

‘Super 10’ @ IIT Dhanbad, 16-yr-olds in Class of 2019

On the campus this time, there will be a bunch of very young students, two of them just 15 years old

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At 14 years 11 months, Chaturbhuj Singh Kiral is the youngest fresher at IIT Dhanbad, the Indian School of Mines, and likely among the youngest in any of the country's 23 IITs to gain admission this academic session. The average IITian fresher is aged about 18, but Chaturbhuj will not feel alone. In his campus, there are nine others in his age group who have made the cut — a rare event.

Just five months older to him is Jyoti Priyadarshini from UP's Rae Bareilly. The toddler who loved books is an IITian at 15. Jyoti, her proud parents say, never needed a tutor at home nor had they the means to send her to a coaching institute. They saved hard to buy a cooler for the house so that through the sultry long summer she could study in some comfort. Jyoti, her hair cropped short, is set to pursue the five-year mining and machine engineering programme.

Jyoti's mother Manju Chaudhary says the teen's love for books and study started when she was barely 2 years old and that she was "born bright". Teachers said she was smart enough to skip kindergarten. Jyoti cleared her matriculation (UPSEB) with 89.5% at 13. This year, she finished her intermediate (CBSE) from the same school with 84.4%. The IIT-JEE "good news" came on June 14, four months after her 15th birthday on March 22.

Her father Suresh Kumar, a mathematics and social science teacher, had hoped Jyoti would become a doctor. "But my daughter wanted to be an engineer and I decided to support her dreams," said the man who looks after their joint family of 11, including a stroke survivor, with a monthly salary of around Rs 60,000.

Chaturbhuj, who



Jyoti Priyadarshini from UP's Rae Bareilly is an IITian at 15

took admission to India's only mining school on Wednesday, belongs to Rajasthan's Alwar. Of humble origin, the son of a scrap dealer cracked JEE (Advanced) in his first attempt. "I know what poverty is first-hand, and how it affects underprivileged children," he said.

His father Lalchand Kiral added, "Our financial condition was pathetic, but I did everything possible to help him as his teachers always told me that he was good in studies."

In the new academic session, IIT-ISM has enrolled 170 girls, taking the number to over 1,200 girls in the 7,000-student base.

In-between the hectic admission process which continued into Friday, R K Das, chairman of JEE admission committee, told TOI that the admission of under-16s and early 17-year-olds is based entirely on performance in the entrance exam. "Though there is an upper age limit of 25 years for admission to IITs, there is no minimum age limit. There are 952 seats in

this institute, of which 910 students have registered for admission. By Wednesday, 865 students had already been admitted."

Among the others in Chaturbhuj and Jyoti's age group are three who belong to the same school — the state-run Prayas Boys Vidyalaya, a residential school for tribal students near Chhattisgarh's Raipur; here talent is scouted from Maoist-hit belts and the students of Classes XI and XII undergo training to sit for professional exams.

Baby-faced Yogendra Nath Singh of Surguja, the smiling and spectacled Vivek Kumar Diwan of Mahasamund and the thin Amanath Paikra of Balrampur are elated. All sons of marginal farmers, they have made the cut to IIT in their first attempt. "Our school prepared us to face the entrance exam. Eight students from my school have made it to IITs," a chuffed Yogendra said. Their friends are off to IITs in Delhi, Varanasi, Roorkee, Mandi and Ropar. In Raipur, their teacher and co-ordinator of Prayas Boys School, Tejram Pradhan confirmed that eight students have indeed been selected from the school to IITs.

The youngest IIT fresher across India so far, 12-year-old Satyam Kumar from Bihar's Bhojpur district, made the cut in 2012. He was sent to Kota for coaching and cleared the grueling test in his first attempt. He then reappeared in 2013 for a better score and emerged the youngest IIT fresher again with a rank of 679.



"I know what poverty is first-hand. I want to become an IAS officer and contribute to society

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