

IIM, IIT unsure of in-person classes

**SUBHANKAR
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Calcutta: Central academic institutions like IIT Kharagpur and IIM Calcutta, which have resumed calling students to the campus following the Bengal government's nod to the reopening of campuses from February 3, are still unsure about starting in-person classes.

IIT Kharagpur, which had to be shut down last month following a surge in Covid cases, said the institute would continue to hold classes over digital platforms even though the authorities have resumed calling students to the campus.

Since the residential institute has as many as 15,000-odd students, the authorities are keen on a wider consultation before deciding on resumption of in-person classes.

IIM Calcutta, where four hostels had to be brought under a micro containment zone last month, has like the IIT decided to hold classes over digital platforms till the end of term in March. The Joka business school, too, has started calling students to the campus.

NIT Durgapur, which witnessed a spike in cases last month, has called a meeting on February 8 to decide on the recall process.

Classes will continue to be held over digital platforms for some time, said an NIT official.

Dhrubajyoti Sen, dean of students at IIT Kharagpur, said they were planning to recall in the first phase research scholars who had registered last year and the students who left the campus following the latest surge in Covid cases last month.

"No decision has been made yet on starting in-person classes," he said.

An IIT official said that since theirs is a residential institute, in-person classes could begin only after all students arrived on the campus and were accommodated in hostels.

"We have to weigh the pros and cons before making any decision on the resumption of in-person classes. We need to hold a wider consultation with doctors and students' representatives before making a decision," he said.

The institute is also exploring the possibility of holding some classes in the hybrid mode

— some students will attend lectures in-person and others will have the sessions live-streamed to them — till normality is restored on the campus.

The IIM had asked the students who were staying in hostels that were not within the containment zone to leave the campus by January 9.

Manish Thakur, chairperson of the IIM's Covid task force, said students are free to return to the campus. But they will continue to attend classes and write exams on online platforms till the ongoing semester ends in March.

"Since the classes are being held online from January, there is no point in disrupting the momentum. Besides, we have to be cautious about starting offline classes because hostels were last month brought under a micro containment zone," an IIM official said.

At NIT Durgapur, also a residential institute, research scholars and MTech final-year students started arriving from Sunday. The meeting to be held that day will decide on recalling students from another year and also resumption of in-person classes.