

## Computerized CAT

The Common Admission Test (CAT) of the Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs) at Ahmedabad, Bangalore, Kolkata, Indore, Kozhikode, Lucknow, and Shillong is going to be a Computer Based Test (CBT) from this year onwards. The test will be conducted in a window of about ten days sometime at the end of the calendar year. CBT CAT will be a candidate-friendly test in terms of flexibility in the selection of test date, ease of registration process, better physical environment and test experience, and enhanced security in terms of biometric identification of candidates and video monitoring. CBT format also would improve communication between candidates and IIMs in terms of programme information, test delivery, receipt of admit cards, and receipt of score reports.

IIMs have been conducting CAT in paper-&-pencil format for the last 33 years. This test is reputed to be the toughest entrance test for management and business schools worldwide. With growing student aspirations to undertake management education, the number of candidates appearing for CAT has been increasing manifold. While about 95,000 candidates took CAT in 2003, the number rose to about 250,000 in 2008 indicating a rise of a whopping 163 percent. This has resulted in severe strain on the administrative system of IIMs to conduct CAT in its existing format.

CBT is a natural culmination of the modernization CAT has undergone. In the late 1960s, multiple choice questions (MCQ), an educational testing innovation, was introduced for the first time in the entrance examinations of IIMs. Later, in the late 1970s, entrance tests of different IIMs were merged to form CAT. In the late 1980s, another technology feature was introduced in the form of optical machine reading (OMR) of the answer-sheets. Today, CAT is poised to take a CBT format comparable to the existing tests such as GMAT, GRE, and TOEFL but at substantially lower cost.

IIMs have selected Prometric ETS after a very elaborate search process to be their partner in delivering the computer-assisted CAT. More details will be available on the computerised CAT along with the advertisement for CAT to be released later this summer.