

Banned Startups Still Scout IITs

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New Delhi: Startups across sectors are reporting interest from students in the Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs), suggesting that the year-long ban imposed by the IITs' placement committee on startups at campus recruitment drives has not affected their plans to hire top talent.

In August, 30 companies, mostly startups, were blacklisted by the All IIT Placement Committee (AIPC) and barred from taking part in the campus placement process for renegeing on job offers and delaying joining dates, among other changes.

While the final year students at these institutes could not be reached for comment, founders of startups that ET spoke with, including NowFloats, Babajobs, ConsultLane, Mera Hunar, CashCare and Portea Medical, Medd (now part of 1mg Technologies) and Runnr, claimed that startups have not fallen off the radar for IIT students. "It was unfair to ban us without issuing any warning. This ban will not prevent us from taking top talent from the IITs," Jasminder Singh Gulati, chief executive of NowFloats, told ET. Gulati's company is planning to hire at least half a dozen engineers from the IITs. "Startups like ours need premier engineering talent to thrive in the competition and even the IIT students are looking forward to join startups like ours."

Vinay Dalal, director of Mera Hunar, said, "Students from the IITs are reaching out to us in any case despite the official ban." Dalal said bigger startups were given a chance to explain, unlike smaller ones.

ConsultLane too has been getting a good response from students, said its founder Dinesh Sharma.

The company is also looking at making lateral engineering hires, besides making fresh recruitment from the IITs. "We are looking at lateral hires too this year apart from getting talent from the engineering colleges," said Sharma.

Vir Kashyap, chief operating officer at Babajobs, said, "This year, we are looking at lateral hires as



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we have a few positions open that need experience too."

Healthcare startup Portea Medical, which has the backing of International Finance Corporation, Accel, Qualcomm Ventures and Ventureast, is planning to take in six engineers this year. The company is looking at hiring premium talent.

"We are seeing interest from talent across the board, including from the IITs. For new engineering graduates, we will be looking for placement in the coming year, as the season hasn't commenced as yet for them," said Meena Ganesh, managing director of Portea, adding, "We do not have a specific number that we wish to recruit from IITs as such."

Mera Hunar's Dalal said the IITs are biased towards bigger startups as they were given time to explain the delays. CashCare's founder Vikas Sekhri said, "Student interest has not died down as the reality is everyone needs a job." His company requires about 10 engineers (freshers) this year.

Medd is still getting invitations from IITs for placements. The company was acquired by 1mg in July this year. ET also reached out to other blacklisted companies, including Grofers, Click-labs, Grabhouse, Stayzilla, Zettata, Hops-cotch and Lexinnova Technologies, but could not elicit a response.

The AIPC is unlikely to revoke the ban. "We are just protecting students' welfare. Companies have no right behaving unprofessionally with students," said a spokesperson for AIPC.