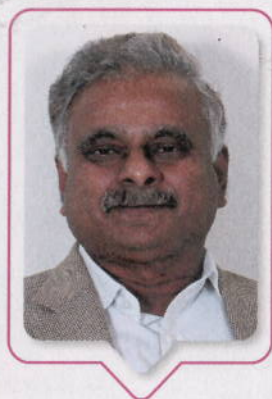




BUILDING A GOOD IIT TAKES A LOT OF TIME AND EFFORT

Prof. R. V. Raja Kumar, Director, IIT Bhubaneswar speaks to Abhay Anand on how new IITs help in improving quality of engineering education...



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Q. How do you look at the establishment of new IITs?

A. Our 10+2 students aspire to get into top-class institutions like the IITs. Nearly 2 lakh students appear for the JEE Advanced and only a fraction of them gets into the IIT system, but with emergence of new IITs, we are able to admit 11,000 students. Getting education from a top-class institution makes a lot of difference in the career path of a student. There is a very strong need for education like the ones offered in the IITs for a good number of students and in that sense we need to have a good number of seats to be made available in the IIT system. The only difficulty is that it is not possible to build an institution to the level of IITs in one go. Building an IIT takes a lot of time and effort.

Q. Many a times we hear that opening up of more new IITs will dilute the quality of output. Is that so?

A. If opening up of new IITs is done carefully, like what we are doing now, it will not dilute the system at all. In fact, in the past six decades of the existence of IITs, it should have grown significantly but during this period it did not grow as per the actual requirement. It is good that expansion is now taking place, though it will still take some more time to meet the full requirement. Coming to the dilution part, as the expansion is happening in a planned manner with right kind of leadership in place and the effort that they are making is visible, I am hopeful we will bring them to the level of the old IITs, if not better than that. One challenge that we faced initially was related to faculty recruitment but things have started to improve now.

Q. What about placements at the new IITs? Are they doing good?

A. All the new IITs established after 2008 are coming up without dilution of the quality and have shown it with their performance; and in some cases we have done better because we have small number of students. If you look at the way some of the IITs have picked up new areas of teaching and research, it is really good and their interaction with the industry is also at a much higher level at such an early stage. At IIT Odisha, we are matching the placement figures of the old IITs and in none of the parameters we are below. In fact, we are better than many old IITs in some areas.

Q. The new IITs have been facing problems in attracting quality faculty and more so at the senior level. How can this problem be addressed?

A. We also have some retired faculties from the IIT system who are willing to teach further and this will help in training the young talent that we are getting as faculty members. If we talk about faculty shortage, the issue is there in the older IITs also and it was there earlier also so, we need to address this issue in a systemic manner and if we focus only on hiring senior level faculty, then it would delay the matter and will not be right for the young talent who are ready to get into teaching.

Q. What about infrastructure development at the new IITs?

A. Though some of them are still facing space crunch, this will be sorted out soon. In fact, the centre has allocated around Rs. 850-870 crores for infrastructure development at IITs for the next three years. 