

Reddy's dream project to take flight in May-end, preparations complete

By Rajiv Shukla

HYDERABAD

Andhra's prestigious and novel IIT experiment in education would take a second flight in the last week of May, paving the way for a silent revolution in InfoTech education.

The experiment, a brain-child Prof K C Reddy, chief of Andhra Pradesh State Council for Higher Education, aims at launching a massive IT talent hunt in rural areas that has remained largely cut-off from the elite Joint Entrance Exams (JEE), the All-India Engineering Entrance Exams (AIEEE) and the razzle-dazzle breed of Indian Institutes of Informa-



Dr K C Reddy, Chairman, APSCHE

tion Technology (IITs) which have come up of late.

Speaking to *The Academician* in an exclusive interview on April 24, Dr Reddy said that the admission process for three IITs at Basar (Adilabad), Kadapa and Nuzvedu (Krishna) will begin

in the last week of May when the government will formally issue notification for admission to the three International Institutes of Information Technology run by the Rajiv Gandhi University of Knowledge Technologies (RGU).

"The results of class X normally come out in the last week of May and that's the time we wish to issue the admission notice for the IITs", he said with a smile.

The RGU is finalising the notification with certain modifications over last year. This

year, the students need to apply for admissions as against the last year when the government had sent applications to meritorious SSC students for admissions.

"We will issue the notification for admission to 6,000 seats in IITs in the last week of May. There will not be any entrance examination and admissions will be made purely on the merit secured in SSC exams. Applications will be available in all the schools," said Dr Reddy.

Dr Reddy is the Vice-Chancellor of RGU of which Dr Raj Reddy is the Chancellor. When asked for the *raison d'être* of the IITs and its admission mode he said

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CAT goes online, US company assigned job

BANGALORE : On April 27 the Indian Institutes of Management announced that the Common Admission Test (CAT) for admission to IIMs and over 118 other B-schools would go online from this year and that the job has been assigned to Prometric ETS, a US based firm which excels in online examinations.

With this the 33-year-old pen-and-pencil format of the CAT will come to an end and sources at IIM Bangalore confirmed that CAT 2009 would be a computer-based test (CBT).

Dr Amarnath Krishnaswamy, a faculty member of IIM-Bangalore and the spokesman for CAT committee said, "IIMs have selected Prometric ETS, a US based firm, after a very elaborate search process to be our partner in delivering the computer-assisted CAT.

The details on the computerized CAT would be made available soon." ETS Prometric are already conducting globally recognized tests such as Graduate Record Examination (GRE) and Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL).

"The CAT will be a CBT from this year onwards. The test will be conducted in a window of about ten days, sometime at the end of the calendar year. CBT CAT will be a candidate-friendly test in terms of flexibility in the selection of test date and ease of registration process," Dr Krishnaswamy said.

The aspirants who had expected the CAT to turn into something similar to GMAT will, in fact, find that the for-

mat of the test has not altered much.

As of now, CAT has merely been computerised. So instead of circling the answers on an OMR sheet, candidates will be clicking answers on a computer screen.

An IIM official said there was a likelihood of three sessions of the CAT being held in one day across the country in around 100 centres in such a way that approximately 3 lakh candidates could be accommodated in 10 days. "For this, we will be developing about 3,000 questions, instead of merely 100 that we come up with for each year's test," said the faculty member.

According to an official communiqué CAT will be a candidate-friendly test in terms of flexibility in the selection of test date, ease of registration process, better physical environment and test experience and enhanced security in terms of biometric identification of candidates and video monitoring. CBT format also would improve communication between candidates and IIMs in terms of programme information, test delivery, receipt of admit cards, and receipt of score reports.

The test has been necessitated by the increasing number of candidates appearing for CAT.

While about 95,000 candidates took CAT in 2003, the number rose to about 2.5 lakh in 2008, indicating 163 per cent increase. This has resulted in a severe strain on the IIMs to conduct CAT in its existing format.



Dr R. Venkata Rao

Vizag don is VC of B'lore NLS

From MV Krishnaya

VISAKHAPATNAM: Dean Faculty of Law and Officer on Special Duty of Andhra University Prof R. Venkata Rao has been appointed Vice-Chancellor of the prestigious National Law School of India University, Bangalore, (NLS) Venkata Rao who has earned a lot of respect from his colleagues has been the Principal of AU Dr. Ambedkar College of Law.

Prof. Venkata Rao received the appointment order from the Chief Justice of India, who is the Chancellor of the NLS, through a fax message on April 21 and the following day his colleagues and friends celebrated the occasion at the local Officers Club. He proposes to join NLS during the first week of May. He will have a five-year term.

The 55-year-old Prof. Venkata Rao has also been a Member of Executive Council of Andhra University and Chairman of Board of Studies (Law). By change, the profes-

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No extra chances to SC, ST students in JEE

From Sanjiv Dube

NEW DELHI : The party seems to be over for HRD Minister Arjun Singh as the Joint Admission Board (JAB) of the IITs has rejected the Ministry's move to give more chances to SC/ST students in the IIT-Joint Entrance Examination.

The jolt to the MHRD came on April 21 when the Joint Admission Board, the highest body to take decision on IIT-JEE, rejected the MHRD suggestion, saying it was not required. At present, the IITs give two chances to aspirants, including SC and ST students.

The HRD Ministry had

earlier suggested that the IITs should give more shots to the SC/ST students to help them qualify for admission to the institutes.

"We decided to maintain the status quo. The whole board thought that what is given to them (SCs/STs) is sufficient," said an IIT Director.

The members at the JAB were of the view that SC/ST students were getting special preference for admission to the elite institutes.

It may be recalled that Mr Arjun Singh has been insisting that the SC/ST students should get more chances to clear the Joint Entrance Examination of the IITs as they

belong to the educationally deprived class.

However, the directors felt that that the SC/ST students were allowed lower cut-off marks in the JEE and giving them more benefits would tantamount to giving them double benefits.

Andhra VCs to hold meeting

VISAKHAPATNAM: Vice-Chancellors of universities in the State will meet at Andhra University on April 26. The vice-chancellors of 27 out of the 32 universities have confirmed their participation.

SBI cuts edu loan rates for new customers

NEW DELHI : The State Bank of India has reduced the interest rates on education loans by up to two percentage points (200 bps). The rates, said sources, have been cut for loans to be taken between May and September 2009.

The interest rates for loans up to Rs 4 lakh, between Rs 4 lakh and Rs 7.5 lakh and above Rs 7.5 lakh will be reduced to 11.5 per cent, 11.25 per cent and 11 per cent respectively from the present rates of 11.75 per

cent, 13.25 per cent and 12.25 per cent.

The girls would get a further concession of 0.5 per cent. So, EMI on a Rs 7.5 lakh loan, to be repaid in seven years, will come down to Rs 12,940 from Rs 13,740. However, the existing customers will be charged the old rates.

The bank extends loans up to Rs 10 lakh for studies in India and up to Rs 20 lakh for studies abroad.

During moratorium (in this period an option is given

to skip servicing the loan and pay EMI later), simple interest rate is charged. A concession of 1 per cent is given for promptly servicing the interest during moratorium. A repayment period of five to seven years is given after moratorium.

The bank offers collateral-free loans up to Rs 4 lakh to students. Third party guarantee or other collateral is required only if the loan amount is higher than Rs 4 lakh.

The rates will be linked to the prime lending rate (PLR).

A reduction in PLR will cut both the existing and new rates from their respective levels.

On April 28, the bank, in fact, changed the discount against the PLR for the new loans.

Earlier, the loans between Rs 4 lakh and Rs 7.5 lakh was offered at one percentage point higher than the PLR, but now it will be given at one percentage point lower than the PLR. Therefore, the benefit of the new loans at lower rate will not be for a given

period but for the entire tenure of the loan.

A senior official of the bank said that the new rates have been offered to promote education loans by the bank. At present SBI has around 25 per cent share of this segment. At present, the total outstanding of the bank in the education loan segment has gone up by Rs 2,653 crore in 2008-09 to Rs 7,066 crore. So far, SBI has given loans to 3,56,000 students for pursuing higher studies in India and abroad.

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