

By VERNON FERNANDEZ (04' EEE) AND SANDIP GANGAKHEDKAR ('05 EEE)

BITSAT Review

For the administration, BITSAT '05 was a great success. Conducted in 14 centers all over India, it truly reflected the nationalized outlook that BITS Pilani has always desired. A pioneering venture, BITSAT '05 has already changed from being a prototype to being a model that will probably remain in place for years to come.

BITSAT '05 was announced at a press conference on 15th December, 2004. The last date for the receipt of applications was 31st January '05. Approximately 57,000 applications were received. 48,435 candidates appeared for the exam at centers all over the country. 11,611 of these were female. 1400 candidates were successful, 800 in Pilani and 600 in Goa.

Each candidate was given a choice of centre and of date and time. This gave the students a lot of flexibility, as they had to appear for other competitive exams as well. Faculty in charge of PS and professors on campus also took on the responsibility of overseeing the procedure in the respective centers.

DEMOGRAPHICS

The post BITSAT demographics give a rosy picture of regional parity etc., which was missing in the normalized percentage

About the BITSAT

BITSAT '05 tested skills in five areas – Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, English and Logical Reasoning. The three-hour test was on 450 marks. It contained multiple choice questions. Each question carried 3 marks with no associated negative marking. The weightage was 135 marks for Math, 120 each for Physics and Chemistry and 75 for English and Logical Reasoning. For those who attempted all the 150 questions in the stipulated time, a bonus of 12 questions were unlocked.



BITSAT Test Center

procedure followed by BITS Pilani. This new, more cosmopolitan crowd is strongly in tandem with what BITS Pilani has always valued – intellectual and regional diversity. One odd fact however, is the surprisingly low percentage of girls, 14% in Pilani, admitted this year. The factors that contributed to this

drastic skewing are varied and subject to much debate, prominent among them being the existing educational system which promotes the ‘coaching class’ culture where guys get more preference and flexibility for going to the “renowned” coaching classes. This coupled with a patriarchal societal system, which tends to favour boys and thereby put girls at a disadvantage in competitive exams like IIT JEE, AIEEE etc. Another factor could be the lack of awareness about the various educational avenues in BITS, like MMS and B. Pharm. However, the institute plans to take affirmative action to remedy this problem. Where the authorities feel that the initiative to send more girls should come from their parents our VC Prof.

S Venkateswaran says that the institute is, looking to increase the number of girl participation in the test by introducing certain incentives like reservation quota for girls etc. Much of it is still in the process of discussion.

PROBLEMS

One might wonder how ride through the first ever-online test was- a bumpy and rutted one or was it a smooth sailing experience? **Prof. Raghurama**, Dean Admissions and Placement believes that it was the latter, where problems faced, in terms of software, security, management were close to none or at least ones that had been expected. However, he adds that the mammoth task of pulling off an online entrance of this stature has its own challenges. Meeting

these challenges and bettering the given norms comes as part of the responsibility of organizing a completely new entrance test, and improvements are in the offing. Nothing tangible, so far, has been decided but we can look forward to a possible increase in the numbers of centers, increasing software efficiency etc.

BITS – THE ROLE MODEL?

One avenue, which BITS still holds its mark, is its acknowledgement of 12th standard result, which had been relegated to the background with increasing emphasis on entrance exams. Admission to the toppers from every board was granted this year too in spite of an entrance exam and 17 board

toppers from the 2005 batch are now on campus. The required cut-off in the 12th exam was 80% in addition to the BITSAT score, which reiterates BITS' stance on this issue. Recently the IIT's have introduced a 60% cut off for entrances. Emulating BITS should we say? Prof Raghurama smiles and says, "We can't be sure but if they are, then the institute is happy that others are also waking up to the importance of school results".

With the BITS administration being highly satisfied with the whole process, BITSAT will most certainly be conducted next year with necessary improvements and new features.



BITSAT – A Freshman Perspective

Anticipation and fear dominated my senses as I entered the test-centre for the all important, much-vaunted BITSAT 2005 exam. The swank and plush building called 'Eduquity Career Technologies' in the elite area of Marol, Andheri East, was going to be the battlefield. The warriors? A fully-armored, battle-ready brigade of 40. Except that there were no sides- everyone pitted against everyone else... Phew! Sounds much more than just a war... guerrilla warfare, maybe.

Being an objective, multiple-choice test, speed and accuracy were the main keys to success. A race against time, BITSAT '05 was a well-structured exam with unconventional testing areas like English Proficiency and Logical Reasoning. It was this part that made BITSAT '05 different from the other routine examinations like AIEEE, IITJEE, State CET's, etc. The smooth flow of proceedings was marred by a few complaints about mistakes in a few questions. The invigilators could do nothing beyond noting the ID numbers of the respective candidates.

As the seconds ticked and the minutes flowed, the warriors were deep in thought, fervently clicking away... some to glory, some to doom... The stakes were too high; no compromises could be made...

I heaved a sigh of relief as the final bell rang. The joy of having finished the last of my exams pushed the more immediate concern over my BITSAT performance into oblivion. The BITSAT was unique in many ways. It certainly gave me more freedom than any other exam. Right from the date and time of the examination to the order of answering, everything was decided by me... The true mettle of the candidate was tested by a plethora of carefully crafted questions from a very vast database. In retrospect, BITSAT seems largely representative of our life at BITS!