

Scrap online CAT: tutors

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Scrap online CAT: Trainers

Questions Not Repeated, Most Labs Restored: IIM-B Director

Team ET

AHMEDABAD | NEW DELHI

A DAY after the Union HRD ministry directed a probe into the technical glitches at the ongoing Common Admission Test (CAT), private training centres have demanded the scrapping of the computerised MBA entrance.

The trainers on Wednesday, the fifth-day of the ongoing exam, raised questions over the fairness of the testing process. Apart from raising questions on the poor infrastructure and technical glitches that have led to close to 14,000 students miss the test so far, the trainers claim that the questions were repetitive in nature, thus handed out an unfair advantage to those appearing in the later slots of the ten-day test.

CAT training centres together

CALLED TO QUESTION

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enjoy a clientele of close to two lakh candidates, through classroom or correspondence courses, out of the 2.41 lakh who registered for CAT 2009.

Responding to the apprehensions, IIM-B director Pankaj Chandra told ET late on Wednesday that the test was not being unfair to those appearing in the later slots. Dismissing the contentions that questions were be-

ing repeated he said, "I can say for sure, this is not true. There were 23 sets of question papers prepared and we have taken all possible care to ensure the difficulty levels are being maintained."

Pointing out to the basic nature of online exams, Chandra said, "There might be some similarity, else how can one ensure a uniform difficulty level. But then, that's how online exams are held." The IIMs were closely monitoring the situation, and "we will ourselves take corrective measures, if we find any violations," he said.

Meanwhile, the coaching centre's demand found support in BJP's Sushma Swaraj, who said the "exam was reduced to a farce and that it should be scrapped." For next year, the test should be held after proper rehearsal, Swaraj told ET on Wednesday.

NetComm offers free solution to IIMs' CAT

Peerzada Abrar

BANGALORE

THIS year's computer-based Common Admission Test (CAT) fiasco, in which 7,000-8,000 students were unable to take the test during the first three days due to a virus attack, has prompted companies such as NetComm Systems to help IIMs free of cost.

"We would be happy to assist IIMs or their solution providers or test centres with what ever help without charging any fee," NetComm Systems chief executive Narendra Kumar said. He said the firm is still trying to get in touch with IIMs to offer them free solution.

On visiting a test centre, NetComm found that for security and bandwidth optimisation purposes, the test papers are down-

loaded to a local server from main Prometric servers. Each student then connects to the local servers and gives his test.

On finishing the test, the local server uploads the answers to the main Prometric Server via internet. Each centre has multiple local servers depending on number of students. The test systems are actually part of the local network and can develop technical snag by network traffic in the local network including viruses like conficker.

The IIMs attributed the technical snags in CAT to the 'Conficker' worm and some hardware issues. Conficker, also known as as Downup, Downadup and Kido, is a computer worm targeting the Windows operating system, detected first in November last year.

SEMICON INDUSTRY BETS ON INDIA TO LEAD THE WAY

MAJOR innovations in the Semiconductor Industry will happen in India and China, Cadence Design Systems president and chief executive Lip-Bu Tan said in his key note address.

India's innovation opportunity lies in new technology areas such as the fourth generation of cellular wireless (4G), a successor to 3G and 2G standards. Mr Tan said WiMax, (worldwide interoperability for microwave access), a telecommunications technology that provides wireless transmission of data, is also showing promise in India as it is affordable and is available anywhere and anytime.

"There is a huge opportunity in the Indian market in mobile space which is growing faster than China", he said. The other areas which are going to drive innovation and become big markets in India and China include smart grids for energy efficiency, solar photovoltaic, medical electronics, unified communications, high definition video and mobile search.

He said these innovations will be driven by the semiconductor industry, however, it has to overcome certain challenges and adopt a different strategy to address the market. For instance some customers spend 60% of their time and budget on modification of a new product.

"Listen very well and stay very close to your customers, define the product and the market, which is half way to success," he said. Mr Tan said more than hardware, it is important to pay attention to software and intellectual property, which needs to be unique and should differentiate the company.

"It is important to focus on what you are good at and rest can be procured through licence." He said major semiconductor companies in the US, Europe and Asia are observing that the industry's woes may have reached a bottom, though conditions will remain challenging for the rest of the year.

This is because chip makers have been hit hard by plunging consumer demand for electronic gadgets. As people tighten their spending, they buy fewer mobile phones, computers and navigation systems powered by microchips. However, India and China are the two



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promising countries which is seeing an uptick in demand as entrepreneurship is driving the growth in semiconductor industry. Entrepreneurs need to be capital efficient and utilise their resources well. Even though this industry has been hit by the downturn, it is now showing signs of recovery and will grow much faster compared to other sectors.

These are also interesting times, to come up with a formula to scale up the cross border companies and partnership is very critical in semiconductor industry not during the process to make the products but till it reaches to consumers.

"I am a strong believer of globalisation and real potential of semiconductor industry can be achieved through this," he said. He said that there are lot of startup companies in India, which have great potential and Cadence is willing to mentor them.

INDIA'S innovation opportunity is not only in the formal sector, but there is extraordinary creativity among Indian students in the informal sector, says Professor Anil Gupta of the Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad (IIM-A) and executive vice-chairman National Innovation Foundation.

Over one lakh projects and innovative ideas from over 500 engineering colleges in the country have been compiled into a database for future use by students to showcase their ideas to potential investors and partners.

All this information has been documented for the first time in a 'Techpedia' developed by professor Anil Gupta. Some of the projects and innovations featured on the portal include personalised vehicles designed by students suitable for use in the narrow lanes of factories, black-boxes which can be used in vehicles, bio-bikes, a gas-operated iron-box, among others.

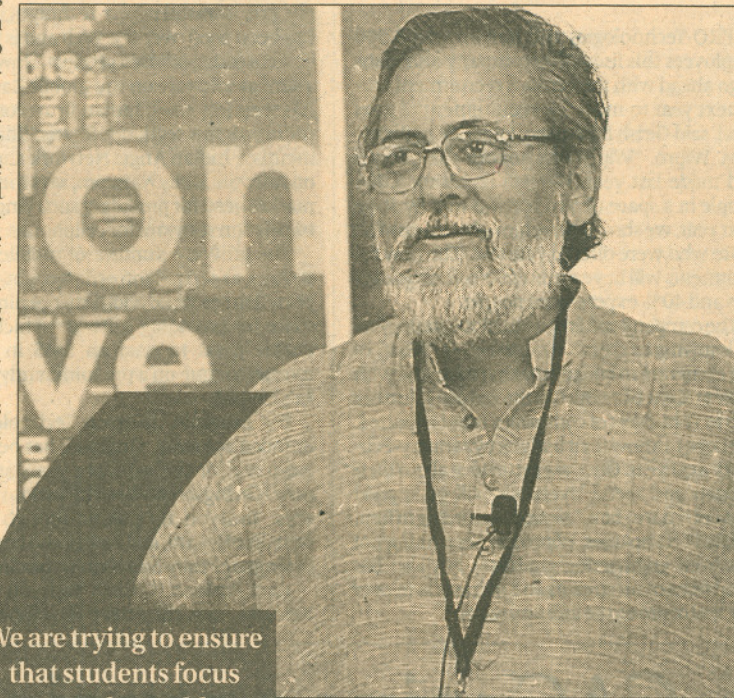
"We are trying to improve the innovation quotient of youths," said Mr Gupta, who expects to have over 10 lakh projects on the portal in a few years. Mr Gupta says that there are about six lakh technology students who spend at least six months in their final year on a project. Once done, these projects are forgotten. "Some engineers don't even remember their college projects," he says. The University Grants Commission (UGC) or the All-India Council For Technical Education (AICTE) have not made it mandatory for students to put a summary of their projects on a national portal.

"We are trying to ensure that students focus more on the problems faced by grassroot-level entrepreneurs and the technical problems faced by the small and medium industries," Mr Gupta said.

Mr Gupta is in the process of forming a national mentors' network comprising retired scientists, professionals and technopreneurs who will enhance confidence and also indicate direction in which the said technology can be taken forward.

He also plans to put the thesis of the PhD students on this portal. Some of the various grassroot level innovation exam-

'Tap talent in the informal sector'



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ples that Mr Gupta presented include the Laxmi Asu machine, created by Malletham in Andhra Pradesh, which has relieved women workers from eight to nine hours of labour everyday.

"A woman worker had to move her hand 18,000 times, to make two saris a day", he said "This machine does the job in half an hour". Mr Gupta also spoke about grassroot-level innovations such as two wheeler washing machine, pressure cooker used to make coffee, vehicle implanted with sensors for physically challenged people, which can be navigated using breath.

Mr Gupta pointed out that manufacturers should partner with such innovators and build capacity to pick up ideas from the young minds of the country.

INNOVATION: THE ROADMAP TO PROSPERITY

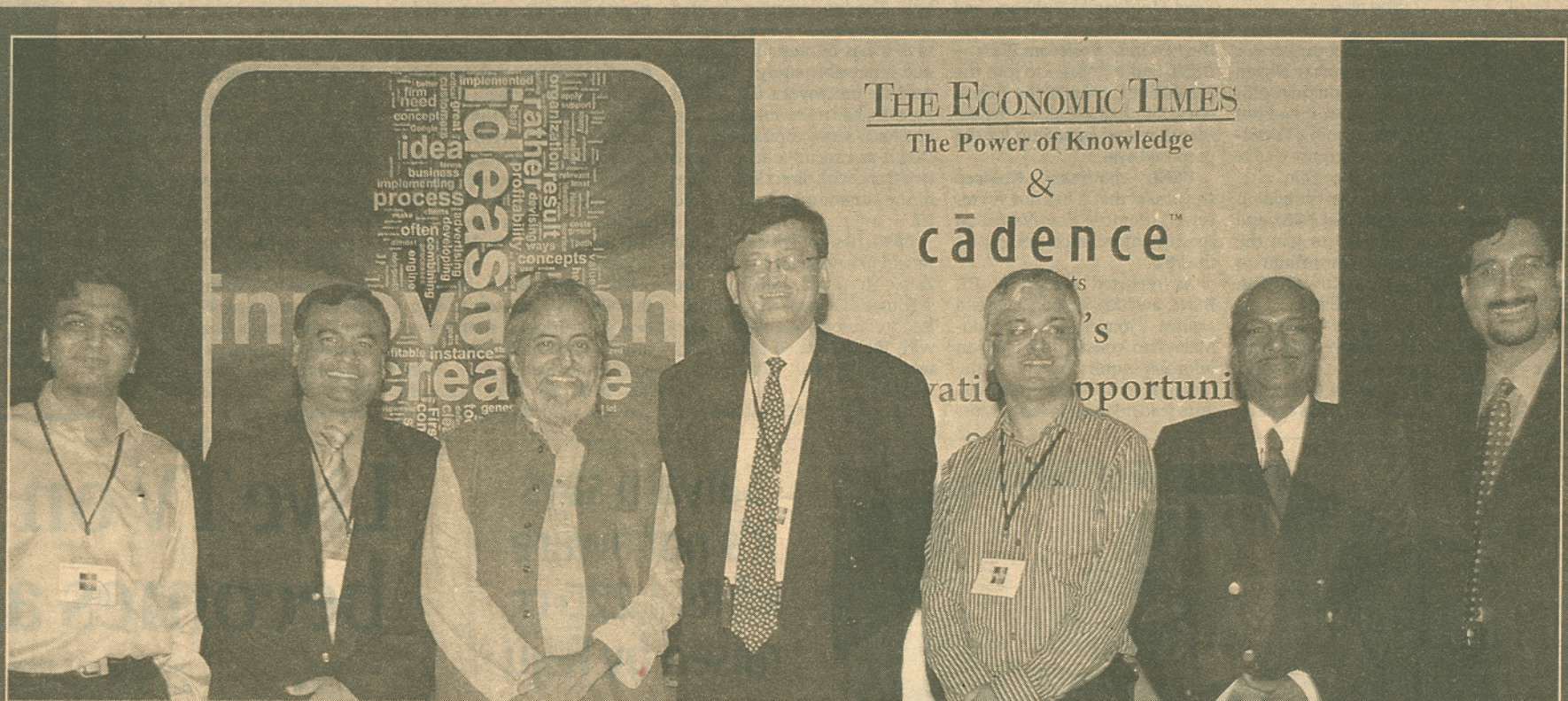
THE Economic Times in association with Cadence Design Systems, a global design innovation company, conducted a panel discussion on 'India's Innovation Opportunity'.

Many industry experts from diverse fields presented their ideas on innovation dealing with areas such as energy efficiency, affordability and new technologies. The discussion was moderated by Cadence corporate vice-president and managing director for India Jaswinder Ahuja.

Learning lessons from the markets like India, GE Healthcare, the world's biggest maker of medical imaging equipment, thinks innovation is all about reverse innovation.

The product developed for the US and European markets may not be suitable for the Indian market. "We have established cross functional team in India who are interacting with Indian customers, doctors and hospitals to understand their needs and pain points," said Ashish Shah, general manager, healthcare technology, India GE Healthcare.

With India being considered the capital for cardio vascular disease and most of the patients being in the rural areas, GE said that it is addressing this opportunity. It has come



(From left) Ashish Aggarwal, CEO and chairman, SNAP Networks; Ashish Shah, GM, healthcare technology, India GE Healthcare ; Prof Anil Gupta, IIM-Ahmedabad and executive vice-chairman National Innovation Foundation; Lip-Bu Tan, president & chief executive, Cadence Design Systems; Ramendra S Baoni, founder & MD, Bisquare Systems; VB Vibhute, CEO, Hexmoto Controls; Jaswinder Ahuja, Corporate VP & MD Cadence India

up with a novel portable electrocardiography (ECG) machine which interprets the electrical activity of the heart.

The machine which weighs 1,100 gms is very small and cheaper compared to GE's previous products which were heavy and bigger in size. The machine, designed, sourced and manufactured in India will address the bottom of the pyramid in markets such as India. "It can take 100 ECG's, works on batteries and has a great

use in India's rural areas", said Mr Shah. He said that innovation is all about accountability, affordability and quality that needs to be kept in mind for the success of any innovation. "The days have come, when India will innovate and we will sell the products to the world", he said.

Hexmoto Controls which makes low-power AC drives said that it is also seeing opportunity in Indian rural areas, especially in the area of agriculture. Since the

availability of electricity in rural areas is a problem, Hexmoto has come up with an innovation where the solar energy is converted into electricity to drive the agricultural motor applications. For instance, solar panels on invertors are used to drive the pumps which feed water to the agricultural lands during the day. "At night this energy is used to light the homes," Hexmoto Controls chief executive VB Vibhute said. Mr Vibhute said

that there is a need for support and innovation in semiconductor industry to produce renewable energy as India loses electricity worth thousands of crores of rupees annually due to power cuts. And solar energy is one such solution which is cheap and can do huge savings. "Even small portions of land subjected to solar energy can meet large energy needs of the country as India has high solar insolation", said Mr Vibhute.

Echoing similar views, Ramendra S Baoni, founder and managing director — Bisquare Systems, who said even though renewable energy is the need of the hour, Kerosene is still used for lighting and cooking purposes in villages, which is hazardous. "Still the government continues to subsidise it", he said.

Mr Baoni who heads a product innovation company was of the view that that factors such as usability and design also lead to the success of an innovation. "We spent lot of time in villages for our research and development purpose to understand their lighting needs".

Similarly, entrepreneurs such as Dr Ashish Aggarwal, chief executive and chairman of SNAP Networks, said that they surveyed the landscape of India for eight months to find out needs on which a product can be built. Finally, SNAP was able to come up with a three-dimensional audio system or speakers that can fit in a light bulb socket. "We are now in the process of equipping it with colour LED lights," Mr Aggarwal said.

Dr Aggarwal, who has spent most of time in the US, was of

cadence

the view that India will become the world's innovation hub in next 12-15 years, due to its affordable innovations and enterprising attitude. Currently, India has established brand equity in IT and we will see it happening at the product level as well, he said.

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