

● CRISIS MANAGEMENT TEAM FOUND AMISS ● NEW DATES MAY CLASH WITH COLLEGE EXAMS

CAT now smells a rat Students hit panic button

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Nov. 29: The lack of adequate crisis management teams formed on behalf of the Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs) as well as the technical support firm Prometric has been held responsible for the chaos in CAT centres across the country on Saturday by aspirants and academicians.

Experts feel that the crisis could have been averted if the exam organisers had put in place a good public relations team that could have cleared the misunderstanding. Students have expressed displeasure with Prometric, alleging that they were taken for granted and the firm had not set up effective helplines and contact email addresses. According to experts, the technical glitches in the CAT online exams arose from problems in the main server.

Former vice-chancellor of Visvesvaraya Technological University (VTU) K. Balaveera Reddy, who introduced online exams at the postgraduate level, said the organisers had committed a lapse through neglect and lack of preparedness.

"According to the standard procedure, organisers should set up a server which

has twice the capacity of the actual number of applicants. But it seems that Prometric neglected this aspect which resulted in nationwide chaos."

However, he added, "Online exams are the future of the education system and there is no meaning in criticising it. This is the time to come out with some standard guidelines over conducting online exams."

MeritTrac CEO Madan Padaki also agrees with this point of view. Speaking to this newspaper, he said, "When we conducted online tests for admissions to various PG courses in Gujarat, we did not face any problem as every system was checked and trial exams were conducted for two days before starting the actual process. We recorded zero error in the online exams conducted for admissions to the Manipal University." But many feel that more than the technical snag, the absence of a local crisis management team was the reason behind the chaos. "Chaos, protests and negative feedback can be avoided with a local crisis management team. No one was there to give proper information to the students on the problem. Some mischief-mongers worsened the situa-