

# WE DON'T NEED AUTONOMY: IITs

The premier engineering institutes say they cannot sustain without govt support

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**E**ven 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 Jhunjunwala, IIT Madras.

IIT Guwahati Director Gautam Barua, IIT Mandi Director T. Gonsalves and IIT Kanpur Chairman M. Anandkrishnan were special invitees on the panel.