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Govt steps in as MTech students ditch IITs mid-course for PSU jobs

The Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) are reportedly having a hard time retaining their MTech students, with many quitting the course after landing jobs in public sector undertakings (PSUs).

Officials said a number of IITs complained of such occurrences at the recently held IIT council meet, presided by human resource development (HRD) minister Prakash Javadekar. It is learnt that out of 8,000-odd students, 2,000 left the course after getting jobs at PSUs. To tide over the problem, the council has decided to ask all such PSUs to allow students to join after completing the programme.

"We will take up the matter with the PSUs. A lot of time, money and energy are invested in the MTech programme. IITs are premier institutes, and there is a long waitlist for getting into them. If students leave midway, the seats go empty. We want to encourage students to go for higher studies and research," said a senior official on the condition of anonymity.

"The HRD ministry will write to the department of public enterprises in this regard," said another official.

Admissions to the IIT MTech programme take place through the Graduate Aptitude Test in Engineering (GATE), the score for which is also used by PSUs for recruitment. GAIL, ONGC and SAIL are said to be among the PSUs that offer jobs to MTech students from IITs.

To discourage 'deserters', the council also approved a proposal to recover the entire fellowship amount (of Rs 12,400 per month) if any of the students leave the programme midway. "This happens because there is immense pressure on students to start earning after completing their bachelors. We are trying to get the PSUs onboard, so these students can rest assured that their jobs won't go to anybody else," the HRD official said.

The IIT council, which is the highest decision-making body for the prestigious institutes, also considered providing 1,000 teaching assistantships – bearing a fellowship amount of Rs 25,000 per month – to meritorious MTech students.

The council had recently approved a proposal to introduce the Prime Minister's Research Fellowships, aimed at encouraging BTech graduates from IITs to directly enrol in Ph.D courses.

There are 23 IITs in the country, with a total count of 72,000 students. Around 14,000 MTech students are enrolled in the institutes.