and an IIT alum himself, felt sufficiently piqued by this to retort that he who runs body-shopping company should not comment on the standards of others. Such a rap-battle, of course, generated a lot of heat and light in the popular media. Of course, then Bhagat's new book released to glowing reviews and insane sales and he kind of apologized for his previous statement and all was right with the world again.

Now, this is not the first time the word "bodyshop" has been used in a pejorative sense for an Indian IT company nor will it be the last. If "innovation" of the Apple, Cray and Google type be the sole criterion for excellence and anything less be considered "mediocre" then, yes, definitely Infosys and the others are guilty as charged. But, unfortunately, that is a very restrictive metric for assessing excellence in the technology industry. Infosys, Wipro, TCS, etc. are not "product" companies but vendors of services. In other words, they are not in the business of making general-purpose consumer products like music players, tablet computers or, yes, even search engines. Comparing them to product companies is like comparing apples with oranges or more precisely comparing Shakti Kapoor with Ajit Agarkar.

In their respective niches, Indian IT companies have consistently maintained their leadership well past the Y2K which, if you are old enough to remember, was when the naysayers had said that Indian IT would go bust. Performance-wise, thus, there is absolutely nothing middling about them in any way. For those who would say, "Hah, even supplying contract laborers to the Gulf is profitable", it is the height of ignorance to presume that what Indian IT companies do is move cheap technical labor around the globe. If it was that simple, then anyone from any country could do it.

Being excellent in this domain means, among other things, leveraging the technical skills of a complex heterogeneous workforce and organizational knowledge to provide IT and software services in a predictable and cost-effective manner. And yes, belying the pervasive image of software coolies doing rote work, there are also intellectual challenges in delivering IT solutions (cut testing effort by half through the creation of re-usable test automation templates, for example).

These, while not as sexy-sounding as coming up with "Google Wave", are no less important, difficult and brain-cycles-consuming.

The irony in this is that the man who called Infosys "mediocre" has himself been accused of being "mediocre" and far worse. If "innovation" in literature be the sole criterion for quality, then that assessment of mediocrity would be true — Chetan Bhagat does not blaze any new trail in terms of content, structure, characterization or language.

And here is the thing. He does not have to.

Bhagat is in the business of writing best-sellers and he does it better than any author in the history of Indian writing. And when one does exactly what one set out to do, book after book, it would be immensely churlish to dismiss that success with a flippant wave of the hand. He consistently engineers successful books by crafting stories that strike a chord in his target audience using language that does not tax their



**UNHAPPY WITH IIT TALENT** What should be done now?

comprehension skills and then prices and markets them perfectly. Sure this is a different set of skills than what Milan Kundera possesses, but that does not make it any the less worthy of admiration.

Call them "mediocre" or whatever else makes you feel good, but the truth remains that Murthy and Bhagat have both developed and internalized "non-obvious business knowledge" that has enabled them to maintain their leadership in their respective niches.

And ultimately, in the market-place of products and services where profit remains the only objective criterion for gauging excellence, that's all that matters.

*Arnab Ray is the author of 'May I Hebb Your Attention Pliss'*

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Hindu ND 30.10.2011 P-6

# “Crux of education should lie in identifying innovators”

**Special Correspondent**

**CHENNAI:** Often, we come across people with relentless curiosity, tenacity and who come with a degree of irreverence. They are there in schools, organisations and in board of directors in a company. Do we identify them? If we do, do we encourage them?

Identifying these three aspects as key traits of innovators, Srikant Datar of Harvard Business School, said the answer to the two questions could be central to changing not just what needs to be done in business schools but in education itself.

Addressing a conference on Rethinking Management Education with Innovation and Creativity' organised by the IIM-A Alumni Association - Chennai Chapter, and Anna University here on Saturday, Mr. Datar said research on business schools in the US and the last four months in India has shown that the business schools were not certainly helping the students to think innovatively. “We are not engaging the stu-

dents the way we should.”

Research on successful companies like GE, HP and Tata has revealed that there were bursts of innovation at points of time which was one of the prime reasons for the success of the companies over a long period of time. “Innovators are extremely curious to find new or different way to go after a problem, they don't give up easily and interestingly there is a degree of irreverence that comes with them,” he said.

## HR policies

Asking if the HR polices are tuned to identify and promote these innovators thinking differently, he said the managements should be willing to tolerate their mistakes and failures and understand that they were trying to create a culture of innovation and not measure it in terms of money spent.

“Kids are full of innovation. In US, a 13-year old kid has developed a way of designing solar cells based on observation of leaves designed by nature to receive maximum lighting from the sun,” Mr.

Datar said. With respect to the question of whether innovation can be taught, the Harvard professor said, “I don't think so. It can be triggered, provoked and stimulated. The larger the problem, the more innovation you need,” he said emphasising the need for fostering innovating talent in the country faced with many social problems.

Samir Barua, Director, IIM-A, said the series of conferences, in collaboration with IIM - Calcutta, was to identify issues in leadership, globalisation and governance and impart the necessary changes in B-schools' curriculum across the country. Shekar Chaudhuri, Director, IIM-C, emphasised the need to leverage technology to reach out to more students. Mannar Jawahar, vice-chancellor, Anna University, said adopting a cross disciplinary approach would foster creative and innovative thinking. IIMAAA Chennai Chapter president S. Muralidharan and organising committee chairman Kandaswamy Bharathan spoke.

# Lessons not to learn

What sets a great university apart from the rest? The freedom to think new ideas and challenge old ones. But many of our institutions do just the opposite, racially profiling students, emphasizing stereotypes, hindering questioning minds and caving in to political pressures. Our temples of learning are in need of new gods

Anindya Chattopadhyay



Shobhan Saxena | TNN

Education is the ability to listen to almost anything without losing your temper or your self-confidence

— Robert Frost, 19th-century American poet

Modern education is not just about developing a good temper or building loads of self-confidence, it's about experimenting with new ideas and challenging the old ones. A modern university is not just huge lecture halls, hi-tech labs and swanky cafeterias, it's a place that can take young minds to the frontiers of knowledge. But in 21st century India, the campuses seem to be either regressing or are still living in the past. A few incidents on some of our most prestigious campuses this month show how new ideas are being resisted and old, archaic thinking imposed on students by the people who are supposed to guide them.

On October 9, the academic council of Delhi University decided to drop A K Ramanujan's essay "Three Hundred Ramayanas" from a course in the history syllabus after some faculty members objected to it for being "blasphemous". A week later, at Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), the administration issued a showcause notice to the president of All India Backward Students' Forum for "denigrating" gods and goddesses after a section of dalit students decided to observe 'Mahishasura Day' to reiterate that the demon killed by Durga "belonged

to a backward community". Again, the move was called "blasphemous", a word generally heard in medieval fiefdoms, not in secular democracies.

In both cases, as usual, the debate turned into a shrill slanging match between the right and left. The real point about academic freedom and free speech being curtailed on campuses was completely missed. "The lesson from this episode is to realize that any

epic, phenomenon, event and text in history is multivocal; their meanings are multiple, alternative, complex, conflicting and not final. Undergraduate students have to be exposed to such cultural diversities, narratives and different perspectives. No academic council, administrative body or political group has the right to interfere in an academic course at the undergraduate level. Academic freedom and historians' territory should be protected from political attacks on history teaching and history-writing," says Nonica Datta, who teaches history at Miranda House, Delhi.

The problem is that history is not being left to historians. Everyone, including the lunatic fringe wings of political groups, has jumped into the debate. But the real problem could be the academics themselves. "The recent controversy in JNU is another instance of the oppressive mindset of the academia. JNU is

considered an institution of excellence. But so-called Hindu orthodox organizations are trying to smash its secular fabric and forcing the administration to take action against backward caste students," says K P Singh, dean, school of humanities and social sciences and chief proctor of Gautam Buddha University in Greater Noida. "The academic system in most Indian universities is worse than the caste system. In

**'In Madhya Pradesh colleges, they teach the virtues of caste. You can imagine what kind of students will come out of this educational system'**

social sciences if someone wants to research on issues related to caste, that scholar is judged not on the basis of merit of the subject matter but on his or her caste," says the social scientist who till recently taught at the Washington State University, Seattle.

Religious bias, caste prejudice, regional stereotyping and gender discrimination plague our universities for a reason. The campuses don't exist in a vacuum. They are merely showing symptoms of society at large. As the politics of intolerance grows, the universities, too, have fallen to the culture of hooliganism. Four years ago, Rohinton Mistry's *Such a Long Journey* was introduced in a course in colleges affiliated to Mumbai University. But in August 2010, Shiv Sena supremo Balasaheb Thackeray's grandson Aditya, a student of St Xavier's College, mobilized the party's student wing—Bharatiya Vidyarthi Sena—whose workers burnt copies of the book and asked the uni-

versity's then newly appointed vice-chancellor Rajan Welukar to drop the book from the syllabus as it contained "matter that was anti-Shiv Sena".

And the university obeyed the Thackeray scion's diktat without a murmur. "Timidity has no place in academia. Heads of such institutions must have the courage to face the music," says writer Aroon Tikkar. Prominent Mumbaikars, students and filmmakers defied the Sena workers by gathering at the Mumbai Press Club and reading out passages from the book. But that did little to change the stand of the university. The novel is still banned.

Indian campuses have been always prone to interference from political parties but the nature of intervention has changed dramatically over the decades. In the early and mid-1970s, students and teachers joined Jayaprakash Narayan's "Total Revolution" and rose against the Emergency; now the climate on campuses is more conformist. "The change happened in the early 1990s as the anti-Mandal agitation and L K Advani's rath yatra vitiated the social atmosphere. That also led to the rise of ABVP on campuses across the country and many academics, who were earlier shy of expressing their right-wing views, came out in the open," says a JNU professor. With the rise of backward politics coinciding with the growth of militant Hindutva, it's not surprising that most campus conflicts have happened around the issues of caste and religion. "In the undergraduate courses of Madhya Pradesh colleges they teach the virtues of the caste system. You can imagine what kind of students will come out of this educational system," says a lecturer in a Bhopal college who doesn't want to be named.

Regression is not just limited to syllabus and teaching. Some institutions have begun to give their students lessons in social behaviour too. In 2006, Bangalore University decided that boys and girls should sit in separate rows in class. "If sitting near a boy is being progressive, I do not agree with it," K Narahari, a former MLC who was part of the university syndicate that took the decision, had said as some students protested against the move. After creating gender segregation in the classroom, the university also tried to impose a dress code, but did not succeed. Still, many colleges in India's Silicon Valley have a dress code for students. "It's the security guard at the gate who decides whether we are decently dressed or not. If he thinks that we have a 'provocative' dress on, we are to go back and change and miss the first hour. What's decent and indecent for him, we have not yet figured out," says Smrithi R, a final-year student of Christ University.

Wearing jeans may not be a sign of a liberal mind, but in the eyes of university authorities it's definitely a symbol of decadence. In 2009, the fashion police cracked down on colleges in Kanpur, mandating that women teachers and students should dress "decently" to ensure discipline on campus. The ban, "unofficially" imposed by the management of four colleges, prohibited denims, long earrings, sleeveless blouses and high-heeled shoes. "I am a proponent of appropriate clothing on campus, but to say that all women who wear a pair of denims are dressed inappropriately is ridiculous. What we need are courses on gender sensitization, starting from school, to change this mindset; not some ridiculous rules about clothing," says Nishi Pandey, a professor of English at Lucknow University.

But that seems to be the last thing on the mind of the authorities even as students, especially those from the northeast, suffer in silence. "There is an immediate stereotyping of women from the northeast by the administration as well as by some other dominant, aggressive elements on the campus. These women face discrimination, sexual harassment and violence in their everyday life. Many of them, for fear of being attacked, are forced into confinement in hostels and colleges," says Datta of Miranda House. The curriculum imposes "limits" as well. "We don't have any references to the northeast in our undergraduate courses. Our curriculum has a strong north Indian bias, and perspectives and histories from the south and northeast are not taught."

Ramanujan's essay somehow bridged this gap as it mentioned 300 versions of the Ramayana in different languages and from different regions. Perhaps that's the reason it was dropped from DU's syllabus.

With reports from Hemali Chhappia, Mumbai; Sruthy Susan Ullas, Bangalore; Swati Mathur; Lucknow; M Ramya, Chennai; Manash Pratim Gohain, Delhi, and Somdatta Basu, Kolkata



D-G of National Archives, says the problem with our universities is that questioning is no longer encouraged on the campus

As a former VC of Jamia Millia Islamia University, Mushirul Hasan has seen many campus protests at close quarters. The historian, now

Delhi University recently banned A K Ramanujan's essay on the Ramayana. Don't you think it's an attempt to curtail academic freedom?

Of course it is. In fact it's a scandal that calls to question the collective wisdom of a university's supreme body for academic affairs — the academic council. How can an academic council approve such a decision in the presence of so many intellectuals? It's a worrying thought.

Do you think our campuses provide a

good environment for intellectual inquiry and freedom of expression?

There is no hope for our university system if the academic council is deaf, dumb and blind. In such a scenario there can be no development, no intellectual inquiry and no freedom of expression.

What do you think is the real problem with our universities? Is it lack of good faculty or overall resources?

The real problem lies in the fact that questioning of authority on our campuses is no longer accept-

able. There was a time when this was considered sacrosanct. Now it is regarded as blasphemy.

Do you think Indian campuses have become a battleground for the left and right as far as social/academic issues are concerned?

Barring a couple of them, I don't think Indian campuses are polarized at all. They are quite apolitical. Rather, there should be more political activity.

—Manash Pratim Gohain

## 'Questioning authority seen as blasphemous'

# IIM-C widens its net to catch more students

VINIT KONERU  
Mumbai

Every year over 200,000 students take the CAT examination aiming to join the premier management institutions, but only about 3,000 make it. Some enter the IIMs, a few more join other premier institutes like IMS, FMS and others. Those who do not clear the examination settle for other private management institutions, or foreign universities, or choose a different profession.

Here is an opportunity for those others to look at online courses offered by the top management institutes of the country.

IIM Calcutta, which is celebrating its golden jubilee this year, declared an ambitious five-year plan to reach out to more students. The institution has already started offering online courses on management, and plans to do this in full measure. "We are the only institute of this repute, 10 per cent of whose

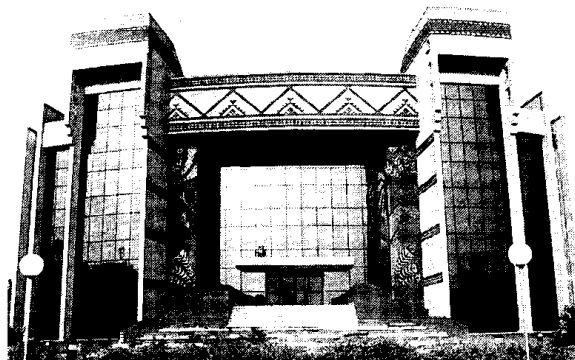
revenue is generated through online programmes," says Shekhar Chaudhuri, director of IIM-C.

The institute presently houses 462 students. Its strength can be increased to 700 in the coming years. "Yes, we are developing infrastructure to accommodate more students, and our target is to take 500 students this year. But how far can we increase the strength? We cannot accommodate the thousands of students taking the examination," says Ajit Balakrishnan, chairman of the board of governors of IIM-C. "It is not economically viable. [On the other hand,] we can certainly educate thousands

**THE INSTITUTE IS OFFERING internet-based courses which will enable an online education in real time. It says these will be as good as a full-time campus course**

through online courses."

There are always apprehensions among students that online courses are not as effective as full-time courses. But here IIM-C is offering Internet-based courses which will enable an online education in real time. They will be in no way inferior to full-time



IIM-C faces the pressures of a traditional institute but is looking to technology and the Internet to hold on to its lead. COURTESY: IIM-CALCUTTA PHOTOGRAPHY CLUB CC BY-SA 2.0

campus courses, says Chaudhuri. "We designed the courses so that the candidate will also be visiting the campus for a few days to learn," he adds.

IIM-C has about 600 students on

its campus every year, plus about 4,500 through its distance programmes. With the introduction of Internet-based models the institute is expecting to add 2,000 more students

this year, and reach out to 5,000 more students in coming years. "The courses offered online are socially motivated to reach out to different geographies and different sections of people who would otherwise miss a quality education," says Sougata Ray, IIM-C's dean.

To address the woes of the manufacturing sector, which complains that the best management people enter the service sector, IIM-C is offering a programme titled "Visionary Leadership in Manufacturing," in collaboration with IIT-Kanpur and IIT-Madras.

The institute is also planning to develop a one-year Advanced Teachers Management programme, that will help institutions across the SAARC region to enhance the quality of their management faculties.

These teachers will also participate in doctoral programmes at the institute.

IIM-C will also tie up with other universities, foreign and Indian, to develop a diverse faculty and student body. It aims to become an international centre of excellence in management studies.

Times of India ND 30/10/2011 P-1

# Premji to start two free schools in every district

Hemali Chhapia & Sruthy Susan Ullas | TNN

**Mumbai/ Bangalore:** After chipping in for the country's educational system for a decade, the Azim Premji Foundation (APF), run by the third richest Indian on his own money, is all set for a generous initiative. The foundation plans to start 1,300 schools across the country—two per district—which will be free, impart education in

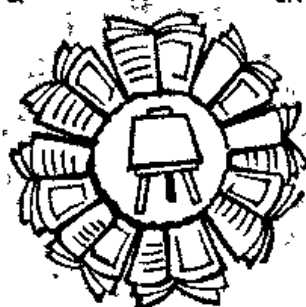
**► To cost ₹9,000cr, P 10**

the local language and be affiliated to the state board.

If the idea succeeds, it could shame India's dysfunctional public education system—and perhaps inspire other wealthy tycoons to look beyond their personal status-building.

## First of the 1,300

**K**arnataka will get the first two Azim Premji Foundation schools—one each in Yadgir and Koppal districts, which have the poorest literacy rates in the state. Work is also on for schools in Tonk and Sirohi in Rajasthan, Uttarkashi and Rudrapur in Uttarakhand and Dhamtari in Chhattisgarh. These are expected in a year and half.



The APF schools, from preschool to class 12, will be on the lines of government ones. The difference will be in quality. "Quality education is fundamental to our becoming a developed nation. And the final crucible of learning is the classroom," says Azim Premji.

# 'If Aakash can help level the playing field for the poor, that's the biggest motivator'

Montreal-based company Datawind designed and developed the \$35 Aakash tablet that was launched earlier this month. In this Idea Exchange on Campus held at Delhi Technological University, Suneet Singh Tuli, CEO of Datawind, explains how Aakash "serves the purpose of a phone, a computer and an entertainment device". This session was moderated by Nandagopal Rajan of *The Indian Express*



RAVINKANOJIA

dia over the next 12 months. Now, we are sitting on 1,20,000 pre-bookings, apart from the government order. And if you add institutions and enterprises and others, that adds up to about 2.3 million units. If I ask my driver and I say *apko tablet milni hai* at a certain price, he won't know what a tablet is. If I tell him you are getting a computer for ₹2,500-3,000, that's a different scenario. So, we want to make sure that when we pitch this to the masses, they understand that this serves the purpose of a phone, a computer and an entertainment device. And, if it can help educate their kids, help level the playing field, that's the biggest motivator in this country.

**TANYA SINGH:** People relate price to quality. Most of the time, if it is cheap, then it must be of poor quality. So, how do you convince them into buying this tablet? That kind of positioning, where you relate price to quality, works when there is a 20-30% price variable. But here, the price differential is three to four times. I don't expect the iPad customer to react positively. Actually, I don't expect most technology reviewers to give it a very positive feedback. They'll say, "Oh, it's a resistive screen, it's not a capacitive screen, it doesn't have a camera, my iPad lasts 10 hours and this only lasts three hours. I would rather buy an iPad."

**'I don't expect the iPad customer to react positively and say this is my product. Actually, I don't expect most technology reviewers to give it a very positive feedback. They'll say, "Oh, it's a resistive screen, it's not a capacitive screen, it doesn't have a camera, my iPad lasts 10 hours and this lasts only three hours. I would rather buy an iPad"'**

When I met the other bidders for the tablet at IIT Rajasthan, I asked, why doesn't somebody like Samsung bid on this? Samsung makes \$70 million every week or more than that by selling smart phones. Why would they kill that market? Because they want to sell it to the rickshaw *wallahs*? They don't care. So what is the market opportunity in India? Assume 300 million families. How many people in this country have broadband? Ten million families. The remaining 290 million don't. The question is, what do you offer to those 290 million? That means you have to be able to deliver Internet to them with the best network that's available there. The only network that exists, that 300 million Indians use, is GPRS. If you are going to do a product, you have to compete on price and at the end of the day, you also have to deliver performance. The Chinese products will come in and they will only confuse the market.

**ARCHNA SHUKLA:** If you actually target those 290 million families without a broadband connection, then you are soon going to be a billionaire if you are not one already. I am not a billionaire, not even close. The fun part would be, what if I could change society? But I can't afford to go bankrupt doing this, I have to make money. My target is the 900 million people who use mobile phones. Can I sell 900 million? I don't know. But if I sell a few million a year, it will get others to sell at that price. Right now, looking at the reaction (Aakash) has generated, we are forecasting a quarter billion dollars in revenue in India for the next 12-18 months. What's happening is that the masses are reacting to it, which is fantastic. For the first time ever, Indians are proud of a Made-in-India product. There will be people who will trash it—for political reasons or because they promote other products. That's fine. But if that rickshaw *wallah* thinks that this can help educate his child, and it actually helps educate his child, I think it's a big deal. With regard to billions, that's a fantastic number. But you know what, there are 1,200 billionaires in this world. I'll be the 1,201<sup>st</sup> billionaire. Who cares?

planning to launch this tablet in the global market? And will your strategy be any different then? The strategy is going to be similar in some ways. The product features may be different for different markets. Our core market was the UK. There was a report that said 27% of UK's adult population does not use the Internet. To me, it is an astonishingly high number. So the opportunity exists everywhere. The Ministry of Education in Thailand invited us because they want to implement something like this. We received a personal invitation from the president of Sri Lanka and we will pitch this opportunity there. Turkey is launching a similar product. The whole world realises that for very little money, they can digitally empower their masses. India is very important for us for obvious reasons, but the intent is to do this for as many countries as possible.



**ANKUR ARORA (MBA, 1st year):** Are you targeting the customer segment that earns around ₹10,000 a month. But are they really familiar with this technology? Five years ago, if you saw a rickshaw *wallah* with a mobile phone, you would be surprised. A month ago, my children were here on vacation and we were at a friend's house. We asked a rickshaw *wallah* to take these kids around the block. After the ride, he gave me a business card with his phone number on it. And he gave me another Indian concept. He said, "Sir, give me a missed call, *main yahan parhi hata room*." The cellphone, today is not a communication tool alone, it's a commerce tool. If you allow the poor man the utility, the opportunity, he will create wonders that you cannot imagine. Five years ago, we would have been surprised if we saw a rickshaw *wallah* with a mobile phone. Today, we are surprised if we see him with a business card. Tomorrow we will be surprised if we see him with a website. Just watch—he will take advantage of the Internet as a commerce tool.

Transcribed by Shalini Narayan  
For longer version, visit [www.indianexpress.com](http://www.indianexpress.com)

**MUKUL DUTT (MBA, 1st year):** Aakash, the \$35 tablet you designed for students, is a great product. But there are places in India where students or their teachers don't know computers. So how can they cope with this technology? And do you have some training programme planned for them? There are two things to be kept in mind. First, where is the government positioning these first units? Despite all the excitement about the rural areas, they are not sending the tablets to the rural areas right now. The government is procuring one crore units to give to every college or university student. The goal is that over the next 12-15 months, every student should have a device. The idea is that any student in college or university has enough basic knowledge of the Internet and computing that it won't be difficult implementing it at that level. The second tier is classes 9 to 12 and as they implement at that level, they are going to run into the kind of issues that you described. But let me suggest a couple of things. First, if you look at the Indian market, in a country with 1.2 billion people, we have 18 million Internet subscribers and 120 million Internet users. This gap between subscribers and users is that of affordability, people who can't afford to buy computers, laptops and Internet access.

Are we there yet for the villages that have no electricity? No, but then there are still 900 million people in this country who use mobile phones. They are the second-tier customers. They have access to electricity, they can afford to buy a mobile phone, they can afford a top-up. The biggest criticism we have received is that the tablet has a battery life of only three hours. Well, tell me about a laptop that lasts more than three hours. When we are ready for that rural customer, I agree, we need to have a much better battery life. But today, with the customer the government has decided on, they decided the device should



have a battery life of three hours. The idea of training people to use it is misplaced in the market. Let me explain why. The kind of applications today, especially in a touch user interface, don't require a lot of training. You don't need to use a manual. You turn it on, you press a button and you are there. The user interface, the application software is already there.

**TANYA SINGH (MBA, 1st year):** You were talking about the first and second tiers of your customer base in India—university students and then, classes 9 to 12. Why not target the second tier initially itself and capture the first tier by making a mobile phone that offers that extra capability of connectivity? Students would rather go in for a mobile phone than a tablet,

even if it is very affordable. The government's tender was for units with WiFi capability only. The unit that we launched in the market ₹3,000 will have a GPRS module and mobile phone functionality. So the device is thinking of the customer—and that customer isn't just the college student. My team laughs at me every time I start discussions with the rickshaw *wallah* and they ask, "Will you sell an Internet device to the rickshaw *wallah*?" But if I can convince the rickshaw *wallah*, everybody else is easy game. For us, the functionality was very important from two aspects—the first was that for Internet connectivity, you can't be limited to WiFi. Yes, for these units that are going to colleges and universities, the government has established WiFi, but outside of these colleges, where is WiFi? Those 900 million customers that talked about, people who use mobile phones, you have to do it on GPRS.

Then we discovered something else too. In India, the customs excise duty is 14% for a computer and 2% for a mobile phone. So the government has been providing an incentive for mobile phones and not for computers. So, the tax structure makes it more feasible if it's a phone. It makes a lot of sense. Give GPRS connectivity, make it a phone, allow Internet, multimedia video and audio and so on. And along with the rest of the range of applications that you can get on the Android platform, allow games and Word processing and spreadsheets and e-books. But just the simple ability of plugging your pen drive and watching movies, just the simple ability of using it as a phone, takes it from people who are looking for computers to another range of customer that may or may not care about the computer. Do you position this as a tablet, as a computer, as a mobile phone? Before the launch of this product, we were expecting 2,50,000 units to be sold in In-

India. If you look at what happened to the mobile phone market in India, the inclusion point happened when the price of phones hit ₹2,500 and below. And what that means is that a customer with a ₹10,000 salary could finally afford a cellphone. That customer won't say let me spend a little more on my phone. He will say, "Similarly, for a tablet in the ₹2,500-3,000 price point, he will say, "I want quality, a tablet with a capacitive screen and a built-in cellular modem. In India, (such a tablet) is for around ₹10,000. If I have to spend ₹4,000-5,000 on food every month, you will not spend ₹10,000 on a tablet. A computer starts at around ₹15,000 and is not an option. Will he get a smart phone in that price range? At ₹3,000, you can get a 2.2 inch Android 1.6 resistive screen smartphone. But if you want the Internet, you want to watch movies, you want to take advantage of all of those, there is nothing in that price range. Nobody wants to address the customer base that I'm going after. Realise quality impacts perception and Apple has always priced its products at a premium so that you relate it with quality. How many of you don't use Google's search engine? It's free and pay for a search engine instead?"

**SUMIT BHUTANI (MBA, 1st year):** You once said that if this product had been made in China, the cost would have been reduced by 20-30%. What if a company in China makes a product similar to this and launches it in India? What will your USP be? The cheap tablets in China primarily use WiFi. Right now, there are two types of companies in China that will compete with this. One is companies like Huawei and ZTE, multi-billion dollar companies, the size of Samsung and LG and so on. They make their own LCDs, screens and microprocessors. So they are very vertically integrated and they can compete with us at any level.

**RISHI KATARIA (DSM, 1st year):** Steve Jobs has left us with a phrase called "connecting the dots". How do the dots connect for you when you look back? After I took my first company public, I remember coming to India on vacation and they were auctioning mobile phone spectrum. We were sitting on \$10-15 million and we thought, I should use this money to buy spectrum. I thought we won't be able to buy in bigger cities like Mumbai, but let's buy spectrum in smaller towns, let's go to Amaravati, Bhubaneswar. Everybody talked to laughed at me. They said these are products intended for the rich in Delhi and Mumbai. Nobody else needs mobile phones. And so we didn't buy any spectrum. But if we had, we would have been in a different scenario today. Today, when people tell me the masses in India are illiterate and will not need mobile phones, they will not need the Internet. It's a matter of time. Barring every body will be using the Internet.

**GURMESH VIJ (MBA, 1st year):** What would your promotional strategy be? I am going to focus on the price first. Quality is important. The perception that quality is better because of double the price and charge you more money is not true. Two years ago, Nokia had a 65% share of the Indian mobile phone market. Today, its share is 30-35%. Has the Indian market halved in two years? No. So who took this difference? Micromax, Karbonn, Lava and others. I'm not saying quality is not important, but if your salary is ₹10,000, you won't say this is not as flashy as the iPad or that I'll take six months of my salary or three years of my savings to buy the iPad. Quality is all about meeting expectations and going beyond expectations. The expectation at ₹3,000 will be so low, that it's very easy to beat.

**PRERNA (MBA, 1st year):** Are you

Business Line ND  
30/10/2011 P-3

## 'B-school curriculum in India needs to be redesigned'

Our Bureau  
Chennai, Oct. 29

The B-school curriculum in India needs to be redesigned, and "we must infuse innovation and creativity into it", said eminent business leaders and B-school professors from across the country on Saturday at a national level workshop here.

The workshop, titled *Rethinking Management Education with Innovation and Creativity*, was organised by IIM-Ahmedabad Alumni Association's (IIM-AAA) Chennai Chapter and Anna University with IIM-Ahmedabad and IIM-Calcutta as knowledge partners.

Based on the bestselling book 'Rethinking the MBA: Management Education at a Crossroad' by renowned Harvard Professor Srikant Datar (who was present at the event), the workshop saw some of the country's top academic personalities such as Professor Samir Barua, Director, IIM-A, Prof Shekhar Chaudhuri, Director, IIM-C, Mr Mannar Jawahar, Vice-Chancellor, Anna University, besides other business executives. In his inaugural speech, Mr Mannar Jawahar said the time is ripe for changing the curriculum for management education in India. And the perspective should include not only that of creativity and innovation from a student's perspective but that of the various educational institutions as well.

Mr Muralidharan, President, IIM-AAA Chennai Chapter, said the global recession with the exception of a few emerging economies and the growing uncertainties across the business spectrum calls for newer skill sets. "The whole thinking and pedagogy need to be redesigned," he said.

Business Standard ND 30/10/2011 P-3

## Only 2 firms in fray for CBSE tender

PRAVEEN BOSE  
Bangalore, 29 October

TCS, India's largest IT services company, and Department of Electronics and Accreditation of Computer Classes or the DOEACC are said to have emerged as the only two entities that have responded to a tender notification of the Central Board for Secondary Education (CBSE) for conducting the All India Engineering Entrance Examination (AIEEE). The stiff conditions put forth in the tender document are said to be the reasons for lack of response from the companies to participate in the tender.

This has left the examination itself in a limbo as the process has to begin on November 1 when the tender would be opened. According to rules there needs to be a minimum of three contenders for the bid. The CBSE's 'tender document for computer-based test delivery, administration and processing for Professional Entrance Exam (PEE) - 2012' has evoked some consternation among some prospective participants in the tendering

process. This resulted in the fate of thousands of students who planned to take up the AIEEE this year hanging in limbo.

The schedule of the activities of the AIEEE 2012 too is now in a jeopardy. The examination process which is supposed to start on November 1 too is now in doubt.

The ministry of human Resource development had declared that, 50 per cent of the seats in NITs will be filled from AIEEE eligible candidates of states where NITs are located and the remaining 50 per cent will be filled on all India merit basis. Whereas for IIIT's all of the seats are being filled through all India merit basis.

The main firms from the testing and assessment industry that have conducted 90 per cent of the examinations in the country like Eduquity, Merit-Trac, Pearson, Attest and Prometric did not participate in the tender process. What seems to have raised the hackles of these companies is that some of the technical qualifications mandated by the tender document left them ineligible even before their applications were made.

# Set young minds free, or new ideas will wither

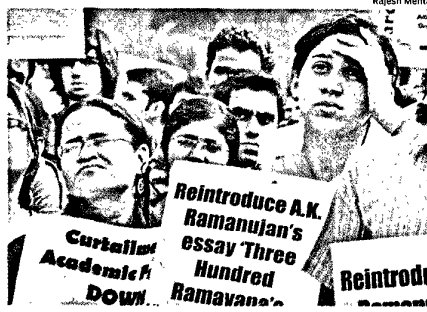
Debraj Mookerjee

The issue of what ought to be taught in our universities is easy to assess. Differences in preferences are really not so troubling despite the fact that much subjectivity goes into the framing of syllabi. We all have our likes and dislikes, and submit to different markers for assessing what is relevant and what is not. As long as the criteria for inclusion is academic and argued on that basis alone, one syllabi would be as unexceptionable as another. What is tricky is what ought not to be taught in our universities, and why.

The fight over what a university is all about begins at the beginning — at the level of etymology. Derived from Latin *universum*, the word 'university' shares its origins with the word 'universe'. The point of contest is this: given the origins of the word, what is it we wish to achieve through the university

system? Do we wish to turn all into one, a homogenised mass of educated individuals that serve functions predetermined by the workplace? Do we, in a sense, wish to universalise our educated youth? Or, quite differently, are we willing to allow students enrolled with the university system to expand their thoughts and ideas and individuality, much in the way the universe expands, without limits?

It cannot be denied that the university is a place where students enroll to acquire knowledge and specialized skills. To argue that such knowledge has nothing to do with the larger world outside would be silly. But even sillier would be to argue that knowledge imparted in the university must necessarily be tailored to suit the exigencies of society. The point is this: ever since the advent of modernity and organized knowledge systems, it is the university that has, by and large, fuelled society with new ideas and possi-



bilities. In a sense, therefore, it has to be insulated from the immediate demands of the larger collective. In fact, the larger collective can benefit best if ideas are allowed to proliferate unhindered within academia.

Higher education is the one arena where things that are perhaps taboo outside can be debated, argued, hypothesised, and, after all of that, either adopted or refuted. Censorship at the outset

Higher education is an arena where things that may be taboo outside can be debated. A mindset that wishes to exclude a reading, such as A K Ramanujan's essay on the Ramayana, simply does not understand the role of the university system

limits the range of possible outcomes. A mindset that wishes to exclude a reading, such as A K Ramanujan's essay on the Ramayana (as is the case in the University of Delhi, where the academic council decided to drop the essay from the history syllabus) simply does not understand the role of the university system. If students pouring out of the university sys-

tem have nothing new to contribute to society, the world of ideas will wither and atrophy (in the absence of intellectual nourishment). The challenge in the university system, pedagogically, is to develop a habit of questioning. Great ideas spring from questioning minds. If you set limits to the type of questions you allow students to ask, you are already limiting the creative potential of the university system. They say a good teacher is one who has all the answers, a great one who asks all the right questions, and the ideal one who teaches his students to ask all the right questions. The habit of seeking answers is a lifelong gift, one that a student carries with her when she leaves the university.

Why do we not have top-rated universities in India? The answer lies not in peripheral issues (funds, semester system versus annual system, application of modern technol-

ogy, and so on), but in the fact that we lack imaginative academic administrators. The less imagination you display, the higher you are likely to climb in the administrative hierarchy of the university system. People with true imagination are seldom allowed to set the agenda for higher education. The politicking and the narrow manoeuvring within universities is not dissimilar to what goes on in the bureaucratic apparatus. To give shape to a modern and progressive society that produces the required energy for social reform and inclusiveness, we need to foster liberal questioning of ideas and discourses within our universities. That alone can produce the academic and other types of leadership we will desperately need in the years ahead to meet the myriad challenges, and opportunities, this country will inevitably offer.

Debraj Mookerjee is an academic and commentator



# Tough Lessons in Australia

Over 6,500 Indian students have been deported from Australia in 2010-11 for visa irregularities. Experts, however, say the cleansing of the immigration system will benefit genuine students in the long run

## :: Ishani Duttgupta

A recent report in Australian media about the cancellation of a whopping 15,066 visas of foreign students has caused a flutter in India. The largest number of students – around 6,500 – who now face deportation, are Indian.

While the media report, which appeared in Australia's *The Daily Telegraph*, is based partly on annual figures for 2010-11 published by the Australian government's Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC), educational consultants and experts in India are not pressing the panic button yet. Most of them feel that genuine Indian students who comply with the requirements of their visa have no reason to be concerned about deportation. The crackdown by the Australian government, which resulted in a 37% increase in student visa cancellations over the previous year, are part of series of steps being taken to benefit international students and weed out low-quality education service providers.

### Many Cases of Visa Expiry

"The visa cancellations have primarily hit Indian students in vocational education training [VET] in Australia who have violated their student visa terms. In some cases, the visas had expired rather than being cancelled. Many Indians joined courses only as a means of getting permanent residence in Australia and were not genuine students," says Harmeet Pental, regional director (South Asia), IDP Education, the largest organisation representing Australian universities. It appears that around 8,000 of the cancelled student visas were cases of visa expiry when the time period ran out.

"Students need to ensure they don't get into such a situation. Among the visas which were genuinely cancelled by DIAC, over 2,200 occurred because the students withdrew from their courses," Pental adds.

Even as the DIAC is trying to spruce up the student-immigration process, reforms are also targeted at making things smooth for genuine students. A recent review by



GETTY IMAGES

former New South Wales minister Michael Knight focuses on a easier visa policy for foreign students. The Australian government has accepted all the recommendations of the Knight panel that will kick in from the first half of 2012. These include the end of mandatory cancellation of student visas for unsatisfactory attendance, unsatisfactory progress and working in excess of hours allowed. This will allow DIAC to decide cases on individual merit.

### Indians Hard Hit

While the cancellation of student visas for the last financial year seems to have hit Indians the hardest, this is also seen as a fall-out of a sudden hike in numbers of people who went to Australia from India in the two previous years. "A large number of non-students entered Australia on student visas, largely through VET courses, looking for residence options. Now with the

Australian government stepping up vigilance, many have been caught on the wrong foot. This will lead to a cleansing of the system. In fact, those going to the degree and university courses will now have post-study work options ranging from two

to four years. The Australian government is also likely to review the visa norms for the vocational educational sector sometime next year and provide some benefits," says Ravi Lochan Singh, MD of educational consultancy Global Reach and president of Association of Australian Education Representatives in India.

While a lot of the visa offences have been in the vocational training sector, not everyone believes that VET is not a good option for Indian students. "VET courses in Australia are the best in the world. The training and further education institutions of Australia, in fact, offer degree courses," says Dipen Rughani, president of Australia India Business Council's New South Wales chapter.

The Federation of Indian Students of Australia has, meanwhile, raised questions on the larger implications of the visa cancellations of Indian students. "Most of these students are innocent victims of an unfair system. In 2009-10, following immigration reforms by the Australian government, more than 200 colleges collapsed. Many Indian students were victims of these fraud institutions. The government of India should intervene to help them to remain in this country and get a return on their huge investments," says Gautam Gupta, founder of FISA. ■

### WHY ARE STUDENT VISAS CANCELLED

- If students miss more than a maximum number of classes allowed, they are reported to the DIAC by their respective colleges for non-compliance due to non-attendance
- Some institutes have been reporting students only on unsatisfactory course progress (students who fail more than 50% of enrolled modules in two consecutive semesters)
- A lot of institutes identify students who have failed more than 50% in one semester and consider cancelling their enrolments. These students are sent letters at the end of the semester and asked to contact their international student coordinators who put them on a learning agreement and monitor their progress

Of the 15,000 plus foreign student visas that were cancelled, around 8,000 were cases of visa expiry

Amar Ujala ND30/10/2011 P-7

# आईआईटी जेईई में आवेदन हुआ महंगा

ऑनलाइन के लिए 1600 और ऑफलाइन के लिए 1800 रुपये

● अमर उजाला ब्यूरो

नई दिल्ली। कैंट के बाद आईआईटी जेईई परीक्षा के लिए भी आवेदन करना महंगा हो गया है। वर्ष 2012 अप्रैल में होने वाली परीक्षा के लिए ऑनलाइन आवेदन करने में सामान्य श्रेणी के उम्मीदवारों को बीते साल के मुकाबले में 700 रुपये अधिक चुकाने होंगे। वहीं, ऑफलाइन के लिए 800 रुपये अधिक भुगतान करना होगा। अन्य श्रेणियों को भी अधिक भुगतान करना होगा। हालांकि, ऑनलाइन आवेदन करने वाली सभी श्रेणी की महिला उम्मीदवारों के लिए अच्छी खबर यह है कि उन्हें किसी प्रकार का भुगतान नहीं करना है। ऑफलाइन आवेदन करने वाली महिला उम्मीदवारों को दो सौ रुपये खर्च करने होंगे।

वर्ष 2012 में 8 अप्रैल को होने वाली आईआईटी जेईई की परीक्षा के लिए आवेदन प्रक्रिया सोमवार से शुरू हो जाएगी। प्रक्रिया के आधार पर भारतीय प्रौद्योगिकी संस्थानों भुवनेश्वर, मुंबई, दिल्ली, गांधीनगर, गुवाहाटी, हैदराबाद, इंदौर, कानपुर, खड़गपुर, मद्रास, मंडी, पटना, राजस्थान, रुड़की, रोपड़ और अन्य प्रौद्योगिकी संस्थानों की शी हिंदू विश्वविद्यालय व धनबाद के स्नातक पूर्व पाठ्यक्रमों में प्रवेश



यहां से प्राप्त करें जानकारी

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पाया जा सकेगा। ऑनलाइन आवेदन प्रक्रिया 31 अक्टूबर से 10 दिसंबर 2011 तक चलेगी। ऑफलाइन आवेदन प्रक्रिया 11 नवंबर से 5 दिसंबर तक चलेगी। भारतीय प्रौद्योगिकी संस्थानों में भरे गए ऑफलाइन आवेदन पत्र अथवा ऑनलाइन आवेदन की मुद्रित कापी पहुंचाने की अंतिम तारीख 15 दिसंबर है। दिल्ली में 14 यूनिजन बैंक ऑफ इंडिया की शाखाओं से ऑफलाइन आवेदन फार्म प्राप्त किए जा सकते हैं। इस बार ऑनलाइन व ऑफलाइन दोनों के लिए ही भुगतान

● महिलाओं को ऑनलाइन आवेदन करने में कोई भुगतान नहीं

● महिलाओं को ऑफलाइन के लिए चुकाने होंगे 200 रुपये

● ऑनलाइन आवेदन प्रक्रिया 31 अक्टूबर से शुरू हो जाएगी

की राशि में बढ़ोतरी की गई है। सामान्य श्रेणी के पुरुष उम्मीदवारों को ऑनलाइन आवेदन के लिए 1600 रुपये का भुगतान करना होगा। जबकि बीते साल यह 900 रुपये था। इसी तरह से ऑफलाइन आवेदन के लिए 1800 रुपये का भुगतान करना होगा। बीते साल यह राशि 1000 रुपये थी। एससी-एसटी व शारीरिक रूप से विकलांग श्रेणी में पुरुष उम्मीदवारों को ऑनलाइन आवेदन के लिए 800 रुपये और ऑफलाइन के लिए 1000 रुपये का भुगतान करना होगा।