Relief for IIM aspirants

Ministry seeks report on CAT chaos

NEW DELHI/AHMEDABAD:
Stung by the adverse impact of the failed first ever computerised CAT, the Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs) on Monday said aspirants who could not take the test because of technical and other problems would be given a second chance soon.

Empathising with aspirants across the country, IIM Directors' Forum chairman Samir Barua said at a press conference in Ahmedabad: "The IIMs would categorically like to assure candidates who could not take the test that they would get another opportunity to take the test."

Shocked by the test fiasco Human Resource Development Minister Kapil Sibal on Monday shot off a letter to CAT convener Satish Deodhar in Ahmedabad seeking a detailed report on the repeated disruption. "The ministry has sent a letter to Deodhar asking for a factual report on the ongoing disruption of the computer-based entrance test for admission into IIMs," a senior HRD Ministry official said in Delhi.

The standardised competitive CAT that went online for the first time this year ran into trouble for the third consecutive day Monday when a computer crash stalled the exam at centres in

IIM aspirants at an examination centre in Bangalore on Monday. DH PHOTO

three cities — Mumbai, Bangalore and Ghaziabad. Barua reiterated that the "major reason for this (computer crashes) was a virus attack". According to him "all precautions were taken for quarantine, but despite that the attack took place. Responding to reporters' queries, Sibal said outside Parliament that the IIMs should fix this problem as soon as possible. "The IIMs are answerable to public and they should explain why such a thing has happened. I have also asked for a factual report," he said.

Though the online test failed for two consecutive days, the IIM could not come out with concrete explanations to the students, he alleged.

Uncertainty continues to bother candidates

Students fear rescheduled test may clash with exams

Bangalore: If the students who couldn't take the Common Admission Test (CAT) on Saturday and Sunday, hoped they would get a reassuring message from the Common Admission Test (CAT) organisers, they had nothing coming their way even on Monday.

They spent the day, clueless and deeply anxious.

Ajay Arora of Triumphant Institute of Management Education (TIME), a CAT coaching centre, said he was flooded with calls from anxious candidates.

The students, he said, were distraught over the reigning chaos that have defined the CAT exams this time around. "Amidst all organisational problems, the concern about the paper itself has taken a backseat. Despite assurances from the IIMs about having rescheduled exams for a lot of candidates, I still had not come across a single candidate, who has received an alternate date," he said.

The candidates are now concerned if they would have adequate time to prepare for the rescheduled exams and whether it would clash with their semester exams.

Lab exams for most engineering courses have already begun and theory exams are just around the corner and this has added to their woes.

In the absence of any notification from IIMs or Prometric, students have no idea what kind of an advance notification they will be given for the exams.

Out-station candidates have also expressed concern about getting enough time to make travel arrangements.

"This is really punishing them. They should not be made to take these exams under such stressful conditions," Ajay rued.

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TESTING TIME: Students waiting for the CAT online exams at R V Institute of Management in Bangalore on Monday. DH PHOTO

Day 3: Authorities still to bell CAT

BANGALORE: Over 200 IIM aspirants waited for four and a half hours in vain at Garden City College (GCC) as glitches continued to haunt the first-ever online Common Admission Test on the third day on Monday.

While many centres claimed there were no problems, the systems in four computer labs at GCC crashed, preventing 200 students from taking the test.

The second session of the CAT examination could not be conducted as the main server was down at GCC. After the technical snags on Sunday and Monday, the IIM authorities were sure that the third day would not pose any trouble to them. Candidates who appeared for the CAT on Monday told *Deccan Herald* that there were no hitches in the first session but in the second session they faced a lot of problems. The server slowed down in one of the labs, leading to the problems. They will have to appear once again at a later date.

The GCC authorities and the test organisers kept on telling the students from 1 pm that the exam would begin at 5.30 pm once the new server was in place.

But that never happened and the students were asked to leave the hall in the evening. They were told that the next date of the examination would be conveyed to them through email. However, the students were agitated.

"How many times should I appear for the examination? These arrangements are bringing a bad name to the prestigious IIMs," said Venkat, an employee in a private firm. "I have taken leave to appear for the examination. Now, it has gone waste," he added.

Nikhil from Bihar, who studies at Dayananda Sagar College in Bangalore, said he was disappointed with the arrangements. He said his college exams are commencing on Tuesday. He would not be able to take the exams in the next few days. He said that there were hundreds of students from different cities, who are here to take the exam. "Who will arrange for their stay?" questioned Swaroop from Mysore.

Delay again

Meanwhile, at the Vivekananda Degree College here, the test started an hour late on Monday morning. Glitches again prevented the tests from starting on time. It was only in the afternoon batch that the exams and the verification process took place on time.

Fortunately, in the later session, only one candidate experienced a 10-minute delay as his computer took some time to log on. Many students admitted they were very tense before the exams began due to the problems plaguing the centre, the first two days. "But everything went smoothly and we were seated in front of the computers at 3.15 pm," Rajesh, a candidate, said. Most of them felt the paper was relatively alright, but were tight-lipped about more information.

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IIM aspirants get another chance

Some students also complained that computers failed at the Insititute of Management Studies (IMS) Ghaziabad centre, stalling the CAT session on Monday morning. Many candidates were in a frenzy when computers crashed in around 40 centres across the country on the first and second day of the CAT. The test's staggered computerised format has a 10-day schedule and will conclude on December 7. About 2.41 lakh students are likely to appear in the test for admission to seven IIMs and a few other B-Schools.

An American firm, Prometric, was awarded a $40-million contract by the IIMs to switch the prestigious CAT from optical marker reader assessment onto computers. The company has alleged that "viruses and malware that attacked the test delivery system were not detected by the anti-virus software at the testing centres". A Prometric representative said candidates who could not appear in the test would be notified and their examinations would be rescheduled within the testing period.

The CAT committee has stressed that its role in administering the examination at 105 centres in 32 cities was restricted to preparing questions. Prometric is arranging how and when the re-test would be conducted, the committee said, adding that "details would be worked out by Prometric shortly and announced."

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