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'Academic excellence will not be compromised'

DNA Correspondent

The UPA government's decision to set up eight new Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) was aimed at making things easier for lakhs of students who burn the midnight oil to secure a seat at India's premier educational institution.

But the decision has received mixed response from students, many of whom are uncertain if the new IITs would be able to match up to the standards of the established ones.

The six new IITs that will start this year and their mentors are: Gandhinagar (IIT Bombay), Punjab (IIT Delhi), Patna (IIT Guwahati), Rajasthan (IIT Kanpur), Bhubaneswar (IIT Kharagpur), and Hyderabad (IIT Madras).

Though the curriculum, fee structures, and other rules will remain broadly the same, several students appeared unwilling to take the risk of joining a new IIT. Even those with little choice wanted to keep them as the last option.

Professor Anil K Singh, convenor of IIT Gandhinagar, said that while the concerns of students and parents are understandable, they must realise that IITs are known for academic excellence, which would "not be compromised at any cost".

"We will first have to ensure that the academic programme begins on time," Singh said. He said the good practices of existing IITs would be implemented at the new ones.

While classes for IIT Gandhinagar will temporarily function from Vishwakarma Government Engineering College (Chandkheda), Singh said the aim is to have the infrastructure in place in two years. "I am confident seats won't be vacant," he said.

Meanwhile, IIT Bombay director Ashok Misra said things are moving as planned and the institute is looking to select a place for the new batch to stay in. "The Gujarat government is helping us to finalise the place," he said.

Each new IIT will have 120 seats and admit students in the BTech programme in three branches only. Singh said IIT Bombay is planning to award fellowships and chair professorships to attract teachers for the new IIT. "We are looking at hiring young teachers," he said. "It will also be a challenge for them to design something from the beginning."

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