



Some MBBS students got 0 or less in NEET papers

No Cut-Offs For Individual Subjects

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With no cut-off for individual subjects — physics, chemistry and biology — in NEET (entrance exam), at least 400 students with single-digit marks and 110 students with zero or negative marks in physics and chemistry have been admitted for MBBS in 2017, mostly in private colleges. This raises a question. If getting zero in these subjects doesn't make a person ineligible for admission, why bother to test in the subjects at all?

Interestingly, the origi-

SHOULD STUDENTS WITH THESE SCORES HAVE GOT MEDICAL COURSE ADMISSION?

Physics (out of 180)	Chemistry (out of 180)	Biology (out of 360)	NEET Rank
-2	-4	139	5.3 Lakh+
-2	0	131	5.4L+
9	-2	113	5.8L+
5	0	110	6L+
3	-10	118	6.2L+
54	40	15	6.3L+

* TOI is giving indicative ranks of the students, not the exact ones

nal notification to adopt a common entrance examination had stipulated that students should score at least 50% in individual subjects. However, the subsequent notification, which brought in the percentile system, dropped the stipulation on marks in individual subjects.

TOI analysed the subject marks of 1,990 students who got admitted to MBBS with NEET scores of less than 150 out of 720 in 2017. We found 530 with single-digit marks, zero or less in physics or chemistry or even both.

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Rich students with low marks buy way into medical colleges

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There would be many more such examples among those admitted with aggregate marks above 150. Out of these 530,507 were in private medical colleges. The average tuition fees paid by them (not including hostel, mess, library and other miscellaneous charges) were about Rs 17 lakh per annum showing how rich students with abysmal NEET marks have effectively been able to buy their way into medical colleges. NEET, promising a merit-based selection, was meant to prevent exactly this.

About half of these students are in deemed universities which would be free to conduct their own final MBBS examination. Once cleared, these exams would

With the current system, over 6.5 lakh students qualified for about 60,000 seats in 2017

allow their students to register and practise as doctors.

NEET was first mooted in a December 2010 gazette notification of the Medical Council of India (MCI), then administered by the government appointed Board of Governors. The notification specified that eligibility for the MBBS course would be by obtaining at least 50% of marks (or 40% in the case of reserved categories) in "each paper of NEET". However, a subsequent MCI notification in February 2012 not only changed the eligibility criteria from 50% and 40% to 50th and 40th percentile, but

also did away with minimum marks in each paper. When the Supreme Court in 2016 reversed its earlier order to pave the way for NEET to be implemented, it effectively revived this notification.

Dr KK Talwar who headed the BoG in 2012 explained to TOI that faced with stiff resistance to NEET from state governments, the focus then was on finding a way to get NEET accepted. "If the NEET results over the years show that the percentile cut off is too low, or that minimum marks need to be fixed for individual subjects, there is nothing stopping the MCI from making necessary amendments," said Dr Talwar. The MCI when asked why it had not moved to bring in the necessary amendment to stop this dilution of merit remained non-committal.

A helping hand for Indian universities

Leadership in philanthropy is central to enabling an institutional vision for higher education



C. RAJ KUMAR

The future of Indian universities (public and private) will significantly depend upon our ability to harness the possibility of individual, institutional and corporate philanthropy for the purposes of higher education. A major legal and policy reform to promote some form of mandatory corporate social responsibility (CSR) was initiated through the Companies Act, 2013. Path-breaking, it had the potential to transform the relationship between business and society. Unfortunately, the results so far have not been encouraging.

Misinterpreting CSR

The Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MCA) has observed that among the 5,097 companies that have filed annual reports till December 2016 (financial year 2015-16), only 3,118 companies had made some contribution towards CSR expenditure. During FY 2014-15, 3,139 companies had spent 74% of the prescribed CSR expenditure – most were to the Prime Minister's Relief Fund. There has been very little strategic thinking and innovation in the CSR where corporations can play a leadership role in

contributing to society. This also shows that companies in India have generally not understood the larger goals of CSR, viewing it more as a charitable endeavour.

While there is much that deserves attention under the CSR framework for contributing to the social sector, the fact is that higher education and universities do need to receive significantly more attention. Every aspect of a university's growth requires substantial financial resources: hiring of world class faculty; developing research centres; funding research projects; having rewards and incentives for faculty publications; building physical infrastructure, and making available scholarships for students. The Ministry of Human Resource Development should be working closely with the MCA to have a road map that incentivises CSR funding to be made available for universities.

The funding factor

Some years ago, a report by a committee constituted by the then Planning Commission and headed by the then chief mentor of Infosys, Narayana Murthy, focussed on the role of the corporate sector in higher education. It acknowledged the importance of stronger private initiatives and recommended steps such as free land for 999 years (sic), 300% deduction in taxable income to companies for contributions towards boosting higher education and 10-year multiple entry visas for foreign re-



search scholars. It also recommended a ₹1,000 crore scholarship fund (with tax exemption for corporate sector contributions) to promote greater accessibility of higher education to the underprivileged. However, these recommendations were not implemented.

A range of reforms are being promoted in higher education. Recognising that universities in India need to be significantly empowered in order to achieve excellence, the government has initiated five major reforms in the areas of regulation, accreditation, rankings, autonomy and internationalisation. However, the most critical aspect of building world-class universities as well as upgrading existing universities is in relation to funding and the availability of substantial financial resources.

Every year, educationists have put forth the argument that we need to increase the budget for higher education. Marginal increases in budgets and creative reallocation of resources to show more spending on higher education are not going to help. A thorough and even a radical re-examination of budgetary resources is

essential. The higher education sector can be truly re-energised only by a significant increase in loans, grants and philanthropy. Banks and financial institutions have been rather timid and even indifferent towards funding in higher education. Therefore, there is an urgent need for policy intervention, where universities and related funding should be designated a priority sector. It should be seen as being more important than infrastructure development.

Issue of philanthropy

Beyond a few examples of philanthropy in higher education in India, contemporary leadership in philanthropy in higher education is limited and almost non-existent. The historical evolution of public universities in India and their exclusive dependence on the government for all financial resources have contributed to limiting the capacity of funding that could be available for public universities. Today, public universities (State universities and other higher education institutions) face serious financial challenges. While the Central universities and institutions of higher education are better situated, complex procedures, incessant delays, regulatory obstacles and a labyrinth of regulations for access to the funds have created many disincentives for universities to have the necessary freedom and flexibility to spend resources as per their needs and priorities.

As far as private universities/

higher education institutions are concerned, the problem is even more serious. The opening up of the private sector to higher education has ended up creating many mediocre institutions. The privatisation of higher education has not been driven by philanthropy but to a large extent by commercial and for-profit interests that do not have a symbiotic relationship with the vision, values and ethos of a university. Higher education and universities (private or public) by their very nature ought to be not-for-profit and established through philanthropy.

The Institute of Eminence (IOE) policy by the government did create hopes and expectations for establishing world class universities in India. Unfortunately, the policy, procedure and the process of selecting IOEs has been marred by a lack of transparency, vision and imagination in institution building. Therefore, there is an urgent need in Indian universities to reflect upon the crisis of leadership and the inability to seek reforms relating to institution building. In this, leadership in philanthropy is central to enabling an institutional vision that will help build the future of higher education in India.

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Online medicare for yatris soon

ISRO, J&K govt. to set up telemedicine centre at 12,700 feet, aided by top hospitals

PEERZADA ASHIQ
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The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) on Sunday joined hands with Jammu and Kashmir's Directorate of Health Services-Kashmir (DHS-K) to set up a telemedicine centre at an altitude of 12,700 feet, roping in the country's top hospitals, to cater to pilgrims en route to the Amarnath shrine.

The Panjtarni Base Camp Hospital on the Pahalgam cave shrine route will provide real-time treatment for high-altitude and other ailments that pilgrims frequently face in the region.



Pilgrims undergoing a check-up before leaving for the Amarnath Yatra. ■PTI

An Intensive Care Unit will handle critically ill patients.

"The telemedicine facility will enable the doctors post-

ed at the hospital to connect in real time to the tertiary care institutions of the country. Expert opinion on super-specialities like cardiology, neurology and respiratory medicine can be sought for timely intervention," said Dr. Pawan Kotwal, Principal Secretary, J&K Health and Medical Education department.

The Post Graduate Institute of Medical Education and Research, (PGIMER), Chandigarh; the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), New Delhi; the Sher-i-Kashmir Institute of Medical Sciences (SKIMS), Srinagar, etc. will be among the country's top hospitals available

through the tele-medicine facility.

25 pilgrims dead

At least 25 pilgrims lost lives during the pilgrimage from the twin routes of Pahalgam and Baltal since the yatra started on June 28. Many died of cardiac arrest.

"Modern technology at these high-altitude sites is the need of the hour," said Dr. Saleem ur Rehman, Director General of the Health Services, J&K. This year, the department has established 29 health facilities and 12 oxygen booths, manned by 1,380 professionals on the two routes.