



THE TIMES OF INDIA

10th April, 2020

COVID-19

THE TIMES OF INDIA, BHUBANESWAR
FRIDAY, APRIL 10, 2020

Working to classical music, IIT head uses gift of time

Hemanta.Pradhan
@timesgroup.com

Bhubaneswar: What the lockdown has given RV Rajakumar, director of IIT Bhubaneswar, is time; the time to work on the next-generation pedagogical practices and curriculum to be followed by his institution for the following five years. This creative work, which consumes both attention and time, has only been possible because of the unexpected gift of time that the lockdown has brought into the academic-administrator's life.

"I personally took up the task to prepare the curricular structure of the institution. In normal times, it would have been very difficult to do it but now I have a lot of time to carry out this creative work. The number of files I have to screen and the meetings I have to attend are fewer, so I wanted to utilise my time for this work," said Rajakumar.

For the first time, the whole teaching and learning work at IIT Bhubaneswar has gone online and the transition has been smooth, said Rajakumar, who is personally monitoring the online classes of different schools of his institute and research output of scholars and teachers during the lockdown. He talks to them through videoconference and asks them to come up



"I personally took up the task to prepare the curricular structure of the institution. In normal times, it would have been very difficult to do it but now I have a lot of time to carry out this creative work"

RV RAJAKUMAR

with innovative ideas to teach students online. The director also monitors the well-being of 1,900 workers engaged in construction work at the institution. "They could not return to their native places due to the lockdown, but they are doing fine here. We also look after around 400 out of the 2,130 students staying in the institute's hostels," he added.

As the director lives on campus, he goes to his office every day, although it is without most of its staff at present. "I take all precautions at office and work in isolation. I normally spend eight to 10 hours in the office with significantly reduced support staff," he added.

The director has already formed six teams to conduct research on six different issues related to Covid-19. These include study of different characteristics of the coronavirus, ways of carrying out waste treatment and sanitization during this pandemic,

and how to make sanitizers, disinfectants and ventilators to help the government.

Rajakumar, an admirer of Indian classical music, also ensures that he can indulge in his hobby during the lockdown. "When I am at home, I listen to classical music. It is really therapeutic. I also discuss the situation with my wife, a professor. We spend some time over phone or video call with our children in the US. My son is a researcher and my daughter works for Microsoft. They practice yoga and pranayam every day and they are doing fine there," he added.

The director said the government has taken timely steps to control the spread of Covid-19. "My personal request to the government is to create seamless transportation of agricultural products from the farm to the door of customers. It will stop waste of agricultural produce and prevent the creation of artificial shortage of vegetables and other produce. The lockdown should be withdrawn in phases," he added.

**LIFE UNDER
LOCKDOWN**