



International Column



**Ekaterine Pkhikidze**  
Director Sports  
Gori -Georgia  
>> Contd. p.2..



Education Jagat

## 'NEET-UG grace marks withdrawn; 1,563 candidates are given the option to retake the exam'



■ EJ News - Hariom Sharma

The Supreme Court has been informed by the Central Government that the grace marks previously awarded to 1,563 NEET-UG candidates have been revoked. These individuals now have the choice to either retake the exam or accept their original scores without the additional marks. This decision comes amidst intense debate surrounding the NEET-UG examination, particularly concerning allegations of a question paper leak and other irregularities during the test conducted on May 5.

Despite these controversies, the Supreme Court has declined to postpone the upcoming NEET-UG counselling, set to begin on July 6. The court has stated that the admissions of successful candidates will be provisional, pending the resolution of several petitions calling for actions such as the annulment of the May 5 examination.

The cancellation of grace marks was deemed "fairly reasonable" by a vacation bench comprising Justices Vikram Nath and Sandeep Mehta, following recommendations from a committee established to address the concerns raised by petitioners.

The National Testing Agency (NTA), responsible for the all-India pre-medical entrance test, will offer a retest for the affected candidates on June 23, with results announced on June 30.

Lawyer Kanu Agarwal, representing the Centre and the NTA, explained that the committee's decision to withdraw the grace marks was made to alleviate student apprehensions. The committee found that awarding

grace marks for lost time during the exam created an imbalanced situation, as it only applied to unanswered questions. Consequently, the committee advised nullifying the scorecards of the beneficiaries, who will be notified of their actual scores sans compensation.

Lawyer J Sai Deepak, representing Alakh Pandey of Ed-Tech firm Physics Wallah, criticised the arbitrary distribution of grace marks and advocated for a retest option for all students who experienced time loss but did not file court complaints. The court, however, refused to broaden the case's scope beyond those who had formally sought legal recourse.[1]

The Supreme Court has issued notices regarding three petitions related to the NEET-UG examination and scheduled a collective hearing for July 8, following the summer recess. The petitions include demands for an expert panel to investigate the examination process, calls for a fresh exam due to alleged malpractices, and challenges to the



The rigging of the NEET exam has devastated the lives of more than 24 lakh students and their families.

6 students from the same exam center topped with maximum marks; how many get such marks, which is not technically possible, but the government is continuously denying the possibility of a paper leak?

Congress had made a robust plan to deal with this 'paper leak industry' that is running in collusion with the education mafia and government machinery. In our manifesto, we resolved to free students from paper leaks

## Anger in the country over the NEET exam will 'reverberate inside Parliament'



■ EJ News - Agency

We believe that no inquiry can be just, fair, and comprehensive if it is headed by the NTA itself. NTA chairperson should be removed and Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who likes giving exam advice to Class 10 students, should not forget the mental anxiety caused to these undergraduates, says Gogoi.

The Congress on Thursday reiterated its demand for a Supreme Court-monitored probe into the NEET exam issue, and asserted that the anger in the country over the matter will "reverberate inside Parliament as well".

The opposition party also demanded the removal of the National Testing Agency (NTA) Director General and claimed that the BJP government's attitude towards the ongoing demand for an inquiry into the NEET examination is "irresponsible and insensitive".

Congress president Mallikar-

jun Kharge said that in the last 10 years, the Modi government has ruined the future of crores of youth through paper leaks and rigging.

"Grace Marks was not the only problem in the NEET exam. There has been rigging, papers have been leaked, and corruption has taken place. The future of 24 lakh students appearing in the NEET examination is at stake

• 'The Modi government cannot escape its responsibility by placing the responsibility for its actions on the shoulders of NTA'  
• HRD Ministry says no evidence has emerged of NEET paper leak  
• Opposition says that if NEET paper has not been leaked then it is a game of money. Then why are the investigating agencies not finding evidence of money among all the staff of NTA? Is the govt. saving NTA?

"The Modi government cannot escape its responsibility by placing the responsibility of its actions on the shoulders of NTA. There should be a CBI investigation into the entire NEET scam.

"We demand a Supreme Court-monitored investigation into this entire scandal which has affected around 24 lakh students," he said. "The Congress believes that the BJP government's attitude towards the ongoing demand for an inquiry into the NEET exam is irresponsible and insensitive..Or

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"The Modi government cannot escape its responsibility by placing the responsibility of its actions on the shoulders of NTA. There should be a CBI investigation into the entire NEET scam.

If the Modi government is not ready for a CBI inquiry then the Congress party demands a fair inquiry under the supervision of the Supreme Court," Kharge said in a post.

After investigation, the culprits should be given the harshest punishment, and lakhs of students should be given compensation to save their year from being wasted, he said.

Addressing a press conference at the AICC headquarters here, Gogoi also slammed the government over the issue.

"We demand a Supreme Court-monitored investigation into this entire scandal which has affected around 24 lakh students," he said.

"The Congress believes that the BJP government's attitude towards the ongoing demand for an inquiry into the NEET exam is irresponsible and insensitive..Or

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# Sports play an important role in educational institutions



My students are very fond of classes in physical education. Why are your students so fond of sports lessons? As a teacher, I take the abilities, interests, and needs of all my students into consideration. I prefer to use individual approaches to all of them. At the lessons I often act as if I am one of them - I play with them and I am also their friend. They come to ask me for advice. I also have physically weak students who find it difficult to do any activities or are afraid to participate in any of them. To overcome this fear and anxiety, I put them next to a student of their strength or I stand

in pairs and play with them.

Using such kind of approaches, students' tension goes down, and their self-confidence increases. It is really hard to work with a student having challenging behavior but I manage to take control of this situation if any. I let the student stand next to me when considering that he/she needs assistance and I let him/her give a lesson together with me. I give them work by imposing certain responsibilities and they find out how difficult it is to deal with the

situation when a student misbehaves and tries to disrupt the lesson. Seeing this, they attempt to fully engage in the learning process.

I aim to develop psychological and physical abilities within the students, upgrade their personal and social welfare, familiarize them with the importance of the principles of a healthy lifestyle, and develop both vital skills of physical activity and civic competencies such as independent decision-making, responsibility, constructive cooperation, tolerance, self-control, and organizational abilities.

My students are aware that sport is like a precondition for human health. Physical activity helps students develop their minds and learn better. Studies have revealed that children who play sports and are physically active have better academic results and are more open-minded than those who are not physically active. I believe that parents have a great responsibility to form a healthy lifestyle for their children.

We organize "Fun Starts" for children and their parents at school to provide the enhancement of parent engagement where both fathers and mothers are actively involved. We hold projects regarding bad habits such as alcoholism, drug ad-



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Director School Sports  
Gori-Georgia

dition, gambling, and gadget addiction to teach students what negative impact all these have on the body of a teenager and their life. This will help them not to fall under the influence of bad habits.

The teachers at school are involved in physical activities as well. We run internal competitions where all the teachers are happily engaged as they know it is necessary for their health. They encourage the students by doing this kind of activity. In addition to being healthy, sport is an additional opportunity for the adolescent/young adult to make friends, interact with them, engage in group activities, and gain public recognition. For these purposes, we

cooperate with other schools and conduct joint projects to develop cooperative skills in them.

All young adults should have equal opportunities to be active and go in for sports despite their gender, skills, physical abilities, and social status. For this purpose, we organize the projects called "Woman and Sports", thus allowing the students to get to know female athletes and their achievements. It is common knowledge that there is a problem of obesity for both adults and adolescents in Georgia. We organize projects like "Healthy and Junk Food" and "Vitamins and Sports" to increase the awareness of adults in this regard. Within the scope of this project, the students will familiarize themselves and make the difference between useful and harmful food for the body.

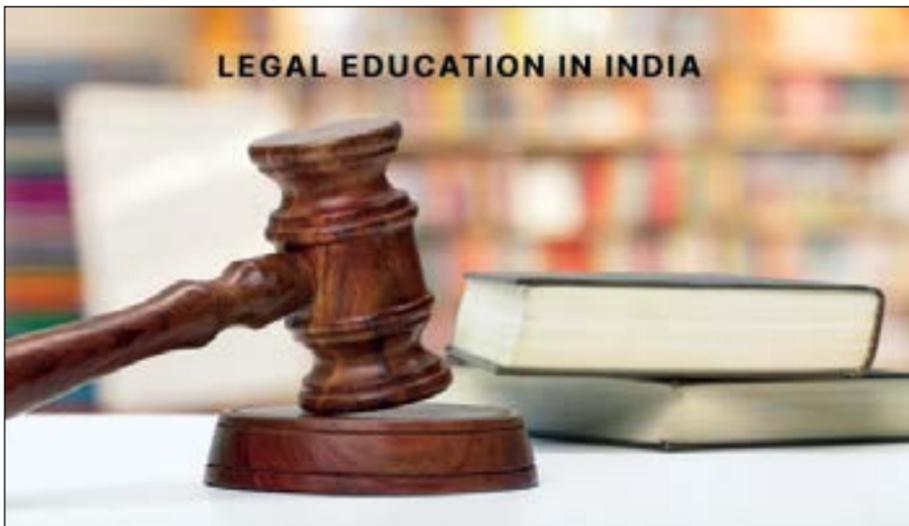
Young adults who are involved in sports activities are healthier, have better academic achievements, are more open and active, and do not suffer from obesity. As a sports teacher, I motivate, encourage, and give an example to my students to live a healthy life and be beautiful both physically and spiritually. Our motto states the same: "A healthy mind dwells in a healthy body".

All sports teachers must establish a healthy lifestyle in schools. All the world admits that sport is the most significant and often indispensable therapy for human and adolescent health. The incorrect and often non-existent dynamics of teaching sports in public or private schools as early as the 90s of the last century produced quite negative outcomes.

The highest rate of drug addiction, alcoholism, and tobacco use was recorded among

Georgian adults for this very period. Sport is a significant precondition for the harmonious development of an individual. The adult should be instilled and taught to understand the need for physical activity from his/her early grades at school. He/she should find out that health implies not only having no kind of disease but avoiding any of them which can be done by following a healthy way of life.

## Legal Education in India



**Prof. Dr. Nimit Gupta**  
CEO - World Association of  
Cases  
New Delhi - India

The globalised economy has shown a remarkable change with the concept of legal education in India. Legal education is not only confined to train the legal professions but also aims at meeting societal demands, upholding moral values and cultivating of informed citizens of the country with law abiding principles, with the deepest knowledge of understanding the terminology of equality before the law. Nowadays, legal understanding or legal literacy is not only bound to be a professional necessity for any citizen but

also it is a civic duty so that individuals can comprehend their rights and duties and then contributing to the society which is governed with the principles of human rights and justice.

Establishments of different universities which started from National Law School of India in 1986 has marked a remarkable shift in legal education. Now there are lot of private and government universities offering integrated law degrees beyond traditional degrees such as LLB or B.A.LL.B which reflects on multidisciplinary approach which specifically focuses on specialised education with practical exposures through court visits, Moot Courts sessions, Prison visits and many more law related activities which challenge the traditional lecture based method of teaching. The role of Supreme Court has also played an important role in focusing on legal education in India with different court judgments highlighting need to encourage more of legal study and right to education including legal education as a citizens fundamental right. Legal edu-

cation in India is seen by the Bar council of India which provides a platform to train legal professionals to address societal as well as individuals problems. The overall agenda is to provide skills and training to create and maintain the society. Also with BCI the UGC simultaneously plays a role in providing university education, allocating grants and ensuring proper standards in meeting ethical norms in teaching, examination and research. It is stated that lawyers and the judicial officers they all form the most paramount backbone of any nation. Legal education can take the form of different programs which can be studied at primary level and at advanced level that is either undergraduate or at graduate level defending on the country and then obtaining masters degree and doctoral degree at advanced level. The main importance of imparting legal education for the society is just because to meet societal demands, helps in moderating change, inculcating moral values in the society and not only that but also helps in equipping theoretical and practical skills. Legal education in India is both a theory as well as practical and it is mandate for students as per Bar Council of India to do internships in their legal studies to adopt practical ex-



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posure of court sessions. Thus, Bar Council of India stated a rule that in 3 Year LLB course a student has to complete a minimum of 12 weeks of internship and for 5-year Integrated Law course a student has to complete 20 weeks of internship. To get through the entrance exam of law school, the law aspirants first has to clear the Law entrance test- Common Law Admission Test (CLAT), it is a reforming of law entrance exam in the legal education. Legal Education has taken a route towards a better specialised procedure for better legal understanding, it has provided boost for many aspirants. Thus, legal education in India has created better and modernised opportunities for law students in India. Hence, in today's time every year 80000+ students graduate from law schools in India.

However, after graduating from law school the lawyers are not only confined to practice the law in the court, but the legal fields are widened which includes, practising law- Litigation, Judicial Services, Civil Services, Corporate Jobs etc. Moreover, Legal Profession in India has enjoyed huge status in addition of popularity in the globalised world.

## Indian universities are allowed to offer admissions twice a year: UGC

■ EJ News - New Delhi

Indian universities and higher education institutions (HEIs) will now be allowed to offer admissions twice a year on lines of foreign universities.

The two admission cycles - followed globally also - will be July-August and January-February from the 2024-25 academic session.

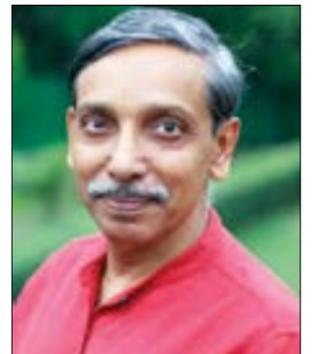
Prof. M Jagdish Kumar said, "If Indian universities can offer admission twice a year, it will benefit many students, such as those who missed admission to a university in the July/August session due to a delay in the announcement of board results, health issues, or personal reasons."

He further said that biannual university admissions will help students maintain motivation since they do not have to wait one full year to be admitted if they miss admission in the current cycle.

This will also help industries to do their campus recruitment twice a year, which will help improve employment opportunities for the graduates.

Biannual admissions will also enable the higher education institutes (HEIs) to plan their resource distribution, such as faculty, labs, classrooms, and support services, more efficiently, resulting in a better functional flow within the university, he added.

"Universities worldwide already follow a biannual admission system. If Indian HEIs adopt the biannual admission cycle, our HEIs can enhance their international collaborations and student exchanges. As a result, our global competitiveness will improve, and we will



align with the global educational standards," Kumar added.

He, however, said that it will not be mandatory to offer biannual admissions for universities and those HEIs that have the required infrastructure and teaching faculty can utilize the opportunity.

"Offering biannual admissions will not be mandatory for the HEIs, it is the flexibility that UGC provides to the HEIs that want to increase their student intake and offer new programs in emerging areas. To be able to admit students twice a year, HEIs must make suitable amendments to their institutional regulations," he said.

If HEIs adopt biannual admissions, they will need to work on administrative intricacies, good planning for increased use of available resources, and providing seamless support systems for the smooth transition of students admitted at dissimilar times of the year.

"HEIs can maximize the usefulness of biannual admissions only when they sufficiently prepare faculty members, staff, and students for the transition," he added.

At present, universities and colleges admit students annually in

>> Contd. p.4...

# NEET topper allegedly fails Class 12 Physics and Chemistry exams. Marksheet goes viral



EJ - New Delhi

Against the rising controversies against the NEET UG 2024 results, a post featuring the marksheet of a student has been circulating widely on social media platform X. The viral post claims that the student has received 705 marks out of 720 in NEET, but failed to qualify the Physics and Chemistry exam in Class 12.

As per the mark sheet seen in the post, the student has scored only 21 out of 100 in the Physics theory paper and 36 out of 50 in the Physics practical paper. She has got 31 out of 100 in Chemistry theory and 33 out of 50 in practical. The same student has

secured 99.861 percentile in the NEET UG Chemistry paper and 99.8903 percentile in the Physics paper.

The significant disparity in marks scored in class 12 and NEET UG is raising serious questions over the authenticity of the student's marks in the medical entrance exam.

This discrepancy in marks has raised serious questions about the authenticity of the student's NEET UG scores. However, EJ has not independently verified the authenticity of the mark sheet image.

Meanwhile, the NTA has announced that a re-test will be conducted on June 23 for all

1,563 NEET UG candidates, who received grace marks due to the distribution of the wrong question paper, torn OMR sheets, or delay in the distribution of OMR sheets. The results will be declared on June 30. The decision was announced by the NTA following the Supreme Court's observations on the report of the NTA's High Powered Committee.

The scorecards of 1,563 NEET-UG 2024 candidates seeking admission into medical colleges will be scrapped after they were given grace marks for a wrong question.

The decision follows allegations of widespread irregularities and unfair marking in the national medical entrance exams. The counseling for admissions into MBBS, BDS, and other courses will start on July 6.

Approximately 24 lakh medical aspirants took the NEET-UG 2024 - an ultra-competitive entrance test for undergraduate medical courses - conducted by NTA on May 5. The results were to be declared on June 14 but were announced on June 14, apparently because the answer sheets were evaluated earlier.

# Foreign medical graduates must now complete full offline training, says NMC



EJ News - New Delhi

The National Medical Commission (NMC) has revoked the policy allowing foreign medical graduates (FMGs) to substitute online classes with offline mode. The NMC declared that certificates validating the supplementation of online theory classes with offline practical and clinical training will no longer be accepted.

"It has been observed that many FMGs are maliciously obtaining compensatory certificates from their parent universities for the online classes carried by them. The medical profession deals with precious human life; therefore, the life of Indian citizens cannot be put at stake by poorly trained medical professionals," the official statement read.

"The UGMEB has decided that henceforth, certificates regarding the compensation or supplementation of online theory

subjects/classes with offline practical and clinical training shall not be accepted," the commission added.

The Foreign Medical Graduate Examination (FMGE 2024) is conducted for FMGs who hold an MBBS qualification from a foreign medical institute and seek provisional or permanent registration with the Medical Council of India (MCI) or any State Medical Council (SMC).

The results of the FMGE for December 2023 were released in February on the official website, natboard.edu.in. Out of 38,535 candidates who took the test, 30,046 failed, and 693 FMGs were marked absent.

The NMC has recently extended the mandatory internship for FMGs to two years, effective until May 2026. This decision came in response to numerous requests from students facing challenges in securing internship placements.

According to the latest notification, FMGs who have attended any portion of their classes online must pass the FMG Examination and complete a Compulsory Rotating Medical Internship (CRMI) lasting two to three years to be eligible to practice medicine in India.



X Hundreds of candidates have gotten 100% marks in the results of the NEET (formerly known as CPMT/PMT), which is an entrance examination for medical studies across the country.

In these cases, many people getting 100% marks together from the same examination center indicates a lot of rigging. Under the BJP rule, examinations are taking the form of business like leaking question papers illegally, getting papers issued by fake people, setting up centers, and managing results. It cannot be a coincidence that almost identical scams occur in most examinations.

Due to this, the country's youth have started losing faith in the system. The despair of the youth means that the future is hopeless. This is one of the biggest failures of the BJP government.

Taking suo motu cognizance of this matter, the Honorable Court should conduct a thorough investigation, give strict punishment to those guilty, and eliminate any possibility of such a repetition in the future.

Akhilesh Yadav

# Top Bengaluru school, IJNM shuts down, second institute in last two years

EJ News - Bengaluru

A premiere institute for journalism in Bengaluru, the Indian Institute of Journalism and New Media (IJNM) announced that it will no longer offer programmes in the field. After a legacy run for 24 years, the decision was taken as the institute failed to reach the minimum number of applicants for the academic year. IJNM offered 11 months of undergraduate and postgraduate diplomas in

three mediums - Print, Broadcast and Multimedia Journalism.

In an email, addressed to the candidates who secured admission this year the management sought the bank details of the students to refund the fee amount.

"In the past 24 years, IJNM has been a school of excellence in the Journalism profession offering the best programme among colleges in India. How-



ever, given the recent environment in which we have been operating, it is not possible to

attract enough students to avoid

huge financial losses to continue the programme," read the email sent from IJNM's official mail

to attract enough students to avoid ID.

A permanent faculty member at the institute said, "It was rather unfortunate that the institute is closing down and we have to slowly come to terms with it, but this was the only option the management had."

When asked what other steps will IJNM take to help the students enrolled, the faculty member said right now the refund will be done within 10 days and hopefully the students find other colleges to pursue their course.

The course was set to begin on July 22. The email added,

"Given the recent environment in which we have been operating, it is not possible to attract enough students to avoid huge financial losses to continue the programme."

This came as a shock for not just the applicants but also the alumni present in almost all media houses across the country. Many took to social media to reminisce about their experience at the IJNM, while some questioned the state of journalism schools in the country.

In 2023-24, around 28 students

>> Contd. p.4..

	Qtr. Ended Dec. 2023	Qtr. Ended March 2024	Growth %
Indian Readers	5.27	5.39	+2.36%
Global Readers	2.78	3.26	+17.47%

(Source CAAR)

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# NTA: No paper leak, but 63 unfair means cases in NEET



■ EJ - Agency

Sixty-three cases of students using unfair means were reported in NEET-UG out of whom 23 have been debarred for varying periods, National Testing Agency (NTA) officials said on June 12, but reiterated that there has been no paper leak and the sanctity of the medical entrance examination has not been compromised.

The results of the remaining 40 candidates who were found using unfair means have been withheld, NTA Director General Subodh Kumar Singh said.

"A committee was constituted consisting of three eminent experts in the field of examination and academics to put forward different types of cases reported such as impersonation, cheating and tampering with OMR sheet," Mr Singh said.

"On the recommendations of the panel, 12 candidates were debarred from taking the exam for three years, nine candidates debarred for two years and two candidates for one year each. The results of the remaining

candidates have been withheld. The panel had given recommendations for each case," he said, adding that the total number of cases of usage of unfair means was 63.

The agency is under criticism amid allegations of irregularities and inflation of marks in the crucial medical entrance exam.

The matter has also reached the top court, which said on Tuesday that the sanctity of the National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test-Undergraduate (NEET-UG), 2024 has been affected.

The Union Ministry of Education had last week set up a four-member panel to review the grace marks awarded to 1,563 students to compensate them for loss of time due to delays in starting the examination at certain centres.

"The panel is yet to submit its report. Depending upon the panel's recommendations, either a retest will be conducted for nearly 1,600 students or an alternate mechanism may be devised to ensure no candidate faces any disadvantage," Mr Singh said.

Asked about allegations of

marks inflation that led to 67 candidates scoring 720 out of 720, Mr Singh said 44 candidates received marks on account of revision of the answer key of physics and six on account of loss of time. "Only two candidates who got grace marks have received 718 and 719 marks," he added.

According to NTA officials, the adjustments were aimed to address inconsistencies in NCERT textbooks "which led to getting the full marks for 44 candidates and revision led to increased marks for many candidates, contributing to the high number of perfect scores".

Even as the NEET-UG exam results have gotten embroiled in a political slugfest, NTA sources said the majority of the claims are an attempt to create a "fake narrative" around the exam.

Responding to a video, shared by Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi, in which a candidate alleges she received a torn OMR sheet via email and that the NTA has given her the wrong score (335 instead of 715), the NTA said the paper is still intact and

## UK University opens admissions to MSc in Artificial Intelligence and Applications



or its equivalent and an IELTS score of 6.0. The tuition fee for international students for the 2024-25 academic year is 26,100 euros (Rs 23.68 lakh).

Scholarships ranging between 5,000 (Rs 4.53 lakh) and 7,000 euros (Rs 6.35) will be awarded to students based on academic merit and relevant experience, with a deadline for applications on July 31.

In line with the national AI strategy from the Office for Artificial Intelligence, the course includes essential AI techniques and their application in business. The curriculum aims to address the skill gap in machine learn-

ing, ensuring graduates are highly employable across various industries, including education, engineering, health, finance, government, manufacturing, retail, and transport.

The programme equips graduates with transferable skills for professional careers in AI, focusing on the design, development, optimization, and application of AI algorithms and technologies to achieve business goals. It also covers training in statistical methods for sampling, distribution, assessment, bias, and error.

Students will have chances to connect with top employers like J Pierpont Morgan, Morgan Stanley, Google, Microsoft, Goldman Sachs, and Logica. The programme is conducted through a mix of lectures, hands-on computer lab sessions, and tutorials.

July-August every year.

twice a year: UGC...

All HEIs follow the academic session that begins in July-August and ends in May-June. Last year, the UGC allowed students to take admission in open and distance learning (ODL) and online modes biannually in January and July during an academic year.

Kumar said that last year's decision had helped nearly half a million students join their degree programs without waiting for one full academic year.

"After the UGC permitted two cycle admissions in a year for Open and Distance Learning (ODL) and Online modes, as per the information furnished by the HEIs on the UGC portal, in addition to a total of 19,73,056 students were enrolled in July 2022 and an additional 4,28,854 students joined in January 2023 in ODL and online programs," he said.

"Biannual admissions can substantially increase the Gross Enrolment Ratio and make India a 'Global Study Destination' as envisioned in National Education Policy (NEP) 2020," he further said.

Considering the tremendous response and interest from the students in ODL and online programs in biannual admissions, in its meeting held on May 15, UGC took a policy decision to allow HEIs who offer programs in regular mode to admit students twice in a year, either in January/February or July/August from the coming academic year, he said.

Anger in ...

dinary families have been forced to cough up amounts close to Rs 30 lakh due to promises given to them by different coaching and examination centers," he said.

"We believe that no inquiry can be just, fair, and comprehensive if it is headed by the NTA itself. The NTA chairperson should be removed and Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who likes giving exam advice to Class 10 students, should not forget the mental anxiety caused to these undergraduates," Gogoi said.

Instead of paying attention to the "NEET scam", he is busy attending oath-taking ceremonies and going abroad on foreign trips, he said.

"Rest assured, the INDIA bloc will take up the cause of these students because that is our responsibility," Gogoi said.

Gogoi credited Rahul Gandhi for taking up the issue of the NEET exam soon after the Lok Sabha results were declared.

"It is a mystery why these results were declared on June 4. It can only point that they knew a storm was brewing and they wanted to avoid any discussion on these NEET results on June 4 when the entire country would be talking about the election results," he said.

"We are waiting for the Parliament session, we will raise the voice of 24 lakh youth of the country inside Parliament. The anger over the NEET exam in the country will also reverberate inside Parliament," he said.

The Congress leader also hit out at Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan for rejecting allegations of paper leak in the medical entrance exam NEET-UG.

Gogoi said this government's modus operandi has always been to dismiss such charges while the prime minister maintains silence. Pradhan rejected allegations of a paper leak in the medical entrance exam, saying there is no evidence of it.

"There is no evidence of a paper leak in NEET-UG. The allegations of corruption in NTA are unfounded, it is a very credible body," Pradhan told reporters.

The Centre on said the Supreme Court that the decision to give grace marks to 1,563 NEET-UG 2024 candidates for admission to MBBS, BDS, and other courses has been canceled and they will be given the option to take a retest on June 23.

If these candidates do not wish to take up the re-test, then their earlier marks, sans the grace marks, will be given for results.

by making a law.

Today, I assure all the students of the country that I will become your voice in Parliament and will strongly raise issues related to your future.

Rahul Gandhi

NEET UG...

grace marks policy.

The number of top rankers in NEET-UG will go down to 61 from 67 after the National Testing Agency decides to withdraw grace marks awarded to 1,563 students, officials said. Six of these 1,563 candidates who appeared in the medical entrance exam from a centre in Haryana had shared the top rank with 61 others.

Unless these candidates take a retest and score 720 out of 720, they will not regain their top spot, the official added.

Asked about how the ranks of other candidates will be impacted, the official explained, "The scores of these 1,563 candidates will now be the pre-normalisation scores and not one with grace marks. A revised rank list will be issued only when we know how many of these candidates want to take a retest."

Meanwhile, Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan on Thursday rejected allegations of paper leak or rigging in the medical entrance exam NEET-UG, saying there is no evidence to substantiate the claims, and accused the opposition of spreading lies without knowing facts.

"No concrete evidence of any kind of rigging, corruption or paper leak has been found so far in the NEET exam. All the facts related to this are before the Supreme Court and are under consideration. The kind of politics being done on this issue is only an attempt to spread confusion and it affects the mental peace of the students," Pradhan said.

"Currently, the counselling process of NEET is about to start and making it a subject of political spar[ing] is not only unfair but it is like playing with the future generation. The focus of the central government is always on ensuring a bright future for the students," he added.

The NEET-UG exam, which saw approximately 24 lakh candidates at 4,750 centres, has been marred by protests and legal actions across various cities and courts, including the Supreme Court. The controversy intensified when 67 students achieved perfect scores, a first in NTA's history, leading to suspicions of irregularities linked to the grace marks.

The NTA administers the NEET-UG exam for entry into various medical courses, including MBBS, BDS, AYUSH, and others, in both government and private institutions nationwide.

IJNM shuts...

were admitted to the institute, 57 in 2022-23, 63 in 2021-2022 and 75 students in 2020-21.

Last year COMMITS (Convergence of Media, Multimedia and Information Technology) another popular journalism school in the city drew the curtains after 23 long years, citing similar reasons for dwindling admissions.

"There was no warning or heads-up given. Since I got my admission early, I didn't bother applying to many other places as a backup. So, when I got the email, I was completely clueless and left with absolutely no options. Now I have to choose a college for my Master's based on whoever is still taking admissions, and there are only a few options."

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# Record student visas to Indians last year, a number likely to cross this year: US Embassy



■ EJ - New Delhi

After issuing a record 1,40,000 student visas last year, the US consular team in India is all geared up to meet the expected rise in number of applications from Indian students [I]dents in 2024, with a senior official at the embassy here saying that the projected total number this year will be "similar or in excess" in comparison to last year.

The U.S. Mission in India held its eighth annual Student Visa Day nationwide observance, with consular officers from New Delhi, Chennai, Hyderabad, Kolkata, and Mumbai interviewing Indian student visa applicants. At the US Embassy in Delhi, a long queue of students was seen since morning. American universities attract a large number of Indian students, and last year, the US consular team in India issued over 1,40,000 student visas -- higher than for any other country setting a record for the third year in a row. Syed Mujtaba Andrabi, acting Con[1]sul General at the US Embassy in New Delhi, in an interaction at the embassy, said,

"By the end of the day, we should have interviewed approximately 4,000 students."

"It (student visas) is one of our top priorities. Academic exchange between the two countries is one of the top priorities of this administration, and our Mission here. Last year, we issued a record number of student visas, numbering 1,40,000, which has been a record...And, we will continue to focus on this area, as we go forward during this year," Andrabi said. "We will continue to have the same focus, and maximize the number of students," he added. Asked about the extent of the expected rise in student visas in 2024, he said, "It will be similar or in excess" to last year.

America gives "high priority" to student visas because it knows people-to-people ties "last a lifetime," US envoy Eric Garcetti had said in an interview here in late April. In 2023, the US Mission in India had processed a record 1.4 million visas overall.

"Even in a record-breaking year, India became the num[1]ber one source of students in higher education in the US last year, almost

» US consular team in India anticipates student visa applications in 2024 to be similar or exceed last year's record of 1,40,000

» 'India became the number one source of students in higher education in the US last year, almost twice the amount of the second highest country of origin'

twice the amount of the second highest country of origin, we were able to accommodate all the students that needed to come to get visas to the US with appointments," the US envoy had then said.

The US Embassy in a statement said the number of Indi[1]ans who choose to study in the US has increased significantly in the past three years. In 2023, the US Mission to India issued "more student visas than in 2018, 2019, and 2020 combined." This "unprecedented growth" reflects the ongoing commitment by the US government to prioritize students and to facilitate their travel, even as the Mission met a 400 percent rise in demand for all other visas between 2021 and 2023, it said. Garcetti had earlier also said that "a heroic effort" of a lot of dedicated public servants who worked weekends, and arranged days just for students was instrumental in making sure that students met their deadlines and American universities could welcome a historic number of Indian students.

# What Indian students prefer most for studying in Canada



■ EJ - Hitesh Walia

In recent years, a significant shift has been observed in the preferences of Indian students seeking global education opportunities, with Canada emerging as a favored destination over the United States. This trend, highlighted by data from the National Foundation for American Policy (NFAP), underscores a substantial increase in Indian student enrollment in Canadian universities, contrasting sharply with a comparatively modest rise in students opting for American institutions.

According to NFAP statistics, Indian student enrollment in Canadian universities skyrocketed by over 5,800% in the past two decades, whereas the growth rate for the United States stood at a mere 45% between 2000 and 2021. This surge in Canadian univer-

sity enrollment comes despite the dominance of US universities in global rankings, with seven US institutions securing spots in the top 20 of the QS World University Rankings 2025, while Canadian universities failed to make a similar impact.

In November, the US embassy announced modifications to visa application procedures for Indian students, affecting all consulates across Indian cities.

The changes, aimed at curbing fraud and misuse of the appointment system, mandate that F, M, and J visa applicants provide their passport information when scheduling visa appointments. Additionally, applicants for F or M visas must enroll in SEVP-certified programs, while J visa seekers require sponsorship from State Department-approved organizations.

Despite the US embassy reporting

record numbers of processed visa applications in 2023, surpassing previous years, Indian students seem increasingly drawn to Canada.

Notably, Canada recently announced a new rule limiting off-campus work hours for international students, including Indian nationals, to a maximum of 24 hours per week, effective from September onwards. This decision aims to strike a balance between providing employment opportunities for students and ensuring their focus remains on academic pursuits.

Marc Miller, Minister of Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship, explained the rationale behind the new policy, emphasizing the importance of maintaining the integrity of Canada's student program while supporting students' financial needs. Miller noted that studies conducted in both the US and Canada have shown a negative impact on academic performance and increased dropout rates among students working beyond 24 hours per week.

Moreover, the Canadian government recently increased the minimum cost-of-living standard for students applying for study permits, signaling a commitment to ensuring students are financially equipped for their educational journey in Canada without excessive reliance on employment.

# Global Chatmates is an inter'l Twinning project



■ EJ - Jelena Kovacevic

Global Chatmates is an international Twinning project involving students from Croatia, Greece, Kyrgyzstan, Peru, and Jordan. The project was conceived and coordinated by Jelena Kovačević, teacher advisor at the secondary vocational school Ekonomska škola Požega in Croatia, in collaboration with her colleagues, teachers Sofia Konstantine from Greece, Rula Sabba from Jordan, Nafisa Murzalieva from Kyrgyzstan, and Robert Carlos Palomino Bustamante from Peru.

This collaboration is original from friendships for med during a five-week stay at the University of Montana in the USA, where for mentioned team, hers met as SUSI (Studies the U.S. Institutes) educators, during a program sponsored by the U.S. Department of State in the summer of 2023.

To foster the global communication and cooperation promoted by the SUSI program, the see educator sailed to experiences to promote the English language, acquire cultural, geographical, social, and digital skills, overcome stereotypes, and gain a broader understanding of the international community and, a sense of global citizenship.

The project brought together approximately 50 students, divided into about 15 small international groups of 2-4 students. From November 2023 to May 2024, students participate in five Zoom

video meetings, guided by detailed instructions, topics, and assignments provided by their teachers.

The activities and discussion topics were derived from the English language curriculum and included the following topics:

» Introductions: Students introduced themselves, families, hometowns, hobbies, and common interests to break the ice and establish rapport.

» My Country: Students presented information about their countries, including population, tourist attractions, history, landscapes, weather, interest, and expanding global geography.

» Education: Students described their schools and educational systems, and discussed similarities and differences, their favorite subjects, and future goals, enabling them to share their lives, concerns, and countries.

» Festivals and Holidays: Students gained useful insights into how different societies celebrate holidays, feasts, and festivals, enhancing cultural awareness and understanding of diversity.

» Food and Music Given the universal appeal of these two topics, students presented their national dishes, shared photos, and recipes, explored new musical genres, and introduced the country's music to their peers.

» Deep Thinking (optional meeting): Students discussed future expectations, anticipated

scientific and technological advancements, and shared their perspectives on societal trends.

Meetings were held without the presence of teachers organized and conducted by students, at times and dates arranged independently, considering the four different time zones. This autonomous approach fostered initiative, responsibility, and enjoy Mento conversation without the stress of teacher supervision. However, these video conversations were recorded and uploaded to a storage platform for teachers to discreetly monitor progress, provide feedback, and draw useful conclusions. At each meeting, students filled out a brief form to document their progress, acquired knowledge, and feelings during each session.

In addition to the meetings, the students had the opportunity to participate in several "Best Screenshot competition" challenges, where they worked together to create collages or screenshots about the topic of the meeting. The teacher on the best screenshot, and the students.

At the very beginning and the end of the project, all participants, students, and teachers introduce themselves, share their greetings, vote on ideas, play quizzes, and exchange their expectations and experiences.

Following the final meeting, each participant prepared a short presentation or video describing their experience, newly acquired knowledge, and new friends, which they presented to their classmates.

Despite challenges such as cultural differences, varying time zones, language barriers, and connectivity issues, the students completed the project. Through it, they gained valuable insight into distant cultures and honed essential skills such as adaptability, tolerance, understanding, flexibility, and openness. Empowered with newfound confidence, students reported feeling better prepared to embrace the global community.

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