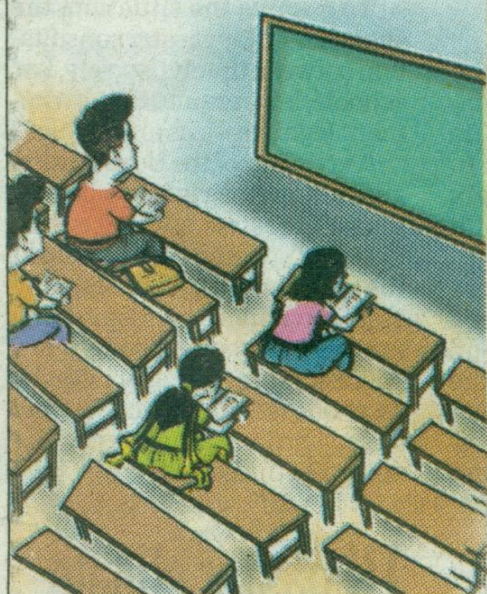


AICTE to merge institutes with over 50% vacancies

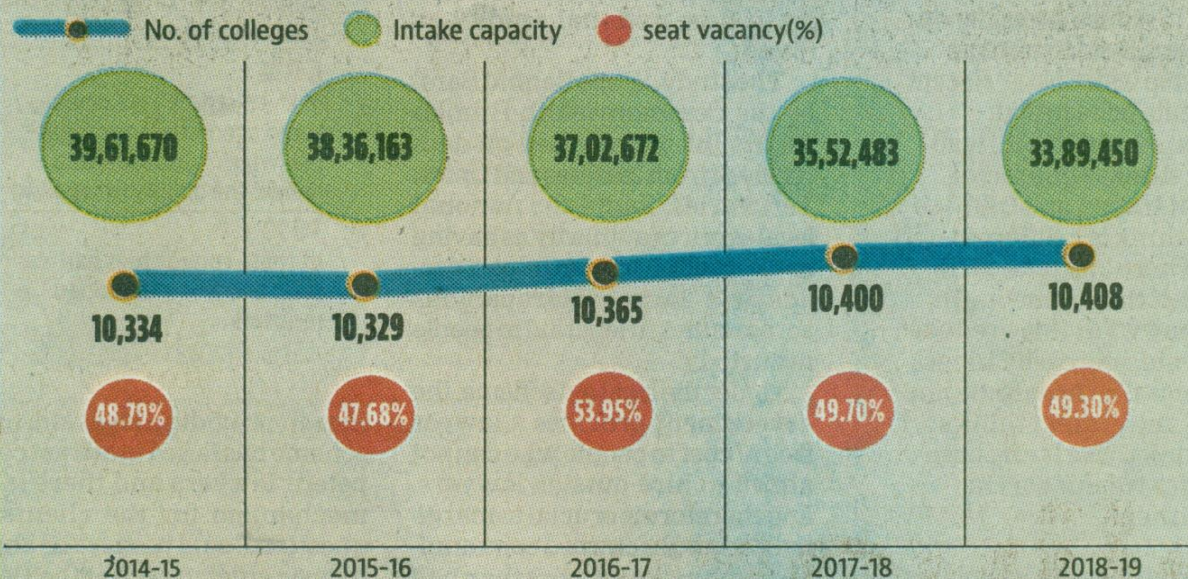
STRICTER RULES Applications for engg courses lower than the number of seats

EMPTY CLASSROOMS

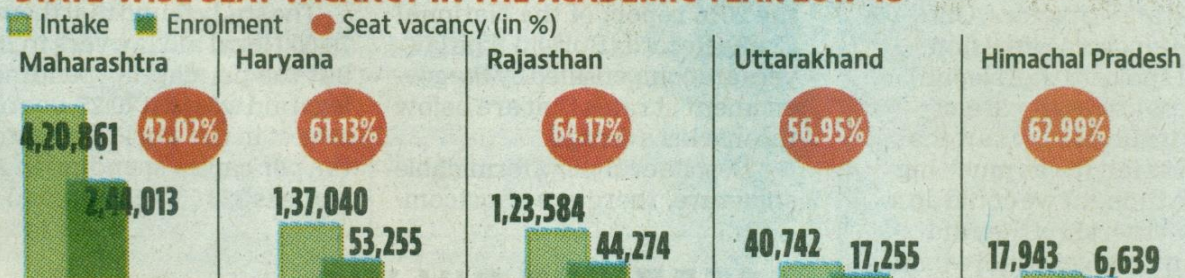
The growing number of vacant seats has prompted the higher and technical education departments of several states, including that of Maharashtra, to request All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) to not approve any new engineering institutes for some time.



SEATS VACANT FOR UNDERGRADUATE COURSES IN AICTE-APPROVED ENGINEERING COLLEGES ACROSS INDIA



STATE-WISE SEAT VACANCY IN THE ACADEMIC YEAR 2017-18



Source: All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE)

HTSPECIAL

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MUMBAI: With nearly 50% of seats in engineering colleges across the country remaining vacant, the technical education department is planning to merge institutes with high vacancies.

Officials of the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) who are aware of the developments said that institutes with over 50% vacancy, and good teaching and infrastructure facilities could be merged to avoid being shut down.

With applications for engineering courses lower than the number of seats, vacancies in institutes across the country have been increasing. In the last

five years, vacancies at engineering institutes approved by the AICTE has remained over 47%, with the 2016-17 witnessing almost 54% seat vacancy.

"Merging of institutes means institutes can put together their resources and also ensure that students get the best facilities and quality of education. This way, the AICTE won't have to shut down institutes and leave students in a lurch," said a senior AICTE official who requested anonymity.

The growing number of vacant seats has prompted the higher and technical education departments of several states, including that of Maharashtra, to request the AICTE to not approve any new engineering institutes for some time. In December 2017 alone, six states including Haryana, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Himachal

Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Telangana had requested the AICTE to not approve new colleges as the demand for engineering seats in their respective states was consistently low. The AICTE had approved requests of four of these states after an initial inspection.

Earlier this year, the Maharashtra government wrote to the AICTE, requesting no permission be granted to new diploma or degree engineering colleges for 2018-19, which was accepted. Still, 42% of seats in Maharashtra's technical institutes went vacant in 2018-19.

"We have also requested colleges seeking a rise in their intake capacity to first find out if all departments are doing well," said Abhay Wagh, director, state Directorate of Technical Education (DTE).

However, officials say that a

ban on new colleges is not the answer to the problem of vacant seats. "Only a few engineering departments have stopped attracting students because they don't promise jobs in the future. Initiating a blanket ban on new colleges also means scarcity of seats in courses that have a big following," said Anil Sahasrabudhe, chairman, AICTE.

Sahasrabudhe said that for the upcoming year, the AICTE is working on stricter rules at the time of approval of an institute to make sure there is no blanket ban on new colleges. "We cannot deprive even a single student eligible for a seat to go without one, just because of a lack of seats in a state," he said.

He said that requests of colleges to shut down have been accepted only after making sure students do not suffer.