

USAID Officials Visit IIT Gandhinagar to Plan US Collaboration



Gandhinagar

IIT Gandhinagar and USAID officials have begun consultations on developing high level partnerships with US universities and industries, under the joint agreement signed in advance of Pres Barack Obama's visit to India in late January.

A team of three representatives, comprising Mitch Kirby, USAID senior education advisor, Sheila E. Desai, USAID India senior science & technology advisor, and Eric Johnson, senior research economist with RTI International visited IIT Gandhinagar today to assess institutional needs and strategies with senior IITGN administrators and faculty.

Their discussions covered a wide range of possible areas of support ranging from strengthening research capabilities, student and faculty exchanges, leadership development, networking, entrepreneurship, etc.

The Joint Declaration of Intent between the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) and the United States Agency for International Development for Providing Support to Indian Institutes of Technology signed on Jan 23, 2015, in advance of Pres Obama's India visit, calls for establishing technical assistance priorities and drafting strategies for further development for IITs and identifies IIT Gandhinagar as the initial IIT for support.

Prof Sudhir Jain, director of IIT Gandhinagar, said: "We look forward to working with USAID in strengthening and expanding many of our exchange programmes and partnerships as well as in developing new initiatives and networks with educational institutions and industries around research collaborations, industry partnerships, entrepreneurship, etc."

USAID and IIT officials will work over the next few weeks in identifying the major areas of collaboration and prioritising them for implementation during the three year term of the agreement.

IIT Gandhinagar, which was established in 2008, has developed a distinctive identity with its undergraduate programmes, with a strong focus on the humanities and social sciences, interdisciplinarity, project oriented learning, and internationalization. Nearly a third of its undergraduate students receive study abroad opportunities and the Institute has a vibrant visiting faculty program that brings many international faculty to the campus every year.

The institute has developed several interdisciplinary centers in cognitive science, archeological science, design and innovation, biomedical engineering, safety, and sustainable development, which are among the high priority areas for collaborations.

IITGN's 400-acre permanent campus on the banks of the River Sabarmati is presently under construction in Palaj, Gandhinagar. The Institute plans to move to the new campus in July 2015.