

# Newspaper Clips

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## *Few takers for several 'unpopular' IIT courses*

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**NEW DELHI:** Despite a mad rush for admission to IITs, hundreds of seats continue to remain vacant in the premier institutes every year, largely because some courses are not popular among students.

While the IITs have made several attempts to fill the seats, 340 of them remained vacant this year also.

Courses like pharmaceutics, pulp and paper engi-

neering, ocean engineering, process engineering with MBA, mineral engineering with MBA, petroleum engineering, mining engineering in some IITs have few takers.

"Yes, it is a fact that some courses in the IITs are not popular among students. Students prefer mainstream engineering course. To solve the problem, there could be a separate exam exclusively for these courses. We had some informal discussions in this regard," says IIT Gauwhati

director Gautam Baruah.

While all courses had their own benefits and a well designed job market, Baruah said, "Too much of specialisation at an undergraduate level is not preferred by students. They feel this could narrow job opportunities."

"Even if we have 20 rounds of counselling sessions, the seats will remain vacant.

The only way out is that after counselling sessions, the individual institutes should take the responsibility of getting

the seats filled. Another way out is to dissociate these courses from JEE. Also emphasis should be on aptitude based counselling," says IIT Kanpur director Dr Sanjay Dhandhe.

Dr G B Reddy, organising chairperson of JEE 2012 agrees to this. "It is a fact that some courses are not preferred by students. I would not say that these courses are bad but simply that they should not be clubbed with the JEE exam."

### ACTION TAKEN

- To fill seats IIT introduced an exit policy and a fourth round of counselling session this year.

- As compared to the 762 unfilled seats in 2011, number of vacant seats this year was 340

- Some institutes such as ISM Dhanbad have even offered 'on-spot' admission to fill seats.

Times of India ND 6/09/2012 P6

## 'Flaws' in NET papers

Manash Pratim Gohain | TNN

**New Delhi:** The dean of Arts Faculty, DU has written a letter to UGC saying that a committee, which studied the UGC National Eligibility Test 2012 questions and answer keys for philosophy, found "serious anomalies" and suggested suspension of the evaluation process till the mistakes are rectified and publicly announced.

According to the letter (a copy of which is with TOI) the dean received a number of representations from the candidates, who appeared for the NET exam, informing him that a number of questions were ambiguous and a large number of answers given in the answer key by the UGC were totally wrong.

# Harvard students fight cheating charge

New York, Sept 5: Harvard University students under investigation for cheating on a take-home government course exam said they're waging a battle against the allegations.

About 20 students and graduates have gone to the media to tell their side of the story, saying skipping classes, sharing notes and collaborating on tests were all tacitly condoned by the professor and teaching fellows of the course being probed, students who took the class said.

The probe involves about 125 students over cheating on a take-home exam for the course, called Introduction to Congress. Harvard officials called it the biggest such probe in living memory. The students who are talking said they want to remain anonymous because of concern the accusations could affect their degrees or jobs taken since graduating.

One 2012 graduate said losing his bachelor's degree in economics might cost him his position at a Wall Street finance firm. "Harvard went public with their version of the story, the version that looks good for the school," a Harvard senior said. "We're trying to present the other side."

A Harvard e-mail to the 2012 graduate previewed his hearing before the Administrative Board, a college disciplinary body, for cheating on the final exam. The process of responding to a complaint to the board takes about two weeks, according to the letter.

"There was a tone set by the nature of the class and the professor teaching the course that collaboration was OK," the graduate said in a telephone interview. "Dragging us into this investigation now, when we have financial obligations and jobs, seems very unfair."

Harvard said last week that each of the students and graduates under investigation will be called before the Administrative Board. Students found to have cheated on exams can be asked to withdraw for two semesters, or may receive a warning or be put on probation, Jay Harris, Harvard's dean of undergraduate education, said in an interview last week.

*Bloomberg*

## WHAT HAPPENED AT HARVARD

■ As many as 125 students are being probed for allegedly cheating in a final exam at the elite institution

■ Harvard says the students "may have inappropriately collaborated on answers, or plagiarised classmates' responses, on the final exam for the course"

■ Neither the course nor the students were identified in the scandal, which is one of the biggest at the Ivy League college

■ An initial probe of more than 250 final exams resulted in cases of alleged cheating involving "nearly half the students in the class"

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## Protest over univ licence revocation rocks London

London: Hundreds of students, lecturers and supporters on Wednesday staged a demonstration outside the home office to protest against the revocation of London Metropolitan University's licence to admit Indian and other non-EU students.

Holding placards with messages such as 'Hands off our university', 'Amnesty now: Save London Met' and 'Student rights are human rights', the demonstrators submitted a petition to the home office in Westminster village, seeking amnesty for current students at various stages of their courses.

LMU's licence revocation also figured in PM's Question Time in the House of Commons, with Labour MP Stephen Timms, who sought lifting the threat to deport the university nearly 2,600 Indian and other non-EU students.

Cameron said, "Having looked at this case, and looked at the action the Border Agency has taken, it does seem to me there was some real abuses going on. What I want to see is Britain open to students and let's be clear: anyone who can speak English and who has a university place is able to come here and study and use our universities."

He added, "But, quite rightly, the immigration minister has been very hard in terms of closing down bogus colleges and making sure good universities like this one, if they are not meeting the rules, they have to take action."

Meanwhile, LMU is expected to approach the high court this week to seek a judicial review of the UK Border Agency's decision to revoke LMU's licence. ■

CASE AGAINST AICTE IN SUPREME COURT

# B-schools seek compromise

Express their desire to withdraw case against AICTE over new rules

KALPANA PRITHAK  
Mumbai, 5 September

Management Institutes, which dragged the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) to the Supreme Court, now wish to withdraw their case. But the AICTE is in no mood to relent. Last February, the Education Promotion Society of India, Association of Indian Management Schools (AIMS) and Jaipuria Group of Institutions filed a petition in the Supreme Court challenging the AICTE notification, dated December 28, 2010, which curtailed Post Graduate Diploma in Management (PGDM) institutions' autonomy on deciding fee structure, admissions, syllabus and examination.

AICTE, in a notification, had listed a new set of rules for management schools in the country which the institutions were not in agreement with. B-schools strongly opposed the norm that admissions to PGDM courses should be through common entrance tests such as the Common Admission Test (CAT), Management Aptitude Test (MAT) or examinations conducted by state governments.

AICTE had said admission to PGDM programmes must be conducted by state governments through a competent authority.

"We discussed the matter with AICTE during a recent

meeting and said we could discuss this issue across the table. We suggested if AICTE withdraws the notification, we would withdraw the case. We had also told the AICTE chairman that B-schools can draft a voluntary code of conduct and implement the same. But the AICTE chairman declined our proposal," said H Chaturvedi, president, EPSI, and director, Birla Institute of Management and Technology, Noida.

AICTE chairman Shankar S Mantha when contacted said, "What kind of an out-of-court settlement are they talking about? AICTE is not anyone's personal body. It is a government body to check standards and quality of technical education. Whatever notification we had issued was in the interest of public. There is nothing like out-of-court settlement."

"All we said was that the fee and the admission process should be monitored, as it is done for other institutions. What is the problem here? In fact,

## CASE DIARY

- EPSI, AIMS and Jaipuria Group of Institutions filed a petition in the Supreme Court in 2011
- Parties who filed the petition now wish to withdraw it
- AICTE wants to fight it out in the court
- Petition was against a notification listing new set of rules for management institutions
- B-schools say the rules in the notification are regressive
- AICTE maintains B-schools are opposing the notification as they want to fleece students

PGDM is an area where we get a lot of complaints from students and there is no redressal mechanism for them. In order to look at such problems and create a healthier mechanism, we came up with that notification," Mantha said.

On the case, this July, the Supreme Court extended the stay on the AICTE notification on PGDM autonomy and allowed these institutions to continue with their admissions for academic session 2013-14 through any of the five national tests — Common Admission

Test (CAT), Xavier Aptitude Test (XAT), Management Aptitude Test (MAT), AIMS Test for Management Admissions (ATMA) and Common Management Admission Test (CMAT).

CMAT is AICTE's own test, which the regulator body launched last year.

Opposing AICTE's notification, B-schools have argued that by allowing students to give CAT, MAT or state-level exams, quality of students will get diluted and that a proper comparison cannot be made since the level of difficulty differs in each of these exams.

AICTE had also suggested that fees to be charged for PGDM, PGDM executive and PGCM programmes be approved by a committee of respective state governments. B-schools say when PGDBM executive programmes, which are of one-year or 15-month duration, are not recognised by

AICTE, where is the need to fix the fee structure?

B-schools argued that fee restrictions may impact the quality of infrastructure, remuneration to attract good faculty and, worst of all, may lead to the malaise of capitation fees.

AICTE had also said admission to PGDM programmes must be conducted by state governments through a competent authority.

Directors of B-schools said if a college does not have a good reputation, it would be unable to fill the seats. For instance, several institutions which have the permission from AICTE to start management programmes without infrastructure, faculty or library but have a seat capacity of 240 had to be content with just 60-100 students. This lead state governments to issue a circular stating that colleges could admit students even without the mandatory scores.

AICTE maintain that B-schools are opposing the notification as they want to fleece students, and the notification will not allow them this opportunity. India has nearly 4,000 B-schools, with 3,50,000 seats.

"These guidelines were not abrupt decisions. If other technical educational institutes, including those for engineering, architecture and hotel management, agree to AICTE's guidelines, why can't B-schools?" asked a senior AICTE official.



**"The notification issued was in public interest. There is nothing like out-of-court settlement. AICTE is not anyone's personal body. It is a government body to check quality of technical education"**

SHANKAR S MANTHA  
Chairman, AICTE

## INFRASTRUCTURE WOES

# Saarc university struggles to gain students' acceptance

BY PRASHANT K. NANDA &  
ELIZABETH ROCHE

NEW DELHI

It was conceived as an institution with world-class facilities that would enable the best and brightest of students from the eight member-states of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (Saarc) to appreciate each other's national perspectives and, at the same time, promote a regional consciousness.

Yet, seven years after it was proposed by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and in the third year of its existence, the South Asian University (SAU) has found it difficult to gain acceptance among students and is struggling with infrastructure bottlenecks.

The New Delhi-based SAU offered admission to 542 students in 2011 and only 156—81 of them from India and none from Bhutan—joined, according to the university's annual report for 2010 and 2011, available on

its website. In 2010, 28 students from other Saarc countries were offered seats and only 14 accepted them.

A portion of the land in south Delhi set apart for the SAU campus is mired in legal problems, and in the last two years less than 10% of the budget for the initial phase (2010-14) has been spent. And now a parliamentary report has rapped the government for hurriedly "launching the university without looking into the standards and quality".

A government official with knowledge of the project said the Indian government is committed to bearing 100% of the capital cost for the establishment of the university. In 2010-14, it had budgeted for spending \$239.93 million (around ₹1,332 crore) besides providing 100 acres of land.

"So far, India has spent \$9.85 million on the establishment of the university," the official said, requesting anonymity. "Major items of expenditure are to be incurred over the course of this

year and next year."

The university is now running from two make-shift facilities—one in Jawaharlal Nehru University and the other in Akbar Bhavan, a former Indian Tourism Department Hotel converted into a government office complex. The run-down Centaur hotel is doubling up as hostel for outside students; a portion of Akbar Bhawan has started housing students as well.

Still, university president G.K. Chadha claims he is "hugely satisfied" with the progress of the institution given that it has been in existence for less than three years while conceding that it's facing issues relating to research and development on the academic front. "A university cannot come up overnight," Chadha said. "We are just two-and-a-half years old."

SAU offers eight master's degree programmes in development economics, computer science, applied mathematics, biotechnology, international relations, sociology, law and

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**The university offered admission to 542 students in 2011 and only 156 joined**

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computer applications. Students pay a fee of \$440 per semester.

The parliamentary standing committee on external affairs said in a 30 August report that the university had been "envisaged as an institution of academic and intellectual engagement to forge a sense of South Asian consciousness in the future generation".

The committee, however, thought the project had been launched in a hurry. It was "dismayed to note that Saarc University was yet to have its own campus, hostel and a standardized curricula in place, library

and books for issuance to students" and was dissatisfied with the pace of construction of the university.

Saarc groups Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, the Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

Chadha said civic agencies tend to take their time in giving various clearances related to campus development which is beyond his control. Student enrolment, however, has improved this time, he said. Ten per cent of the seats have been set aside for students outside the Saarc region and "I don't think that we will get those students for next four-five years," Chadha said.

"People want to see you, test you and then feel satisfied about you," he said.

An education expert, who declined to be named, said that in the last four years the Central government had been in a rush to open several higher new educational institutes like the Indian Institutes of Technology

(IITs) and the Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs) without sufficient planning.

"Like these institutes, South Asian University too suffers from government's poor planning and foresight," the expert said. "But the sad part is that this institute with strategic importance and international nature is even worse off and needs urgent attention."

Srinivasan T., a student of SAU from Tamil Nadu, said inadequate library and hostel facilities were issues. He added: "I am not satisfied but I am not complaining too. We understand that it's a new university and in five to six years it will be of international importance."

The diversity of the classrooms make up for some of the inadequacies. "We have students from all eight countries in the region and when we discuss a topic in the classroom, we get several perspectives on it. It's really good," said Srinivasan.

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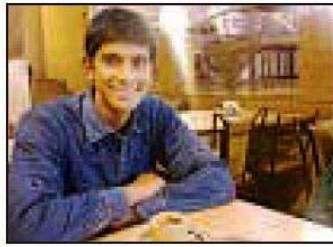
## TECHIE GOES HIGH

# IIT-Indore student will be Google ambassador

**Amrita U Kadam**

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**INDORE:** For the first time, a student from Indian Institute of Technology, Indore has been selected as the Google Student Ambassador (GSA) for 2012-13. Ashok Pancily Poothiyot, a soft spoken, well-mannered third year B Tech computer science and engineering student, who hails from Kerela, would represent his institute as well as the city.



■ **Ashok Pancily Poothiyot**

This year, over 1,000 students have been selected from 65 countries for the Google Student Ambassador Programme. In all, there are

123 students from India including a handful from other IITs as well. The students were selected after Google scrutinised their applications which had a few questions including their plans to utilise this prospect.

So, what would Ashok do for his institute and the city as an ambassador? "I would serve as a liaison between Google, my institute and Indore. Being in touch with the management of Google would help in bringing good

opportunities for the students of IIT and also for the city," he says.

Google Student Ambassador Programme aims at building lasting relationships with Googlers (those working at Google) and fellow ambassadors. "My role would be to coordinate with Google to plan events on our campus. This would help Google to understand our institute's culture and we would also get to know

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## IIT-Indore student will be Google...

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their culture. Google is dynamic and progressive and I am delighted to be associated with them," said Ashok.

Ashok would be representing IIT-I in the Google Student Ambassador's Summit at Hilton Hotel, Goa from September 7 to September 9 this year.

"I am in touch with the other ambassadors from IITs and we all are very excited about our session in Goa. We would know our roles once the summit is over."

Faculty for placement Prof Santosh Vishwakarma said, "We are already in touch with Google but with this, we are hoping that our students will have better placement opportunities and internships."

### OTHER LAURELS

■ Monalisa Sharma, assistant professor of computer science and engineering at IIT Indore, has been selected for IBM Shared University Research Award. The award is designed to promote collaborative research projects that bring value to IBM and to the technology community. It strives to connect the research and researchers at universities with personnel in IBM

■ Priti Ram and Anil Birla have been selected for IIT Indore-Agilent Technologies-Aimil Summer Fellowship Programme on

X-ray Crystallography

■ IIT Indore joins the ALICE International Collaboration at the Large Hadron Collider (LHC), CERN, Geneva, Switzerland

■ Sachin Londhe, Rahul Nanda, Akshat Kumar and Anshul Rawat qualified in French Language (DELF A1) test. Coordinator for this French class Anjali Bandiwadekar said, "Looking at the response, we have started offering elective course for French which would help the students to study and work in France."

**We are in touch with Google and hoping that our students will have better placement opportunities.**

**PROF SANTOSH  
VISHWAKARMA**

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