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NEWS

A TISS INITIATIVE, THE DEGREE COURSE WILL OFFER MA / MSC IN DISASTER MANAGEMENT

Now, get a degree to manage disasters

Mihika Basu

Mumbai, June 7: INSTEAD of merely managing a disaster after it occurs, students will soon be studying a comprehensive course that equips them to minimise and prevent disasters and look at developmental issues critically, thanks to an initiative by the **Tata Institute of Social Sciences** (TISS). A post-graduate degree in disaster management to be started at the Jamsetji Tata Centre for Disaster Management, TISS, from 2007 will teach students prevention, mitigation and management of disasters. And what's unique about the course is that it will be offered as an MA or an MSc degree to candidates with BA or BSc respectively.

"We've been receiving inputs for years now from NGOs, our own students and the corporate sector to start something with tailor-made modules and training courses in disaster response, a field that desperately requires trained professionals in India. This initiative will bridge the gap," said Janki Andharia, professor and chairperson, JTCDM, TISS.

Added Andharia: "This is the first time an Indian institute is offering such a comprehensive master's course in this field. And it's just a means of consolidating our experience of 60 years in disaster response work."

The curriculum which has been prepared over the past one year has been done in consultation with national and state-level policy makers and after consulting professors abroad and studying the course contents of universities in the US and Africa which offer similar

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specialisations within a master's degree.

The programme will include thematic and issue-based courses related to aspects such as the relationship between environment, livelihood and disasters, institutional building and governance, inequalities and social exclusion, local knowledge systems and disaster management. With 30 students, sessions will begin from September.

Students can develop expertise in seven areas — public health and disaster management, governance in disaster management, geographical information systems in disaster management, psychological care in disaster management, conflicts, peace and development, logistics management and service delivery systems and communication and media.

Field work will be integral to the programme and will enable students to work with organisations working in the developmental sector with disaster management as a key thrust area. Government entities designing policy framework in this field could also be an option. Further, the centre is working towards international tie-ups with institutes of excellence like the University of Delaware. “We are also working towards ‘study abroad programmes’ wherein students will get the opportunity to go abroad,” added Andharia.

Spread over four semesters, the programme has been designed in a way to enable mid-career professionals to combine work and study. It has one year of extensive contact classes with field exposure and research is a compulsory component.

In the second year, students will have the choice of working off the campus in the distance education mode. It will also offer multi-level entry-exit option where a student coming for a semester can obtain a “Certificate in Disaster Management”. Students who want to continue in the next semester will get a diploma. Alternatively, students on completion of the certificate programme can come back after a break (not exceeding five years) and join for a second semester. To obtain the master's degree, students can complete four semesters without a break or in an incremental manner after completing the credits required for a diploma.

While the TISS website mentions May 31st as the last day for accepting applications, the institute has extended it to June 9th.