WE DON'T NEED AUTONOMY: IITs

The premier engineering institutes say they cannot sustain without govt support

Even as the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) and the Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) Council decide on the "re-worked" version of the Kakodkar Committee report on autonomy for the IITs, the verdict by IITs is out: We don't need autonomy.

IIT directors and professors that Business Standard spoke to, said, they have enough autonomy to function well.

"In my personal opinion IITs have adequate autonomy. As an institution funded by tax-payers, I do not expect to be handed more on a platter. I am willing to fight for financial autonomy as and when I need it. We have a well thought out Act that protects our autonomy," said M S Ananth, Director, IIT Madras.

The panel, headed by Anil Kakodkar, former chairman, Atomic Energy Commission, has advocated in its report that greater responsibility for operational and financial management be transferred from the IIT council and the MHRD, to the IIT board.

The report states that the objective of realising autonomy would be facilitated by de-linking IIT finances from non-plan support of the Government. IIT professors however, said absence of government grants may restrict their growth.

"While the whole idea of the Kakodkar Panel is rooted in providing us more autonomy, I am not so sure that this will provide us with the prospects of growth that we need in the immediate future and in the long run," said an IIT-Kharagpur professor on the condition of anonymity.

Each IIT has a board, while the IIT council is the apex IIT governing body which has participation from the MHRD, central secretaries of education and all IIT directors along with central government nominees.

The Committee has suggested that IITs be made independent of non-plan (operational) support from the Government for their operational expenditure while at the same time seeking greater plan (capital) support to enhance research in a comprehensive manner.

"My view is that a better solution is to give more autonomy to the IIT Council. The restrictions imposed by the Ministry of Finance should be removed and the Council should be empowered to take all financial decisions. Problems such as number of positions, pay scales, promotion policies, recruitment rules, purchasing rules should all be decided by the IIT Council," Gautam Barua, Director, IIT Guwahati.

Barua added that most of the recommendations by Kakodkar Committee are to delegate powers from the Council or the Government to the board.

WHAT THE KAKODKAR PANEL SAYS

- Transfer responsibility for operational and financial management from the IIT council and MHRD to IIT board
- IITs be made independent of non-plan support from the Government but seek greater plan support
- Hike fee from the current ₹50,000 to ₹2.5 lakh per year

"A board does not adequately represent the main stakeholders, the government, the faculty and the staff. Also, there should be some uniformity among the IITs' 15 autonomous boards which dilute the IIT brand," said Barua.

The recommendations of the panel have also proposed a five-fold fee hike from the current ₹50,000 to ₹2.5 lakh for the undergraduate engineering programme. The additional funds, the report says, will be utilised for providing greater autonomy to the IITs.

First draft of the report was presented by the panel to the MHRD this January which has since been reworked keeping in mind the ministry's concerns about fee hike and the associated problems. The new recommendations, while keeping fee hike intact, suggest a scholarship for deserving candidates.

As per the report, IITs will subject themselves to a comprehensive institution review by an internationally eminent group once every five years.

"The MHRD is concerned about being responsible to audit, and the parliament about the way in which IITs spend taxpayer's money. The Kakodkar report talks of additional autonomy that comes from spending one's own earnings. The latter will not be as accountable for what IITs do with their own earnings as with tax-payers' funds," added Ananth.

The committee was set up in October 2009. Among other members it includes: T.V. Mohandas Pai, former Director (Human Resource), Infosys; Hari Bhatia, Co-Chairman and Managing Director of Jubilant Organosys; K. Mohandas, Vice-Chancellor of the Kerala University of Health and Allied Sciences and Professor Ashok Jhunjhunwala, IIT Madras.

IIT Guwahati Director Gautam Barua, IIT Mandi Director T. Gunale and IIT Kanpur Chairman M. Anandakrishnan were special invitees on the panel.
NSUI finds fault with foreign varsities Bill

DRAFT Students’ body asks HRD panel to cap fees, students enrolled by institutions

NEW DELHI: The students’ body of the ruling Congress has raised a series of concerns over a landmark proposed legislation to allow and regulate foreign universities in India, complicating the government’s long-standing efforts to pass the Bill.

The National Students’ Union of India (NSUI) has petitioned the Parliament Standing Committee on Human Resource Development (HRD) demanding that contrary to what the Bill proposes, the government cap the fees charged by foreign universities. Though stating that it broadly welcomes the Bill, the Centre is concerned that over-regulation will keep best universities away.

NSUI has also demanded a common entrance examination for all foreign universities.

In its petition to the Parliament panel, the students’ body has also demanded a limit on the number of foreign students these universities can enrol in the Indian campuses, sources have told HT.

All these demands are contrary to the government’s position on the Bill. The government is concerned that such over-regulatory proposals will be unacceptable to the best universities across the world, which may choose to stay out of India.

The BJP’s student wing, the Akhil Bharatiya Vidhyarthi Parishad (ABVP), the CPI-backed All India Students’ Federation (AISF), the CPM’s Students’ Federation of India (SFI) and other Left-leaning student bodies have also petitioned the Standing Committee. The House panel, which is at a key stage of deliberations on the Bill, has summoned HRD ministry officials later this week to respond to these petitions.

While the ABVP, like the NSUI, has both raised its concerns over the Bill and citing possible benefits - such as world-class educational opportunities for the Indian students - the Left student bodies have opposed the legislation.

But government sources accepted that the substantive nature of the concerns raised by the NSUI could prove an impediment in the passage of the Bill. Congress general secretary Rahul Gandhi is in charge of the NSUI and sections of the government are wondering whether the petition had his blessings. The NSUI petition also seeks quotas for SC, ST and other backward category students. Indian private universities are not required to maintain student quotas.

ISRO to launch 12 foreign satellites in 2 years

Tribune News Service

BANGALORE, JUNE 1

The Indian Space Research Organisation workhorse PSLV (polar satellite launch vehicle) will launch 12 foreign satellites in the orbit during the next two years.

An ISRO official said this here today in a press meeting attended by organisation chairman K Radhakrishnan, former ISRO chairman UR Rao and Madhavan Nair, space commission member R Narasimhan and directors of various ISRO centres.

The 12 foreign satellites included four from Canada, two from Indonesia and two from Germany, the official said.

He, however, said only one of the 12 satellites would be the “main mission satellite” during the launch. The remaining 11 satellites were of the micro satellite and nano satellite category and would ride “piggyback” during other important satellite launches.
Administration at IIITs in a mess

L. VENKAT RAM REDDY

DC | HYDERABAD

May 30: The Rajiv Gandhi University of Knowledge Technologies (RGUKT), which has been running IIITs in Basar, Nuzvid and Idupulapaya for the last three years, is in an administrative mess even though it is generously funded by the state government.

This is the only university in the state where none of the top officials function from the university headquarters located in Idupulapaya, Kadapa.

While the chancellor, Prof. Raj Reddy, shuttles between the US and India once a month, the vice-chancellor, Prof. R.V. Raja Kumar, and registrar, Prof. S. Satyanarayana, work out of Hyderabad.

Administration has gone for a toss in the IIITs with no monitoring of their activities from higher authorities. The minister for higher education, Mr. Damodar Rajanarasimha, and other senior officials of the department are reportedly upset with the functioning of RGUKT.

It is notable that the funds being allotted to RGUKT every year are more than what the government allots to all the state universities put together.

The admissions policy is in a shambles even though the procedure was changed twice after angry protests from students and the courts. Though the AP High Court last October struck down its admission policy of taking the Mandal as the unit for admitting students, RGUKT has not put a new policy in place. Thus, the university is not in a position to issue an admission notification this year, though SSC results have already been announced, nor can it say when such a notification will be issued.

As if this was not enough, RGUKT's recruitment policy does not follow due reservations, which led to a tussle between the university and the department of higher education.
MIT Graduate Brings Hi-Tech Closer to People

Anup Akkikhal uses a supply chain solution used by US Army to solve problems of village entrepreneurs

Economic Times ND 20/6/2011

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There was a pipeline of vaccines which were to be sent but there was no real way of understanding where the vaccines were. Logistics does exactly that. And it is relatively cheap.

The rural markets across India are underserved because the order-taking and delivery is not large enough. This is where Logistics's order consolidation solution will help. Their software model is forward-looking and robust. This will back India's technology growth as well.

Patrick Lynon
Head Economist, WHO

While working for the UN defence, I realised why don't I try and apply the same hi-tech system to mobile. I remember failing till during every visit to India and not getting medicines on time. That's why I wanted to conduct a research on chemists.

Anup Akkikhal
Founder & CEO Logistics

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President MIT

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