

DELHI HIGH COURT SQUASHES CMAT

The C-MAT was introduced two years ago as part of an ambitious government-mandated plan to hold a common admission test for all the business schools in the country, except the IIMs. Photo: Ramesh Pathania/Mint

New Delhi: The Delhi high court has questioned the right of the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) to conduct entrance examinations for admission to business schools, and quashed the one conducted in September in a move that raises questions about the relevance of the body although it does put the few hundred thousand students who take the exam, and the few hundred schools that use the scores, in a spot.

Cancelling the council's notification for the Common Management Admission Test (CMAT), a division bench of the Delhi high court headed by Chief Justice **N.V. Ramana** said AICTE did not have the authority to regulate MBA courses. The court said on Tuesday that MBA courses didn't fall under "technical education" as defined in the AICTE Act.

"It is clear from the Supreme Court findings that AICTE has no role to play either in admission process or in subsequent monitoring of such (MBA) courses," the Delhi high court observed in its order. The order was given on 7 October but was made public on Tuesday. *Mint* has a copy of the order.

The petitioners, Federation of Association of Management of Unaided Professional Educational Institutions of India (FAMUPEII), had appealed to the division bench questioning the powers of the AICTE to conduct the entrance test.

"The court order quashes the CMAT exams held in the September this year," explained **Romy Chacko**, the advocate representing FAMUPEII. AICTE conducts CMAT exams twice a year and the best score can be used by a student while seeking admission to a B-school.

G.P.C Nayar, president of FAMUPEII, and who runs a business school in Kochi, claimed CMAT created confusion among business school aspirants.

Indian business schools admit students on the basis of their scores in one of six tests including CMAT. The others are the Common Admission Test conducted by the Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs), the popular international Graduate Management Admission Test, Xavier Aptitude Test conducted by XLRI, Jamshedpur, the All India Management Association's Management Admission Test, and ATMA (AIMS Test for Management Admissions) conducted by the Association of Indian Management Schools.

some 215,000 students sat for the exam, said FAMUPEII's Nayar. AICTE decided to conduct CMAT in 2011 and the first edition of the national exam was conducted in

February 2012. This was introduced as part of an ambitious government-mandated plan to hold a common admission test for all the business schools in the country, except the IIMs. In the last two editions of the CMAT,

This is the second court ruling this year to undermine the authority of the AICTE as an education regulator. On 25 April, the Supreme Court ruled that the AICTE did not have the authority to control or regulate professional colleges that are affiliated to universities. That meant a technical college with university affiliation did not need to seek AICTE approval. The apex court ruling also removed most engineering and business schools from the council's ambit.

Mint reported on 3 October that **the Supreme Court ruling** had effectively rendered AICTE irrelevant. The body once used to control every aspect of India's technical education schools, including engineering colleges and business schools.

AICTE chairman **S.S. Mantha** said he was unaware of the high court's ruling.

"I don't have any information on this so far. With (April) Supreme Court order this sort of things will happen now," Mantha said. "Unless the apex court order is reversed (via an ordinance), the value of AICTE will be questioned. But it is important to note that in last few years we have brought huge transparency in the technical education space."

Last year 600 business schools admitted students on the basis of CMAT scores. India admits at least 400,000 students every year to its over 3000 B-schools.