

Newspaper Clips

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WE DON'T NEED AUTONOMY: IITs

The premier engineering institutes say they cannot sustain without govt support

SWATI GARG

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 incremental 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.

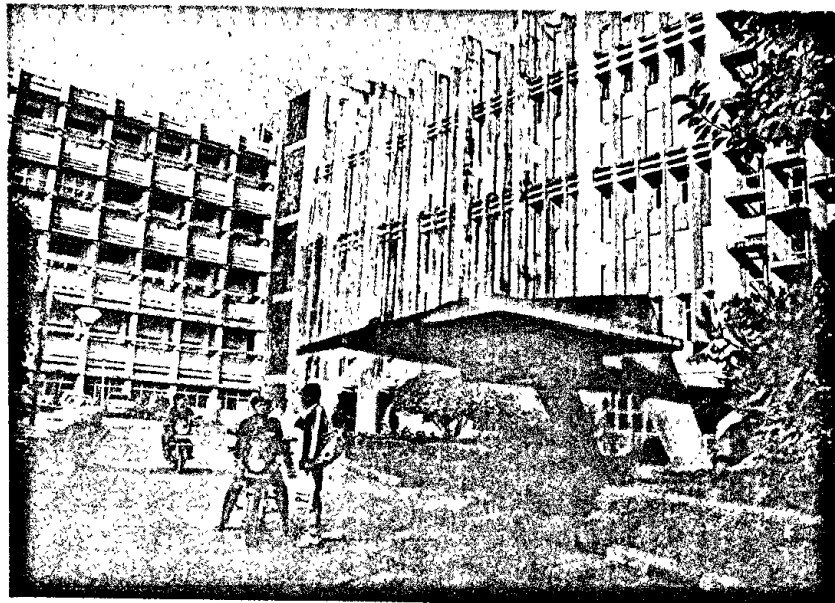
The report states that the objective of realising autonomy would be facilitated by de-linking IIT finances from non-plan support of the Government. IIT professors however, said absence of government grants may restrict their growth.

"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



The Kakodkar committee has recommended increase in fee from the present ₹50,000 to ₹2.5 lakh per year

Council should be empowered to take all financial decisions. Problem areas 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.



THE REPORT SAYS THAT THE OBJECTIVE OF REALISING AUTONOMY WOULD BE FACILITATED BY DE-LINKING FINANCES OF IITs FROM GOVERNMENT'S NON-PLAN SUPPORT

ANIL KAKODKAR
Former Chairman, Atomic Energy Commission

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 will 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 in-

ternationally 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 Bhartia, 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. Gonsalves 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

Charu Sudan Kasturi

■ charu.kasturi@hindustantimes.com

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 Vidyarthi 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 con-

cerns 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.

Tribune ND 2/06/2011 P-8

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 chairmen 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.

Deccan Chronicle Hyderabad

31.05.2011 P-3

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Administration at IITs in a mess

L.VENKAT RAM REDDY

DC | HYDERABAD

May 30: The Rajiv Gandhi University of Knowledge Technologies (RGUKT), which has been running IITs 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 IITs 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.

Economic Times ND 2/06/2011

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MIT Graduate Brings Hi-Tech Closer to People

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

SRIVIDYA IYER
MUMBAI

Siddaramappa Maranabasari, a 29-year-old chemist in Karnataka's Gadag district could never afford a pricey software solution used by large companies to track their products, inventory and forecast demand from customers, but his challenges are not too different from those big enterprises. In fact, a rural supply chain, because of lack of proper infrastructure and at times insufficient supply of electricity, is far more complex and challenging to manage than those in the cities.

The problem for chemists in remote districts like Gadag is to ensure that medicines are stocked well and can be offered during emergencies. Unfortunately, chemists such as Maranabasari had to wait for an emergency before reaching out to a distributor for life saving drugs, losing precious many hours for medicines to arrive.

Maranabasari found answers to his challenges in a solution used by the US army in its Global Combat Support System (GCSS), originally developed by Anup Akkihal, an Indian born in West Virginia. Along with several other chemists in the district, Maranabasari has to pay Rs 100 every month for a software solution that tracks demand, sales and movement of drugs—all on a simple to use handset that does not need any fancy technology.

"I need to brush up on it and need to get back to using it because it is really useful for me and has a lot of potential. I plan to take time out every night and learn to use it again," Maranabasari says. Akkihal, a post graduate in logistics from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, found his inspiration to develop the software while working on a US Army project with defence contractor Northrop Grumman during July 2006.

"While working for the US defence, I realised why don't I try and apply the same hi-tech system to mobile as I realised that military fronts are similar to villages," says the 37-year-old Akkihal who hails from Dharwad in Karnataka. He along with his team, worked with local chemists to develop a solution that could solve their problems in a simple, effective way.

The solution developed by Akkihal, who sells the software through his firm Logistimo, is now gaining traction and holds potential for solving supply chain management problems faced by many village entrepreneurs in the country, experts say. Logistimo's solution is finding takers in remote villages and districts of Africa. For instance, the World Health Organization (WHO) uses Logistimo's technology to track the vaccines meant for the immunization drive in Tunisia since most regions there are not well connected to internet and were looking for some technology that would do it with the mobiles.

"There was a pipeline of vaccines which were to be sent but were creating supply chain challenges. There was no real way of understanding where the vaccines were. And Logistimo does exactly that. And it is relatively cheap in terms of technology. In public health, information system is a critical piece and we are seeing the difference already and this is very exciting work just beginning to get explored," said Patrick Lyndon, health economist at WHO. Around 140 chemists, 120 of them part of a closed-study group, were a part of the research that began in January 2009 and went on till end of the year.

In many ways, Logistimo's software is similar to an enterprise resource planning (ERP) solution that helps companies automate and integrate their business processes of sales, production, marketing and distribution—except that this comes at a fraction of cost when compared with solutions from SAP and Oracle.

Akkihal's early stint with a project for managing logistics for US Army became a learning ground for his homecoming. The US defence's GCSS project is an end-to-end ERP system that manages the logistics of the ar-



ANUP AKKIHAL
Founder & CEO Logistimo

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PATRICK LYNDON
Health Economist, WHO

my and tracks the supply and demand of assets worldwide. After building field and tactical logistics systems for war fronts Akkihal thought it was time to come back to India and apply a similar system to the rural areas in India which are now connected through mobile phones.

While incubating the idea in MIT, Akkihal advised NGOs on a pro-bono basis before coming up with the product 'Saamanguru'. After receiving a grant from the Deshpande centre that funds technological innovations at MIT, Akkihal wanted to conduct a research on local individual chemists in Northern Karnataka for very personal reasons. "I remember falling ill during every visit to India and not getting medicines on time. That's why I wanted to conduct a research on chemists," said Akkihal.

The system maintains a database of the stock for each consumer. Every time a user makes a sale of a particular product, he or she has to log in to the app and feed the information with a numerical. The application then chooses to communicate either through a text message or through GPRS signal based on availability. It senses what the user have available

once the he is logged in.

The ERP system then does order management, inventory management, demand forecast and analytics on demand patterns etc based on the data provided by the user through the mobile application.

During the research that was conducted among the chemists in Karnataka, Akkihal learned that the chemists intentionally go to zero stocks to avoid too many trips to the vendor and hence there was no safety buffer of essential drugs. When the user keys in the daily sales into the mobile application, it's easier to forecast demand and make recommendations for safety buffer of products which Akkihal finds absent.

Priced at Rs 100 per month per user, Logistimo also enables the suppliers and wholesalers list themselves up on the system, which enables them to view the demand of a particular product at a particular place and they can also get the stock update of a retailer and despatch goods accordingly. Despite early adoption by several entrepreneurs, Logistimo faces several challenges. Most of these challenges are due to an over-dependency on the mobile network. For instance,

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

PRASHANT YADAV
Professor, MIT

lack of adequate signal strength for a mobile device to receive and send information and reliability of mobile text service still continue to pose challenges in some remote pockets.

For non-governmental organisations such as Samhita Ventures in Mumbai, Logistimo addresses the challenges in times of disaster when supply of medicines and other essential goods need to be monitored to ensure timely distribution. "Until now we did not have technology that connects real time information with the situation on the ground during disasters. We can now be prepared for disaster management on ground," said Priya Naik, founder, Samhita Ventures. "The rural markets are underserved because the order-taking and delivery is not large enough. This is where Logistimo's order consolidation will help. Their model is forward-looking and robust. This will back India's technology growth," said Prashant Yadav, professor, supply chain management at MIT's affiliate campus in Spain.

Please write to us at et.technology@indiatimes.com