

Mass mock tests could've saved day: Experts

DOWNTIME

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- **Others say if number of impacted candidates exceeds one-tenth of the total number, then it is a serious problem**
- **Some officials said a few CAT centres got disrupted due to virus attacks**

Team ET

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SHOULD the transition for a prominent national test from traditional pen-and-paper format to a computer-based one be so 'difficult' that almost 10% of candidates can't write it at all?

Even as close to 5,000 of an estimated 40,000 aspirants failed to take CAT, IT experts questioned the preparedness on part of the organisers.

"The sample size for the pilot project must have been small, else they could have identified the problem of overloading during the test runs," said an IT expert who conducts online exams.

There are several large-scale exams in the country that have migrated from offline to online successfully.

number of candidates who have been impacted exceeds one-tenth of the total number, then it is a serious problem."

Said Ankit Fadia: "Conducting CAT on computers is a thoughtful action. But the trouble lies in the way it was executed. Prometric must have tested its software, but conducting a mock CAT for all candidates could have proved beneficial for the stakeholders."

Besides the professional agencies, almost every CAT preparatory institute has such set-ups. Endeavor Careers has set up 200 workstations at five locations in Gujarat for CAT preparation. Though CAT is conducted at a very different scale, proper testing of IT infrastructure would have resolved most issues, said Endeavor director Hitesh Devalia.

A Gujarat government official asso-

ciated with GCET said: "Our entire examination process witnessed only one server failure." GTU authorities chose 26 centres out of 47 options and sanitised every computer. They conducted mock tests to check the sustainability of the infrastructure to support tests for 6,000 candidates a day.

Some officials said a few CAT centres got disrupted due to virus attacks. Users were unable to access the exam, there were delays in logging in and glitches with biometrics and passwords. Some students also complained of poor management. "The ambience was poor. Invigilators were talking loudly. Some of them kept their phones inside the examination room," said a student.

(Inputs From Mitul Thakkar and Peerzada Abrar)

Before CAT, Gujarat government's Gujarat Technical University (GTU) had conducted GCET—a common entrance test for MBA and MCA—on computers. A total of 23,000 students took the test over four days at 26 centres.

Celebrity hacker and computer security consultant Ankit Fadia conducted an online test for 2,500 students through Reliance World network on a single day. Manipal and BITS Pilani have also been conducting online entrance exams for around one lakh students since 2005.

According to professor S Sadagopan, founder director of the International Institute of Information Technology, Bangalore: "The technology used for CAT is fine and one needs to look at statistics before blaming anyone. If the