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Now common entrance test for IITs and NITs

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The Joint Council of the Indian Institutes of Technology (IIT) on Wednesday decided to hold a common entrance test for admissions to the IITs and National Institutes of Technology (NITs) by scrapping the joint entrance examination (JEE) and 'in principle' agreed to hike the fee for IIT students, but with some riders. The common entrance test has been devised for all engineering colleges, but would be extended to others after the concurrence of the States.

Addressing a press conference here after the meeting, Union Human Resource Development (HRD) Minister Kapil Sibal said in order to make the IIT system accessible and equitable for all, it had been decided to hold an all-India common test for admission to all engineering colleges, including the IITs, but weightage would also be given to the Class XII marks. The Board results would be equalised by a formula to be devised by the Indian Statistical Institute to which the marks obtained in the common entrance test, based on general logic and non-subject matter, would be added. The results of the two tests would be combined for an all-India merit list, that would form the basis of the admission. Initially, it will be applicable only to the Centrally-administered institutes, while State institutes can join in after elaborate discussions on the issue.

The Minister said as of now it appeared that the IITs were accessible only to the elite and those who could afford coaching, while there were many more deserving candidates who did not have access. A common entrance with a new marking pattern would make it more equitable. "We have various options but have not yet decided which one to adopt to avoid any aberrations in the system."

The Joint Council also agreed to raise the fee of IIT students from the current Rs. 50,000 per annum to Rs. 2 lakh as recommended by the Kakodkar Committee, though it rejected the proposal of across the board hike. The hiked fee would impact about 25 per cent students while students from the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Classes (except the creamy layer) will continue to get exemption and a large percentage of students are entitled to education loan. "While agreeing on the proposal to hike the fee, we have said that the burden on the families should be minimum and asked them to work out a mechanism by which the student would pay the enhanced amount once he or she is gainfully employed," Mr. Sibal said.

As long as the student is studying he or she is not expected to pay, but after getting a job the money will have to be paid in instalments. This will be ensured by putting a condition on the certificate so that the employer can deduct the amount to be paid to the government. However, if a student joins the IIT faculty, he or she is exempted from payment. The provision can be effectively implemented once the National Academic Depository Bill, 2011 — now in Parliament — is passed. However, Mr. Sibal clarified that all this was subject to the approval of the Finance Ministry.

And to make the IITs world class institutions, it was also decided that the IIT system will produce 40,000 Ph.Ds by 2020 at an average of 10,000 per year. As for the faculty shortage, it would be enhanced to 16,000 with an additional 4,000 to be appointed every year. While agreeing to the IIT Directors' demand for more financial and administrative autonomy, the Council asked them to come up with a road map for ensuring accountability if their demands were accepted, on approval from the Finance Ministry.

The Joint Council has also agreed to set up a task force to look into the increasing number of suicides in the IITs.

"Common entrance with new marking pattern will make admission process more equitable"
25 per cent students will be affected by hike, SCs, STs, OBCs to get exemption
