

- (i) The acquisition and testing of low cost access cum computing devices; and
- (ii) The hardware and software optimization of low cost access cum computing devices.

In the first phase 1,00,000 tablets procured by IIT Bombay are for the purpose of testing by users all over India in different climatic and usage conditions. Since these tablets are for the purpose of testing, no criteria for the distribution of the tablets have been laid down.

After the launch on 5th October 2011, initial feedback showed the areas where improvements were required in the Aakash tablets. These included (i) overheating of the device, (ii) need for longer battery life, (iii) need for capacitive instead of resistive touch screen and (iv) need for a better processor. The matter was taken up with the vendor and he agreed to make changes. The advanced version of the low-cost tablet called Aakash 2 was launched on 11th November, 2012 after addressing the deficiencies in the original tablet. As compared with Aakash-1 launched in October 2011, this advanced version has a processor which is about 3 times faster, memory which is twice as large, improved battery life and capacitive touch screen as compared to resistive touch screen. The Government does not maintain any data about the number of private individuals who have ordered any version of the Aakash tablet directly from the vendor or through any authorized resellers.

Seats in MBA and engineering courses

1771. SHRI D.P. TRIPATHI Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

- (a) whether it is a fact that a large number of seats in MBA and engineering courses are expected to remain vacant;
- (b) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(c) the details of steps Government is taking to provide more job opportunities to engineering and MBA students?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (DR. SHASHI THAROOR): (a) The expected vacancies in MBA and engineering courses for the 2013-14 academic session are not yet available as the admission process for the 2013-14 session is still going on. However, on an average, around 22% seats of Engineering and 30% seats of Management have been vacant during the last three years.

(b) Many institutions are located in remote and backward areas and hence they do not have industry linkages and other collaborations. Whereas placement is a very important criteria in a student admission, a student is most likely to go for admissions to institutions which have a track record of certain employment through campus placement. There are several disciplines like Instrumentation, Production, Bio-technology etc. which do not find favour with students because they perceive that these disciplines provide less employment opportunities compared to other disciplines like Civil, Mechanical, Electrical etc. Some of the institutions do not provide adequate infrastructure or teaching facilities or learning opportunities because of which students do not take admissions in such institutions. The demand and supply of technical education are both highly dynamic and responsive to a range of economic and social factors.

(c) The All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) has introduced a Employability Enhancement Training Programme and developed a model curriculum for management, pharmacy, architecture and town planning courses at the degree level and for engineering courses at the diploma level in line with the requirements of industry and to enhance the employability of engineering graduates. The AICTE has also signed an MoU with BSNL to facilitate technical institutions to respond to the need for providing state of the art telecom equipment-based operational skills to engineering graduates to enhance their qualification, competence and employability by enhanced skill up-gradation. The AICTE has also notified a regulation under the National Employability Enhancement Mission (NEEM) to offer on the job practical

training to enhance the employability of a person who is either pursuing his or her graduation/diploma in any technical or non-technical stream or has discontinued their pursuit of a degree or diploma course to increase their employability.

Hunger strike by IIT, Kharagpur faculty

1772. DR. PRADEEP KUMAR BALMUCHU: Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

- (a) whether it is a fact that the faculty of IIT, Kharagpur is going on hunger strike;
- (b) if so, the details thereof and the reasons therefor; and
- (c) the steps being taken by Government to redress the grievances?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (DR. SHASHI THAROOR): (a) to (c) Yes, Sir. The Members of the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Kharagpur, Teachers' Association were on a token hunger strike on 17.07.2013 from 9.00 A.M. to 5.00 P.M. after taking vacation leave for that day to agitate about the issue relating to the appointment of a regular Director of the Institute. The regular Director has since taken charge on 27.07.2013 (AN).

Teaching standards in schools

1773. SHRI SHYAMAL CHAKRABORTY: Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

- (a) whether it is a fact that the Prime Minister has shown concern over the poor teaching standards in schools in the country;
- (b) if so, the details thereof;
- (c) whether Government has contemplated any plan to improve the teaching standards in schools;