

Education Jagat
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Bilasuvar - Azerbaijan

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Several FIITJEE Coaching centers shut down across North India; Students and Parents were left in a lurch



FIITJEE branches were shut down in multiple locations, including Delhi, Noida, Meerut, Ghaziabad, Lucknow, Varanasi, and Bhopal.

■ EJ - Ravi Arya

Amid controversies surrounding the closure of its centers in North India, allegations of financial irregularities, and FIRs, the leading institute for JEE coaching FIITJEE has said that it has "not closed any center as part of its own decision".

In a statement released Saturday, the institute has described the current situation as "temporary" and blamed it on the "overnight desertion" of its center managing partners and their teams, insisting that this was not

the institution's decision.

"This entire story is part of a criminal conspiracy hatched by people with vested interests. The truth will emerge soon as detailed investigations are conducted," read the statement. The institute is working on resuming operations at affected centers, reaffirming its commitment to students, parents, and stakeholders in the statement.

It has denied allegations of financial misconduct, saying that reputed concurrent and statutory auditors audit its operations. "FIITJEE's accounts are 100

percent ethical and in compliance with the laws of the land." Two FIRs have been lodged against the FIITJEE management, one in Noida and another in Ghaziabad, which the statement has described as "malicious prosecutions".

"Our legal team is taking appropriate action against the

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NEET, JEE aspirants hang themselves in Kota, 6 suicides in Jan

■ EJ News - Kota

A medical aspirant from Gujarat and an Assam native taking coaching for JEE committed suicide by hanging in Kota within two hours on Wednesday, police said.

With their deaths, the coaching hub has witnessed six such cases in the first 22 days of the year. NEET aspirant Ashfa Sheikh, a native of Gujarat's Ahmedabad, ended her life by hanging herself in her paying guest room in the Jawahar Nagar area at around 10 am, police said.

The 24-year-old woman had taken the medical entrance exam a few times before but could not clear it. She used to take coaching but was currently self-studying, Jawahar Nagar Circle Inspector Ramlaxman said.

No suicide note was recovered from her room and the reason behind the extreme step is yet to be ascertained, he added.

As the Jawahar Nagar police were probing Sheikh's case, just two hours later the Mahaveer Nagar police received information about another student's suicide.

At around noon, an 18-year-old JEE aspirant from Assam's Guwahati committed suicide by hanging himself from an iron angle in his hostel room in the Mahaveer Nagar area, the police said.

As per the district administration's guidelines, the hostel au-



thority installed an 'anti-suicide' device in the rooms. However, the boy hanged himself to death from an iron angle, the officer said.

The boy was scheduled to take the JEE-Mains exam next week and his mother was on her way to Kota to take care of him but the boy took the extreme step hours before she arrived here, the inspector said.

No suicide note was recovered from his hostel room, he added. His mother is devastated. The police are waiting for the boy's uncle to come here from Delhi and the post-mortem will be conducted after that, the officer said.

Both the bodies have been placed in mortuary. Earlier, four JEE aspirants committed suicide in Kota.

On January 18, 16-year-old Manan Jain hanged himself at

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ASER 2024: Reading & arithmetic skills improve among Class 3 and 5 students, led by govt schools



■ EJ News - New Delhi....

The Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) 2024, a comprehensive rural household survey conducted by the Pratham Foundation, was released on January 28. This year's survey reached 649,491 children across 17,997 villages in 605 rural districts of India. The findings highlight significant progress in reading and arithmetic skills, recovery from pandemic-induced learning loss, and trends in digital literacy.

The ASER 2024 report high-

lights that the reading levels among students have shown marked improvement, with substantial recovery from the declines recorded in 2022.

For Class 3 students, the percentage of children able to read Class 2-level text rose to 23.4 per cent in 2024, compared to 16.3 per cent in 2022 and 20.9 per cent in 2018. Government schools contributed significantly to this improvement, surpassing the corresponding recovery in private schools. States with over 10 percentage point increases in Class 3 reading levels in govern-

ment schools between 2022 and 2024 include Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Kerala, Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Odisha, and Maharashtra.

Among Class 5 students, the percentage of children in government schools who could read a Class 2-level text recovered to 44.8 per cent in 2024, after falling to 38.5 per cent in 2022 from 44.2 per cent in 2018. Private schools saw smaller gains, with this proportion rising to 59.3 per cent in 2024 from 56.8 per cent in 2022, though still below the 65.1 per cent recorded in 2018..

For Class 8 students, the reading levels in government schools showed a slight improvement, reaching 67.5 per cent in 2024 compared to 66.2 per cent in 2022. However, this remains below the 69 per cent recorded in 2018. In private schools, there was no significant change in reading levels between 2022 and 2024. States like Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, and Sikkim demonstrated notable improvements, while declines were observed

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The importance of the communication club at school

Communication skills are one of the most important skills required in the 21st century. Each of our students should acquire the habit of communicating in both their native language and two foreign languages. This is of great importance for a person, both at school and in life. So how can a student's communication skills be developed?

Starting from a young age, developing listening skills in children and encouraging them to ask questions is the foundation of future communication. However, I regret to say that students in higher grades sometimes have difficulty expressing their ideas in writing and orally. To overcome this, I took an initiative and created the "Communication" club at our school.

The "Communication" club has become a very important place for every student in our school. First, we accepted 20-30 students here voluntarily. Then we prepared the club's work plan and started operating. Because the most important need of our students is communication. Acquiring this habit is very useful. We created the club for this purpose. What do we do in the club?

1. We hold reading hours to develop our students' listening skills. During this time, we read works of art in turn. Then questions are asked about that part. Everyone tries to listen carefully to give a good answer. We organize a reading hour once a week after class.

2. We try to teach our students to think and respond without rushing their thoughts. We try to give them time so that they can choose their words correctly.



3. To implement all this, we organize book discussions in the club. 4. When choosing books, we choose them according to age groups. These books are among the most beautiful works of world literature.

We have discussed examples from the literature of Azerbaijan, Canada, the Netherlands, Iceland, America, and Russia. Our students are given time to read the works. While reading the work, they prepare questions about the work, ask these questions to their friends, and receive answers. At this time, their ability to ask questions develops, and their creative thinking is formed. In addition, young book lovers determine the idea of the works, draw educational conclusions, and

relate the topic to life. Such discussions improve children's reading comprehension and listening comprehension skills.

To develop communication skills, we hold presentation auditions in the club. Presentations are on various topics. For example: about historical figures, cultural monuments, countries, environmental changes, etc. Students can also prepare presentations in small groups. This also develops their cooperation.

In our communication club, we also teach our students to build empathy. For this, certain problematic situations are created, and club members respond in the place of the problem owner.

The 21st century is the century of technology. Technology is developing day by day. Digital communication is growing rapidly, and its importance is also increasing.

In the communication club, we teach students effective communication skills in emailing, texting, and video calling.

In addition, we plan to invite speakers, psychologists, actors, and journalists to the school's communication club. Meeting with such specialists contributes to the professional development of students.

Our club often holds events: knowledge competitions, holiday themes, anniversaries are the most favorite activities of children.

Debate competitions are a favorite activity of our students. That's why we often organize debates in the club. These competitions develop their reasoning and argumentation skills.

We held essay competitions to form the written communication skills of our students.



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Our students who won the essay competition "I want to see the world green..." regarding global climate change were awarded diplomas. They wrote their personal ideas about saving the world. These ideas were magnificent. The winners of the essays were awarded diplomas and certificates.

We are preparing to discuss the work "Kalila and Dimna", which is based on Indian folk tales, in the club soon. Our students have already started reading the work.

I think that the work "Kalila and Dimna" will play a role in the formation of students' philosophical thinking, will have a positive effect on the improvement of their personality, and will increase their ability to make the right decisions in the future.

I am sure that the communication club will be very beneficial for students. They will be able to improve their communication skills not only in their academic lives, but also in their personal lives.

By creating the club, we have contributed to their development.

Let's communicate!

FIITJEE..

malicious prosecutions lodged against us."

The institute highlighted that the day-to-day operations of each center are managed individually by center-managing partners under a profit-sharing model.

"Managing partners have a profit-sharing model besides getting a regular salary... They compelled the corporate management to usurp the entire collections, causing significant losses," the statement added. "Companies had to yield to their demands in the interests of the students."

FIITJEE has also said that it continues to remain committed to academic excellence. "Our legacy of producing top results in JEE Main, JEE Advanced, NTSE, and Olympiads over the last 28 years remains unparalleled. Students join FIITJEE for its systems and legacy, not individual teachers."

Over the past week, at least eight FIITJEE centers have gone nonoperational in cities, such as Noida, Ghaziabad, Delhi's Laxminagar, Varanasi, Bhopal, Patna, and Gurugram. Hundreds of teachers have alleged that FIITJEE has been deducting and delaying their salaries, which has led to mass resignations and the closure of centers.

NEET, JEE aspirants

his parents house in Kota's Bundi. On January 16, Abhijeet Giri from Odisha hanged himself to a ceiling fan in his hostel room in Ambedkar colony.

On January 8, 20-year-old Madhya Pradesh native Abhishek hanged himself from a ceiling fan in his PG room. On January 7, Neeraj from Haryana hanged himself from the hook of a ceiling fan at his hostel room. P

The city, a prominent hub for coaching institutes, saw 17 such cases in 2024.

educationjagat.com

Empowering Students for the Future!



Sitting under the shade of a tree after a morning workout, watching boys play cricket, I found myself reflecting on an important yet often overlooked concept: perception. The way we perceive others—especially students—can significantly impact their growth and self-esteem. As teachers and parents, we frequently label students as "bright" or "weak," but these labels can be misleading and detrimental. As I observed the boys in their spirited game, I couldn't help but think about how some of them

might be considered weak in their studies. Yet, in that very moment, I was reminded of the immense potential that lies within them. Some of these boys could be the next Sachin Tendulkar, Virat Kohli, Joe Root, Steve Smith or Babar Azam of cricket. We often fail to recognize that success can manifest in many forms, not just through academic achievements.

My son recently joined a new school, and within the first week, he was already labeled

a "weak student." This categorization stemmed not from a lack of ability but from the disruptions caused by our family's move, which affected his studies. As a father, I felt compelled to advocate for him. I visited the school to discuss his progress, and the teachers were understanding and kind. They acknowledged that while he struggled with language subjects, he was good in others. This brings me to a crucial point: the need to appreciate diversity in student abilities. Each child is unique, possessing a variety of strengths and

(The journey from perception to understanding is essential in education and parenting. When we celebrate diversity and allow children the freedom to express their unique talents, we pave the way for them to realize their full potential. As parents and teachers, we must foster a culture of appreciation, respect, and patience, ensuring that no child is ever underestimated).

weaknesses. Rather than focusing solely on areas of struggle, it's vital for educators and parents alike to recognize and nurture the talents that each student brings to the table. During my conversation with the teachers, I emphasized the importance of fostering respect for educators and cultivating patience in students. It's essential for them to feel valued for their unique contributions rather than diminished by their perceived shortcomings. The following week, a drawing competition was held at the school. To my delight, my son, previously labeled as weak, emerged as the



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first-place winner in his class. This achievement, while not monumental in the grand scheme of life, served as a powerful reminder of the potential that lies within every child. It was a testament to the fact that early labels can often blind us to a student's true capabilities.

This phenomenon isn't limited to my son. Many of my former students, once deemed "weak" or "average," have blossomed into accomplished individuals. They have turned their unique skills into avenues for success that transcend traditional academic measures. Albert Einstein, widely regarded as one of the greatest minds of the 20th century, struggled with language and was considered a poor student in his

early years. However, his genius in physics revolutionized science and earned him the Nobel Prize in Physics. Thomas Edison, known as one of the greatest inventors in history, was deemed "too dumb to learn anything" by his teachers. Despite his academic struggles, he went on to invent the phonograph and the electric light bulb, shaping modern technology. Steve Jobs, the co-founder of Apple Inc., was not a stellar student and dropped out of college. However, his visionary leadership and innovative approach revolutionized technology and the personal computer industry. Oprah Winfrey, who faced numerous academic challenges, including a difficult childhood and struggling in school, became a media mogul, philanthropist, and one of the most influential women in the world. Richard Branson, the founder of Virgin Group, had dyslexia and struggled with formal education. However, his entrepreneurial spirit and innovative thinking helped him build a global business empire. India's R. K. Narayan, one of India's greatest writers, struggled with studies in school. He didn't have the academic accolades one might expect from a renowned author, yet his works, such as *Malgudi Days*, have left an indelible mark on literature. A. P. J. Abdul Kalam, while not initially a top student, rose to become the 11th President of India and a scientist renowned for his contributions to India's space and defence

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Country's education transformed in last decade in learning quality, digital inclusion: Prez Murmu



■ EJ - Manpreet Singh

President Droupadi Murmu on Saturday said the country's education system has been transformed in the last decade in terms of quality of learning, physical infrastructure and digital inclusion. Addressing the nation on the eve of the 76th Republic Day, she said the results of increased investment and efforts by the government in the education sector have been more than encouraging.

"It is, after all, our young generation that is going to shape the India of tomorrow. Education, in turn, shapes these young minds. Therefore, the government has increased its investment in education and made every effort to improve every parameter related to this sector. The results so far are more than encouraging," she said.

"The last decade has trans-

formed education in terms of quality of learning and physical infrastructure and digital inclusion. For the medium of instruction, the regional languages are promoted at more levels. It is not surprising that there has been a notable improvement in students' performance," Murmu added.

The president noted that women teachers have played a crucial role in this transformation since more than 60 percent of those who became teachers in the last decade are women.

"The expansion and mainstreaming of vocational and skill education is a welcome development. This is also supplemented now by the scheme to provide our youth internship opportunities in the corporate sector," she said.

Murmu asserted that with a stronger foundation of the school-level education, India has been scaling new heights in various branches of knowledge, particularly in science, along with technology.

CBSE Board 2025 Exams: List of 'unfair practices' you need to avoid



■ EJ News - New Delhi

CBSE Board Exam 2025: The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) recently asked schools and institutions to make Class 10 and 12 board exam candidates aware of exam ethics and rules. Board Exam 2025: Doing these could get your exam cancelled

Along with instructions for schools, the board also shared the dress code, a list of allowed and banned items and various unfair means (UFMs) and their consequences.

Students must ensure that they do not practice these unfair means, as doing so could result in the cancellation of the exam.

The CBSE has divided these unfair means into four categories. The first category includes:

Having question papers from previous years, writing questions and answers on any material other than the answer book, tearing pages of the answer book or supplementary answer book, contacting/communicating or trying to contact/communicate with any person other than the staff during the exam, having copying material but have not used.

Penalties for this category of violation will result in the cancellation of the current exam for the subject. The candidate will

be allowed to take that subject in the compartment exam if eligible otherwise.

The benefit of the doubt will be given to students against whom no evidence is available to testify to the foul intent on their part.

Category 2 includes affixing/uploading fabricated photographs on the admit card, erasing or obliterating any information printed on the answer book(s), providing wrong information on the answer sheet, having copying material in possession and having used it, communicating with another student or the assistant superintendent directly or indirectly, assisting another student to engage in malpractice, assisting other students in any kind or attempting to do so and taking assistance from another student.

In these cases, the current exam for all subjects will be cancelled and the candidate will be allowed to appear in the next year.

The third category of UFMs include taking away the answer book out of exam hall/room/centre, smuggling question paper (in part or full) outside exam hall, smuggling answer books/supplementary answer sheet, possession, use

or attempted use of electronic devices after entering the examination centre, using abusive language, threatening the staff on duty, indulging in violence during or after the test at the examination centre, forceful entry or exit to/from exam centre or hall.

The penalty for such violations is the cancellation of the current and next year's examinations.

The fourth category includes impersonation (paying/placing/making someone else to write the examination), sharing/uploading any exam-related material on social media approaching exam authorities, persons for unauthorised privilege in the exam and taking legal course or any other means to influence CBSE for gaining advantage in their favour (by providing false information).

The CBSE will cancel the current exam and the next three years' exams for all subjects in these cases.

The last category of UFM includes the use of obscene/derogatory language in the answer book, use of threatening language in the answer book for the evaluators, use of language/threat of harm to oneself, using ink or pencil for writing answers other than the permitted ones and enclosing/attaching a currency note or other such instrument with the answer book with or without any appeal/message for the evaluator.

The board did not say that the exams of such candidates would be cancelled. It said the UFM committee would counsel such candidates so that they refrain from using such language in the answer book in future examinations.

Currency notes will be forfeited and deposited in the board's account.

IP University admissions 2025: Admission through CUET or CET



■ EJ News - New Delhi

Guru Gobind Singh Indraprastha University (GGSIU) will start the admission process for various undergraduate, postgraduate, and PhD programmes from February. The University's application form is for the academic session 2025-26 which has over 40,000 seats in 106 affiliated colleges and 18 university schools.

The online application of IP University for 46 master's degree programmes, 40 PhD programmes, and 34 undergraduate degree programmes will begin on February 1 with classes to start from August 1. Only for the vacant seats, admission will be through CUET in 20 undergraduate degree programmes and 18 postgraduate degree programmes.

This year, as a part of admission, the University has introduced some new courses including an MSc in Molecular Diagnos-

tics, an MSc in Microbiology, a BPT, an LLB for 3 years, a PG programme in Applied Geoinformatics, and a PG Diploma in Radiological Physics.

One seat in each programme will be reserved for single girl child candidates in university schools, mentioned the press release adding that a maximum of 2 per cent of the intake in a particular programme will be filled under the sports quota in university schools.

A total of 52 common entrance tests (CETs) will be conducted between April 26 and May 18. Online counselling for MBA (through CAT), LLB, and LLM (through CLAT UG/PG) will begin on May 1. Online and offline counselling for other programmes will begin on June 2.

Various entry modes include national-level tests through JEE Main, NEET UG, PG and SS, CAT, CMAT, NIMCET, CLAT-UG and PG, UCEED, NATA, etc. Admission will also

be based on merit in qualifying examinations for some programmes, as mentioned in the release.

The one-time application fee of Rs 2500 (including registration and counselling participation fee) will be paid at the time of application.

The ceiling of the EWS scholarship fund has been increased from 2.5 crore to 3.5 crore this year onwards.

This year, approximately 250 additional seats have been added to various programs at the university campus, while 1600 new seats were added last year.

For post-basic in BSc Nursing, earlier, only CET was considered starting from this year, interviews and merit of qualifying examinations have also been included.

For BSc and MSc dual degrees in Physics, Chemistry, and Mathematics, earlier, JEE Main score and CUET were considered from this year onwards. CET and merit of qualifying examination have been included.

In MS Packaging Technology, earlier, only CET and CUET were considered. This year, GATE, UGC-NET, and CSIR-NET have also been included. While in the case of BS Packaging Technology, CET and CUET JEE Advanced, JEE Mains, and NEET scores will be considered.

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'Dreams quashed': Foreign students and universities fear Australia's visa cap



■ EJ - Agency

For Anannya Gupta completing her studies in Australia has always been the "dream". "Their education system is one of the best in the world," the 21-year-old, from the Indian city of Hyderabad, explains.

After completing her bachelor's degree at Melbourne's Monash University in July, she applied for the master's qualification she needs to become a social worker - the kind of skilled job Australia is desperate to fill amid labor shortages.

"I genuinely want to study here, offer my skills, and contribute to society," she says.

But Ms Gupta is among current and prospective international students who have been swept up in a panic caused by the Australian government's plan to slash foreign student numbers. The new cap - which would significantly reduce new enrolments - is needed to make the A\$47.8bn (£24.6bn, \$32bn) education industry more sustainable, the government says. It is the most controversial of re-

cent measures that have also imposed tougher English language requirements on student visa applicants, and greater scrutiny on those seeking further study. Non-refundable visa application fees have also been doubled.

However, the sector and its supporters say they weren't properly consulted, and that the changes could ravage the economy, cause job losses, and damage Australia's reputation, all while punishing both domestic and international students.

"Sends out the signal that Australia is not a welcoming place," says Matthew Brown, deputy chief executive of the Group of Eight (Go8), a body that represents Australia's top-ranked universities.

Education is Australia's fourth biggest export, trailing only mining products. Foreign students, who pay nearly twice as much as Australian students on average, prop up some institutions, subsidizing research, scholarships, and domestic study fees. At the University of Sydney, for example, they account for over

40% of revenue.

But Prime Minister Anthony Albanese's government is facing pressure to reduce record levels of migration, in the hope of improving housing affordability and easing a cost-of-living crisis, ahead of a federal election next year. And international students - who totaled 793,335 last semester - have become a target.

The government has proposed to cap new foreign enrolments at 270,000 for 2025, which it says is a return to pre-pandemic levels. An accurate comparison with previous years is not possible because publicly available data is inadequate, according to an education expert.

Education Minister Jason Clare says each higher education institution will be given an individual limit, with the biggest cuts to be borne by vocational education and training providers. Of the universities affected, those in capital cities will see the largest reductions.

The government says the policy will redirect students to regional towns and universities that need

them, instead of overcrowded big cities.

It also says the changes aim to protect prospective students from "unethical" providers, alleging some accept students without sufficient language skills or academic standards and enroll people who intend to work instead of study.

"International education is extremely important, and these reforms are designed to make it better and fairer and set it up on a more sustainable footing going forward," Clare said.

Abul Rizvi, a former government official who shaped Australia's skilled migration policy, says the "underfunded" sector has "long been chasing tuition revenue from overseas students and sacrificing learning integrity in the process".

Institutions themselves are questioning whether they're too reliant on international student income and how to fix it. Dr. Brown says: "It's a discussion that every university is having." The government has not confirmed how long the caps will be in place, but Dr Brown says the Go8's calculations indicate they will have an A\$1bn impact on their members in the first year alone. The broader economy would suffer an A\$5.3bn hit, resulting in the loss of 20,000 jobs, according to their research.

Australia's Department of the Treasury has called those projections "doubtful" but has not released its modeling on the economic impact of the changes.

Dr. Brown also warned that the caps could see some universities rescind offers already made to foreign students, strangle vital research programs, and may mean an increase in fees for some Australian students.

NTA discontinues optional section, revises Exam duration: NEET-UG

■ EJ - New Delhi

The National Eligibility-cum Entrance Test Undergraduate (NEET-UG) 2025 will no longer include optional questions in Section B as the exam paper format will return to its pre-pandemic format, the National Testing Agency (NTA) announced. With this revised pattern, candidates will no longer have access to the optional questions and extra time that were added during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The optional part was introduced as a temporary step to address the issues caused by the pandemic. This measure continued till 2024.

In a public notice, NTA said, "All NEET (UG)-2005 aspirants are hereby informed that the question paper pattern and examination duration will revert to the pre-COVID format where there will not be any section B anymore."

"Hence, there will be a total of 180 compulsory questions (45 questions each in Physics and Chemistry and 90 in Biology), which will be attempted by the candidates in 180 minutes thereby removing any optional questions and extra time introduced due to COVID."



NEET UG 2025: Candidates taking the NEET UG in 2025 will not get any optional questions and extra time introduced during Covid and exam will now revert to the pre-COVID format.

So, now the duration will be 180 minutes (three hours).

Candidates are advised to prepare accordingly and regularly check the official NTA website <https://www.nta.ac.in> for further updates.

The NTA had earlier announced that the NEET-UG 2025 will be conducted in pen and paper mode (OMR) on a single day and in a single shift.

The date of the exam is yet to be announced.

Bihar Board Class 12th exams 2025: 12.92 lakh students to appear

■ EJ - Patna

Bihar School Examination Board will begin Intermediate or Class 12 exams on February 1, 2025. The BSEB examination will be held for a total of 1292313 candidates across the state at 1677 exam centres. The Bihar Board Class 12 exam will conclude on February 15, 2025.

As many as 641847 girls and 650466 boys have registered for the Intermediate exam.

In Patna district, 75917 candidates will appear for the Bihar Board Class 12 examination, 37174 girl candidates and 38743 boys, in 85 centres across the district, as per BSEB.

In the previous years, the students were strictly prohibited from wearing shoes and socks in exam halls as per the standard regulations of the Bihar School Examination Board (BSEB). However, due to the cold, the board has decided to relax the rules.

As per the official notice: "Considering the current weather conditions and in the interest of the students, students will be allowed to enter the examination hall wearing shoes and socks for the Intermediate Annual Examination, 2025, which is to be held between February 1, 2025, and February 5, 2025. The deci-



sion regarding this matter will be reviewed again after February 5, 2025, and necessary action will be taken accordingly." Students have to arrive at their exam centres on time to prevent any disruptions.

The BSEB exams will be held in two shifts: the morning shift from 9:30 am to 12:30 pm and the afternoon shift from 2 pm to 5 pm.

The entry for the first shift will start at 8:30 am, and the main gate closes at 9 am. For the second shift, entry begins at 1 pm, and the main gate closes at 1:30 pm.

Students should follow the reporting time on their admit cards to ensure timely entry.

ASER 2024.

in Punjab, Andhra Pradesh, and Telangana.

Arithmetic levels have also improved among rural students, particularly in government schools. The ASER arithmetic assessment evaluates abilities ranging from basic number recognition to solving numerical division problem.

Among Class 3 students, the proportion able to solve a numerical subtraction problem rose to 33.7 per cent in 2024, compared to 25.9 per cent in 2022 and 28.2 per cent in 2018. Government school students showed significant gains, with this figure increasing to 27.6 per cent in 2024 from 20.2 per cent in 2022. Tamil Nadu and Himachal Pradesh recorded over 15 percentage point increases since 2022.

For Class 5 students, the percentage of children able to solve a numerical division problem rose to 30.7 per cent in 2024 from 25.6 per cent in 2022 and 27.9 per cent in 2018. Improvements were primarily driven by government schools, with Punjab and Uttarakhand achieving gains exceeding 10 percentage points.

Among Class 8 students, arithmetic levels remained steady, with 45.8 per cent able to solve a numerical division problem in 2024, compared to 44.7 per cent in 2022 and 44.1 per cent in 2018.

The ASER 2024 report notes a reversal in the increase in government school enrolment observed during the COVID-19 pandemic. The proportion of children aged 6-14 years enrolled in government schools, which had risen to 72.9 per cent in 2022, has returned to 66.8 per cent in 2024, close to the 2018 level of 65.6 per cent. Correspondingly, private school enrolment in the same age group increased to 33.2 per cent in 2024, reversing the decline during the pandemic.

Anganwadi centres continue to play a pivotal role in early childhood education. Over 50 per cent of children aged 3 and 4 are enrolled in Anganwadi centres, a trend consistent since 2018. In states such as Odisha, West Bengal, Gujarat, and Karnataka, more than 75 per cent of children in this age group are enrolled in Anganwadi centres.

Pre-primary enrolment in government institutions has shown notable increases only in Punjab (11.2 percentage points) and Jammu and Kashmir (7.6 percentage points) since 2018. Meanwhile, approximately one-third of all 5-year-olds attend private schools or pre-schools in 2024, matching the level of 37.5 per cent recorded in 2018, after a decline to 30.8 per cent in 2022.

The proportion of girls aged 6-14 years not enrolled in school has risen slightly, from 7.9 per cent in 2022 to 8.1 per cent in 2024. States such as Madhya Pradesh (16.1 per cent), Uttar Pradesh (15 per cent), Rajasthan (12.7 per cent), Mizoram (12.3 per cent), Gujarat (10.5 per cent), and Chhattisgarh (10 per cent) report the highest proportions of out-of-school girls.

Among 15-16-year-olds, the proportion not enrolled in school dropped from 13.1 per cent in 2018 to 7.5 per cent in 2022 but increased marginally to 7.9 per cent in 2024.

For the first time, ASER 2024 included a section on digital literacy, assessing smartphone access and usage among children aged 14-16 years.

Over 82 per cent of children in 14-16 years age group reported knowing how to use a smartphone, with 57 per cent using it

for educational purposes and 76 per cent for social media.

The proportion of children owning a smartphone rose from 19 per cent in 2022 to 31 per cent in 2024. Ownership increases with age, from 27 per cent among 14-year-olds to 37.8 per cent among 16-year-olds. Boys are more likely than girls to own a smartphone, with 36.2 per cent of boys reporting ownership compared to 26.9 per cent of girls.

In Kerala, over 80 per cent of children used smartphones for educational activities, and more than 90 per cent used them for social media. Gender gaps in smartphone ownership and usage persist across all states.

Household access to smartphones has also grown, rising from 36 per cent in 2018 to over 74 per cent in 2022 and reaching 84 per cent in 2024.

The proportion of "underage" children (below 6 years old) in Class 1 has declined steadily, from 25.6 per cent in 2018 to 22.7 per cent in 2022, and further to 16.7 per cent in 2024, marking the lowest level recorded so far.

Empowering Students...

technologies. These examples highlight that early struggles or underachievement in school do not determine an individual's capacity for success. Success can manifest in a variety of ways, and each person has the potential to achieve greatness if given the opportunity and support to discover their strengths.

As we navigate the complexities of education and parenting, it's imperative to challenge our perceptions. Can we, as educators and parents, resist the urge to pigeonhole children based on early assessments? Can we foster an environment where children are encouraged to explore their interests, engage in play, and learn at their own pace? In an age where technology evolves rapidly, the skills that children acquire often outpace what we learned in our formative years. For instance, my fifth-grade son is already more proficient in computer skills than I was during my master's program. This generational shift highlights the importance of embracing change and recognizing that our children may excel in ways we never anticipated. Ultimately, the power of perception can either uplift or limit our children. As we strive to support their growth, let's prioritize understanding and appreciate their individuality. By shifting our focus from labels to potential, we create a nurturing environment that empowers all students to thrive.

The journey from perception to understanding is essential in education and parenting. When we celebrate diversity and allow children the freedom to express their unique talents, we pave the way for them to realize their full potential. As parents and teachers, we must foster a culture of appreciation, respect, and patience, ensuring that no child is ever underestimated—whether they are a cricket player in the making or a budding artist. The next great talent could emerge from anywhere, and it's our responsibility to nurture that potential without limits.

As we step into the new year, 2025, it's time for reflection. The world is ever-evolving, and with it, our expectations and understanding of success must also evolve. In the coming year, we should resolve to break free from outdated perceptions. Let this year be a fresh start in nurturing talents that will one day transform the world.

What do Trump's executive orders mean for international higher education



■ EJ - Agency

Within hours of Trump's second presidential term, he wasted no time in issuing a "tsunami" of executive orders about immigration that carry potential repercussions for international students and their families in the US.

In a recent webinar hosted by NAFSA examining the path forward, the organization's president Fanta Aw emphasised the importance of establishing reliable sources of information to prepare for continued policy upheavals, highlighting NAFSA's continued advocacy, set out in its recommendations for the new government.

"The administration has made it very clear that they're focussed on growing the economy and workforce development, so we're looking where we see common ground with this administration," said Aw.

"We're making the economic argument for why international education is for the benefit of the nation... Of course, international education is much, much more than economics, but economics is something you cannot deny, and it's something that we have common ground with the administration on."

Perhaps the most consequential

order – so far – for international students was the President's directive to implement extreme vetting of foreign nationals applying for US visas, "to the maximum degree possible".

"This could permit the government to perform enhanced screening of individuals in particular countries or even warrant a partial or full suspension admission of nationals from certain countries," explained NAFSA deputy executive director of public policy, Jill Allen Murray.

"The enhanced vetting executive order is a particularly important one," she added, citing concerns about how it could materialize for individuals taking part in student protests, who could be deemed hostile by the administration.

It is yet to be seen how far the vetting could go and whether individuals from entire nations could be blocked from obtaining a US visa, with more details expected from federal agencies in the next 30 to 60 days.

With sector leaders paying close attention to immigration changes and NAFSA establishing a 'one-stop-shop' for policy updates, Allen Murray was clear to state that while the order "opens the door for potential actions... it doesn't take them yet".

"For students who may have availed themselves of a gender X

passport, it's not clear whether that will continue to be valid, so in terms of our servicing of students in the study abroad area, that would be one to pay attention to," advised Allen Murray.

NAFSA also warned of the "harmful" ripple effects of the order ending DEI programs in the federal government, which has already prompted several companies including McDonald's, Walmart, and Meta to scale back their DEI initiatives.

In a move that has shocked educators and religious leaders, immigration enforcement officers will now be able to arrest migrants in sensitive locations like churches, schools, and universities, overturning protections that have been in place for over a decade.

Colleges are being urged to put a plan in place to be prepared for what to do should Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) or Customs Border Protection (CBP) come onto campus.

"The initial signal was one of support," said Aw: "But we want to see that in place and understand what that looks like, given the number of students who would be impacted and how detrimental that could be."

Canadian study permit approvals fall far below cap targets

■ EJ - Agency

Canadian study permit approvals are on track to fall by 45% in 2024, rather than the 35% planned reduction of last year's controversial international student caps, new IRCC data analyzed by ApplyBoard has revealed.

"The caps' impact was significantly underestimated," ApplyBoard founder Meti Basiri told The PIE News. "Rapidly introduced policy changes created confusion and had an immense impact on student sentiment and institutional operations."

"While aiming to manage student numbers, these changes failed to account for the perspectives of students and their importance to Canada's future economy and communities," he continued.

The report reveals the far-reaching impact of Canada's study permit caps, which were announced in January 2024 and followed by a tumultuous year of policy changes that expanded restrictions and set new rules for postgraduate work permit eligibility, among other changes.

For the first 10 months of 2024, Canada's study permit approval rate hovered just above 50%, resulting in an estimated maximum of 280,000 approvals from K-12 to postgraduate levels. This represents the lowest number of approvals in a non-pandemic year since 2019.

"Even from the early days of the caps, decreased student interest outpaced government estimates," noted the report, with stakeholders highlighting the reputational damage to Canada as a study destination.

"Approvals for capped programs fell by 60%, but even cap-exempt programs declined by 27%. Major source countries like India, Nigeria, and Nepal saw over 50% declines, showing how policies have disrupted demand across all study levels," said Basiri.

Following major PGWP and study permit changes announced by the IRCC in September 2024, four out of five international stu-



dent counselors surveyed by ApplyBoard agreed that Canada's caps had made it a less desirable study destination.

Though stakeholders across Canada recognized the need to address fraud and student housing issues, many had urged the federal government to wait until the impact of the initial caps was clear before going ahead with seemingly endless policy changes.

At the CBIE conference in November 2024, immigration minister Marc Miller said he "profoundly disagreed" with the prevailing sector view that the caps and subsequent PGWP and permanent residency restrictions had been an "overcorrection".

Post-secondary programs, which were the primary focus of the 2024 caps, were hit hardest by the restrictions, with new international enrolments at colleges estimated to have dropped by 60% as a result of the policies.

While Canada's largest source destinations saw major declines, the caps were not felt evenly across sending countries. Senegal, Guinea, and Vietnam maintained year-over-year growth, signaling potential sources of diversity for Canada's cap era.

The significant drop in study permit approvals was felt across all provinces, but Ontario – which accounted for over half of all study permit approvals in 2023 – and Nova Scotia have

seen the largest impact, falling by 55% and 54.5% respectively.

Notably, the number of study permits processed by the IRCC dropped by a projected 35% in 2024, in line with the government's targets, but approval rates have not kept pace.

When setting last year's targets, Minister Miller only had the power to limit the number of applications processed by the IRCC, not the number of study permits that are approved.

The initial target of 360,000 approved study permits was based on an estimated approval rate of 60%, resulting in a 605,000 cap on the number of applications processed.

Following new policies such as the inclusion of postgraduate programs in the 2025 cap, Basiri said he anticipated that study permit approvals would remain below pre-cap levels.

"While overall student numbers may align with IRCC's targets, the broader impact on institutional readiness and Canada's reputation will be key areas to watch in 2025," he added.

University of Surrey to set up offshore campus in Gujarat's GIFT City

■ EJ - Agency

The University of Surrey has unveiled its plans for the establishment of a cutting-edge International Branch Campus (IBC) in Gujarat's GIFT City, in association with GUS Global Services (GGS), a leading international education group. The collaboration was announced by Professor GQ Max Lu, President and Vice-Chancellor, University of Surrey, and Dr. Sharad Mehra, Regional CEO - Asia and Australia at Global University Systems (GUS), at the QS India Summit 2025, held in Goa.

This partnership is aimed at enhancing educational collaborations between India and the UK in support of India's vision of becoming a global knowledge hub. It supports the goals of India's National Education Policy (NEP) 2020.

Professor GQ Max Lu outlined the importance of this project: "The University of Surrey's campus at GIFT City will be a beacon



of British education's excellence. This endeavour is more than just an academic partnership; it's a transformative step towards redefining global education in an interconnected world. Our students will benefit from high-quality education situated in one of the most dynamic financial and technology hubs."

Aaron Etingen, the executive chairman and chief executive of Global University Systems, called the collaboration a landmark moment in transnational education.

Soon, delegations from the University of Surrey and GGS will pay a visit to GIFT City, further taking forward the project. The campus will evolve a talented pool of human capital that can efficiently navigate the exigencies of an economy as seamlessly connected with the world. An initiative combining excellence in academia and operational efficiency will help GIFT City emerge as a significant place for global education and innovation.

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