

'It may take us two years to get a permanent location of our own'

Vinay Umarji & Chitra Unnithan / New Delhi June 1, 2009, 0:32 IST

Almost a year after its inception, the Indian Institute of Technology, Gandhinagar (IITGn) has got its own director in **Sudhir K Jain**. An expert in earthquake engineering, Jain graduated with a BE in civil engineering from IIT Roorkee before he went on to pursue a masters degree, as well as PhD in structural engineering. In an interview with *VINAY UMARJI & CHITRA UNNITHAN*, Jain talks about his plans of making IITGn "one of the finest institutions in the world". Edited excerpts:

Being the first full-time director of an institute that's just a year old, how do you plan to go about the task?

Yes, Gandhinagar is one the new IITs that have been set up less than a year ago. However, apart from IIT Guwahati and Roorkee which were set up under different circumstances, it is only after 50 years that the government has set up new IITs. Therefore, it is a great opportunity because we can learn from the experience of 50 years, as well as avoid the errors that we have made over all these years. IITGn has a tremendous potential to become one of the finest institutions in the world. Moreover, when the early IITs were set up, our economy was not that vibrant and we were low on confidence. Today, we are more confident as a country.

What are the curriculum changes that you plan to incorporate?

Before we get into curriculum, we need to worry about people and infrastructure. An institution becomes outstanding on the back of high quality infrastructure and people. We have two main goals. First to bring the best brains in terms of students and faculty. Second, to create the best infrastructure in terms of research and living conditions. We are yet to enhance our infrastructure, living conditions, laboratories, equipment and research facilities.

How do you plan to enhance your infrastructure?

Right now, we are working from a temporary building. We are expecting the Gujarat government to provide us land. It may take two years to get a permanent location of our own. We can currently accommodate 120 students per annum in the streams of mechanical, chemical and electrical engineering. Nevertheless, we will keep expanding as much as we can.

How do you plan to attract more students and faculty?

We intend to make IITGn more desirable among students by undertaking some good marketing initiatives. For good faculty, we need to conduct some campaigning and visits to other universities. We may also need to set up scholarships to attract them.

What are your plans for research activities at IITGn? Do you plan to set up any research chairs in the near future?

We have recruited some research scholars at IITGn and some basic research work has begun. We are not going to wait for a new building and we will work within the constraints. I can also assure you we will have a research chair soon. However, things will only expedite once I take charge of the office in the month of June.