

## TESTING TIMES

# Mock trials would have saved CAT online

Anjali Prayag

Bangalore, Dec. 4

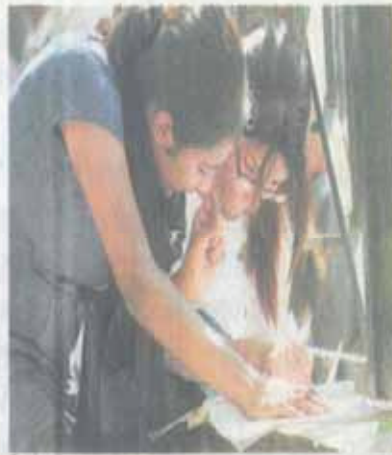
Sandeep P., a graduate from Bangalore who took the Common Admission Test on November 29, wishes his system had crashed.

"There is an advantage for people whose systems crashed," he says, "They already have a glimpse of the paper pattern and can get a (better) second shot at the test. And then there are people whose system crashed for 15 minutes and got that much more time to work on their questions."

But Prof Himanshu Rai, Chairman-Admissions, IIM-Lucknow, does not agree with Sandeep. "It's only one or two questions that a student would get extra time for. This is the utmost advantage that a student would have."

He says that students taking the test on Day 2 and Day 3 would anyway have some idea of what the test would be like, although students have been advised not to discuss the paper pattern.

Despite Prof Rai's reasoning, Mr Ajay



Arora, Director of TIME, Bangalore, an institute that trains students for the entrance test, agrees with Sandeep.

"This year's test has become a mockery (of the system). With students writing the test under varying conditions, there is no level-playing field."

In his opinion, the examination process for the year should be scrapped and a retest conducted for all the students.

The entrance exam to the country's most prestigious management institutes has been controversy-ridden – a test paper leak in 2003, changed fee structure in 2004, reservation issue in

2006. Now the exam has thrown up another debate on if the CAT would revert to the pen and paper mode.

Prof Rai says the Directors of the IIMs would take a concerted decision on the matter soon.

### SETBACK TO ONLINE TESTS

This is a setback for the country as universities and institutes that were preparing to take their exams online are now jittery, says Mr Madan Padaki, Co-founder and CEO, MeritTrac, a skills assessment firm that has conducted online exams for Manipal University and the State Government of Gujarat. "We have conducted half a million online exams in 24 months and they have worked," he says.

"CAT exams could have been managed better if there were sufficient mock trials and tests for the online examination system. Any software should have to undergo a preproduction test to ensure a desirable and reliable output," says Mr Swami Krishnan, CEO, IFIM Business School, Bangalore.