

CAT 2009 not to be scrapped, IIMs decide against re-test

POST-FRACAS BREATHER: Relief For 2.16 Lakh Candidates, Additional Sessions In January 2010

Our Bureau

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IN A decision that went in favour of the 2.16 lakh candidates who completed the Common Admission Test (CAT) 2009, the IIMs on Wednesday said the computerised exam will not be scrapped. The decision was announced after a meeting of the institute directors and the CAT committee members with senior HRD ministry officials in New Delhi.

The outcome of the meeting was eagerly awaited by the students fraternity even as a section of the IIM faculty opined that the test be scrapped and a re-test held in the paper-pencil format to maintain fairness of the prestigious exam. A re-test would have thrown the 2010 academic schedule haywire

and clashed with other MBA entrance exams.

On Wednesday, while the top brass were engaged in the HRD meeting in New Delhi, a group of unidentified people shouted slogans and broke a few pots outside the IIM-Ahmedabad premises demanding scrapping of the test. The protesters claimed to be parents of the candidates, but it could not be verified.

The computerised test, which was conducted over 11 days starting November 28, was marred by technical glitches at several testing sites, affecting a few thousand candidates. The IIMs have announced one extra date, sometime in mid-January.

Of the 2.41 lakh candidates registered for the test, close to 2.16 lakh completed the test successfully, IIM officials said, adding that paper-pencil tests were history now. The scrapping of test could have affected a majori-

ty of candidates who had written the test successfully, experts felt. The coaching centres who enjoy a clientele of close to 2 lakh students however, gave out mixed reactions.

"Based on our interactions with the candidates, we had found that the computerised CAT was not fair for all. Now, if the IIMs are convinced that the test has been fair for all, we should accept their decision," says Ajay Arora, director, TIME Bangalore.

PT Education COO Manish Saraf saw the decision being taken in favour of the majority. "Any announcement of re-test could have gone against them as they are now preparing for other MBA tests and looking ahead for the next level of preparation for making way to top-ranking MBA institutes."

As per CAT committee officials, about 24,000 students did not show up for the test

and around 2,000 candidates are yet to be tested. The IIMs are in the process of identifying a system to provide another opportunity to genuine candidates who could not take the test due to reasons like premature exit through the exit/end button, slowness of computers while reviewing and refreshing questions, rebooting of computers and disruptions, missing graphics and data.

"IIMs have decided to continue with computer-based test for 2009. We also look forward to continue the CAT through computer-based testing in future," IIM-Ahmedabad director Samir Barua told reporters after the meeting. The test, which was conducted by the IIMs in paper-pencil mode for the last 33 years, changed to computer-based format this year. The task of conducting the testing was handed over to

US-based company, Prometric. However, the test incurred several technical problems from Day 1 itself, affecting around 20,000 candidates across a 10-day span, leading the IIMs to extend the test by a day.

The failure of the test had drawn flak from many quarters, leading a section of people demanding the scrapping of the test. Reports said, while directors of IIM-Ahmedabad and IIM-Bangalore were not in favour of scrapping the test, the heads of other five IIMs preferred a re-test.

On Wednesday, IIMA director Samir Barua and CAT centre convenor, Satish Deodhar were in New Delhi meeting HRD officials. Speaking to the media in New Delhi, Mr Deodhar said fresh test would be held around mid-January for those genuine students who could not appear in the test.