

Changes on cards for joint entrance exam

HT Correspondent
Kolkata, October 16

A NUMBER of changes are on cards for the West Bengal Joint Entrance Examination (WB-JEE) from next year. The state government has placed the suggestions before the Central Selection Committee and the WB-JEE board, which will take a final decision and make the all-important announcements on October 23.

Among the several changes that are likely to be made effective, the most important is a cut-off percentage for engineering aspirants in the exam. As of now, students appearing for the medical entrance examination

are required to score above 50 per cent to get a call for the counselling. But there is no such cut-off for the engineering aspirants. "There is nothing called pass or fail in the engineering entrance test. All the students who take the engineering exam get a rank card after the results are published and even students who are ranked 70,000 get a call for counselling if seats are available. This rule needs to be revised," said a WB-JEE board member.

The board is also likely to decide on a minimum cut-off percentage of forty-five percent, which the students would have to score in their Class XII board examination if they want to sit

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for WBJEE. The state government has also suggested that a cut-off of 30 is fixed for English. A special mention has been made of the cut-off in English because many state boards such as the ones in Bihar and Orissa have 20 as the qualifying marks in English. This, board members feel, is diluting the quality of students.

The board also has a decision to take on whether outstation students would be allowed to take admission in government

engineering colleges. In 2006, as also in the previous years, students from other states were allowed to take admission in government engineering colleges after appearing in WBJEE. With several states having stopped admission of outstation candidates in their government engineering colleges, there is a chance that West Bengal might follow suit.

It has already been decided that WBJEE 2007 will be a one-day examination with physics, chemistry being punched into a single exam of two hours. The medical students too will have their exam on the same day. The board plans to decide on the change in question-paper for-

mat soon. The forms for WBJEE 2007, which will be held on April 22, are likely to be distributed over the next two months.

Higher education minister Professor Sudarsan Roychoudhuri, who has taken the initiative of restructuring the WBJEE, met the board members on Monday. "The state government has given its suggestion in this regard. Now the Central Selection Committee and the WBJEE board will take the final decision," said professor Roychoudhuri.

The WBJEE board will have its final meeting on October 23 and announce the changes in a press conference, WBJEE board chairman professor N. R. Banerjea said.

Inching closer to national institute status

HT Correspondent

Kolkata, October 16

THE BENGAL Engineering and Science University (BESU), Shibpur, inched closer towards acquiring the institute of national importance (INI) status with a meeting between the state higher education minister and representatives of the varsity ending on a positive note on Monday.

A team of eight BESU representatives, led by vice-chancellor N.R. Banerjee, met higher education minister professor Sudarshan Roychoudhuri to discuss the issue of acquiring the INI status bestowed by the Union ministry of human resource and development. The minister is believed to have welcomed the idea and agreed to the Ananthkrishnan Committee report, which had recommended INI status for BESU.

"Being upgraded to the national level is something all institutions dream of. Though BESU is already an institute of

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national importance in its own right, we are always open to an official status," Roychoudhuri said.

The minister, however, made it clear that the state government was not ready to accept the central rider that it had to give up total control of the university if it were to be conferred the INI status. He, instead, suggested a "participatory mode of governance". "The Indian Statistical Institute (ISI), Kolkata, is also an institute of national importance, but the state government has a say in its functioning. This is what we call a participatory mode of governance. We will discuss this issue further," he said.

Roychoudhuri also said that the Centre needed to clear its stand on the process of funding. "The union ministry is conferring the INI status to some select institutions across the

country as part its 11th Five Year Plan. It should clearly state whether its grants would recur or was for a certain period of time. If central grant is for a limited period, we need to know where the funds will come from after that," he said. "The Act that confers INI status to BESU should also ensure permanent central grant for the university."

The minister said he would ensure that students from the state get a chance to study at BESU even if it goes the ISI way. "Once BESU becomes an INI, students from across the country will make a beeline for admission. We must ensure that admission is not given to outsiders at the cost of our own students," he said.

The ministry has already pledged Rs 20 crore for BESU. An INI status will ensure more grants per annum. The state is required to send its feed back to the Centre by October 31. Roychoudhuri said he hoped that the BESU authorities and the state government would be able to negotiate in time.

