Institute Anthem

यात्रा पथ ज्योतिष्मान
ज्ञान रथ गतिमान,
स्वागतम महान।।

ध्यान मगन
पूर्वी तपोवन
दृष्टि दूर गगन,
मुक्त मन
नवसृष्टि प्रण
अभिनव आरोहण
गा हे गा हे गा हे गान
श्रेष्ठ भारत दृश्यमान।।

ज्ञान मंथन
नव उभ्दावन
dीप्त प्रयूक्ति प्रांगण,
स्वच्छ मन
हडय आरोपण
बाधा प्राचीर लंघन,
गा हे गा हे गा हे गान
ज्ञान लूब्त प्रवाहमान।।
श्रेष्ठ भारत दृश्यमान....

Lyrics and composition: Prof. Arup Kumar Sarma
MESSAGE

It gives me immense pleasure to know that Indian Institute of Technology, Guwahati is going to celebrate its Silver Jubilee with various activities throughout the year 2020. A souvenir is also being published to mark the celebration.

IIT Guwahati is a premier engineering institution of the North East India. During last 25 years, this institution has provided the best resources to enhance the country’s scientific impact in the world. It has also contributed in the field of innovative thinking and its alumni have scaled the ladder of success in different walks of life in society.

I convey my best wishes to all the present and past students, teaching and non-teaching staff of this prestigious institution on the occasion of its Silver Jubilee.

(SARBANANDA SONOWAL)
Greetings from the desk of the Director on the occasion of Silver Jubilee year of IIT Guwahati and Happy New Year 2020. Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Guwahati was established in the year 1994 and has completed 25 years of glorious existence. Within this short span, IIT Guwahati has been the only academic institution from India that occupied a place among the top 100 world universities – under 50 years of age – published by London based Times Higher Education (THE) in the year 2014 and continues to do this even today in various International Rankings. Along with older IITs and Delhi University, IIT Guwahati has also been ranked below 500 in the QS World ranking released recently. IIT Guwahati ranks 7th among the leading science and research institutions in India in terms of research citation and 20th in the world in Chemistry as evaluated by the Nature, the most reputed scientific research magazine and one of the highest faculty to publication ration of ~4.5. IIT Guwahati has been ranked 7th (Engineering) and 9th (Overall) in the national institutional ranking framework conducted by MHRD in the year 2018. IIT Guwahati has also been ranked 3rd in the “Swachhata Ranking” conducted by the GoI and is the only centrally funded technical institute to be among the top 5 consistently for the past three years ever since these rankings were launched. IIT Guwahati has one of the most beautiful educational campuses in the country that provides an ideal setting for learning and research and we believe that “Learning in tandem with the tides of the mighty Brahmaputra at the vibrant campus of IIT Guwahati” is an experience we as a community have been blessed with. It is strongly believed that IIT Guwahati has been able to fulfill the aspirations of people of the North East region to a large extent, since its inception was through Assam Accord signed in 1985. The institute is fully residential for the students, enriched with world-class facilities and is empowered with a young and dynamic faculty and staff. The vision of IITG is to become a preferred destination of seeking best science, engineering and technology education and to be recognized internationally for excellence in research, pursuit for developmental activities and deep concern for students’ care. An important feature of academic excellence is the continuous replenishment of ideas and creation of new areas of research and innovation, attracting organizations seeking collaboration in education, research and development as well as product development. In a fast changing world, keeping pace with the ever-increasing number of areas of research and application poses a major challenge to this Institute. IIT Guwahati is trying to augment the research initiatives in all the areas of Sciences and Technology in general and in Nano-science & technology, Bioengineering and Data sciences in particular. Initiation of research in some of the cutting edge areas of Biological sciences namely Genomics, Developmental Biology, Health Care and Bioinformatics, Flexible Electronics, Advanced Functional Materials, Sustainable Polymers, Water Resources and Management is a testament to the aspiration of IIT Guwahati to excel in research. The Scope of Environmental Science and Data science is inherently interdisciplinary and expanding rapidly. Recognizing the challenges for environmentally sustainable development, IIT Guwahati emphasizes an interdisciplinary research paradigm in Energy and Environment to solve problems that have important societal impact. It is indeed a challenging task to match the ever-increasing need for funds and providing infrastructure for these emerging and futuristic research areas, and IIT Guwahati has resolutely taken this challenge in its stride.

Further, IIT Guwahati has set goals to be recognized as one of the world’s top 150 Institutes/Universities within the next five years. This will include attracting external grants and research funding at the level of internationally well ranked Institutes, to furnish state-of-the-art facilities for all programs, attract International faculty and students to spend time at IIT Guwahati, enhance the perception globally, fostering academic excellence and freedom while maintaining rigorous academic standards and to become a preferred destination for transformative educational experience.
The strategic commitment provides the road map of the long journey. The strategies include the Mission, Vision, Goal and Values that would be instrumental in placing IIT Guwahati among the top academic institutions of the world. These strategies will create new opportunities for the faculty and the students for enhancement of knowledge, performing cutting edge research and development of professional skills. The ultimate aim is to provide the students with an educational training that emphasizes innovation, social awareness and professional ethics while promoting the spirit of creativity amongst our researchers.

An important feature of academic excellence is the continuous replenishment of ideas and creation of new areas of research, innovation and incubation. While the world has experienced the miracles brought about by the Indian engineers and technologists in Information Technology, IIT Guwahati is trying to leap forward by embracing the rising demands of newer and interdisciplinary areas of research and technology development by incorporating industry participating in offering courses in futuristic areas of artificial intelligence, robotics and machine learning while focusing on other areas, involving Design and Manufacturing, Power Generation and Distribution, Construction Technology, Water resources and management that are essential and in forefront of development in the coming decade.

It is indeed a challenging task to match the ever-increasing need for funds and providing infrastructure for these emerging areas, and IIT Guwahati has resolutely taken this challenge in its stride. Since major technological developments in the future would require expertise from various disciplines, IIT Guwahati has been promoting the concept of virtual research departments. One such group is working on the development of Electrical Vehicles. The endeavors for a High performance-computing center, a research center for Computer Security are the other goals in this direction. IIT Guwahati also plans to retain its excellence and reputation in the area of Sustainable Polymers. The Center of Excellence in Sustainable Polymers integrates sustainability issues that focus on the science and technology of polymeric materials into research, education, and products. High performance computing and Computer Security are also areas under focus. Such initiatives will take IIT Guwahati to greater heights similar to that enjoyed by the top Universities in the world. The new initiatives in the Biological Sciences, Experimental Physics, Environmental Studies, Computational Mechanics, Quantum Computing, Nano-Technology, Theranostics augur well for this spirit of excellence in this Institute. In the years to come, IIT Guwahati, we hope, would become the ultimate destination of scholars and scientists from the world over.

In addition, the institute is also enhancing its curriculum in view of the enhanced demands from industry and academia that would ensure that the students are prepared for the broadened world of engineering and technological trends. Personnel exchange between industry / government and academia through visiting professorships and sabbaticals or summer leaves in industry and government are also being pursued. The industry has also embarked on undertaking research based on social and societal problems while expanding research directed towards solving regional challenges. In a renewed drive towards community impact, developmental activities are essential. Some of these encompass intra-institutional collaborations to bring together the best of resources in the national interest and moving from tower of excellence to network of excellence. As a unique initiative, IIT Guwahati will also host students from Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh region to spend few weeks during the summer break beginning 2020.

The challenge for the Institute is to create the optimum research eco system and enhance the ambiance where each individual would be encouraged for performing cutting edge research and development. In particular, to promote quality research, the Institute is planning to identify and reward excellence in research where active participation of majority of the faculty members to attract research funding would improve research accomplishments. The patents and publications, technology transfers, encouraging entrepreneurship would be valued most while taking a stock of the human inventory. While IIT Guwahati embarks on the next phase of its journey, the society has greater expectations from this institute of higher learning. Aligning with its vision and mission, IIT Guwahati would always remain committed to student growth, social upliftment and generate knowledge and resources for the benefit of future generations while instilling a sense of pride and belongingness while fulfilling the aspirations of all stake holders.

As we move forward to transform this vision into reality, we will create endless opportunities to students, researchers, faculty and staff of IIT Guwahati in the coming years. I welcome all of you to join the IIT Guwahati Silver Jubilee celebration and its exciting journey to become a “Network of Excellence”.

Vision of IITG

“To be recognized globally for excellence in education, research and innovation, and nurture future leaders, to serve the society at large”
Let’s Join Hands in Making a Glorious India

Prof. Arup Kumar Sarma
Convener, Silver Jubilee Celebration Committee

IIT Guwahati has just completed 25 years of its successful journey. During this period it has demonstrated its capability of doing world-class research by entering into the list of top 100 young (less than 50 years) universities of the world. Now, it is the high time that we should orient and utilize our research capability and infrastructure to address the country’s needs. While IIT Guwahati is providing technical expertise to various agencies in their endeavour, we need to do lot more for bringing a visible change in the society through need-based proactive innovative research. In India and in many other developing countries, people still believe that technological intervention from the developed world can only provide a solution to our problem. Generating confidence on IITs technical capability among the masses is the responsibility of IIT, I believe. While extending technical expertise in different developing countries, we have observed that they are looking towards us (India) for a solution to their problem. In India, our people look towards the developed world for a solution to our problem. Thus, it is the so-called level of development of a country that influences the mind-set to look towards those who appear to be at a higher level. Unlike other IIT’s, IIT Guwahati came into existence as per an agreement made in the Assam Accord. This has happened because of sacrifices made by many. Being located in the North-eastern part of India, which is relatively less developed as compared to many other parts of our country, IIT Guwahati has a moral responsibility and also has the scope to demonstrate that innovative technological intervention can bring a change to the society. With a strong determination we can set an example for others and can become a leading institute working in collaboration with others towards a developed India. IIT Guwahati came with a commitment to fulfil the dream of the people—a dream of developed Northeast India through technological intervention. People love seeing IIT Guwahati at a high rank; happiness will be increasing by many folds if they see IIT Guwahati in a developed India. While rank of an Institute can make the image of a country marginally higher, the rank of a country as a whole can take the image of its all institutes to a much higher level.

We strongly believe, IIT Guwahati is not just an Institute, but is a journey on the path of light, a mission for a brighter future. It’s a place of in-depth thought to unfurl our vision beyond horizon. With purity of mind, through our innovative research and discovery, we will conquer all obstacles that may come on our way. Technology ground is now illuminated and through it we see a glorious India. We welcome all great minds to join the journey so that knowledge flows seamlessly like the river Brahmaputra (Luit) flowing by our side. Let’s join hands in making a glorious India.
From the Desk of Convener, Souvenir Sub-committee

Prof. Mrinal Kanti Dutta

It is a matter of great pride that the premier institute of science and technology of the north eastern region, the Indian Institute of Technology Guwahati, has completed twenty five years of its existence and is celebrating its silver jubilee. A product of the Assam Agitation of the 1980s and born in an unusual manner after three decades of the establishment of the last old IIT, this institute had to traverse a thorny road in its journey to the present state. Unfavourable political situation in the face of insurgency problems, and the dearth of skilled manpower coupled with underdeveloped infrastructure posed many challenges in setting up of the Institute in a difficult north east. However, thanks to the strong leadership and dedicated efforts of the faculty members, staff, and others involved, the Institute has been able to establish itself as one of the premier academic institutes of the world. Apart from producing top quality human resources, the Institute has also been able to contribute positively to society at large by engaging itself in carrying out specific studies relevant to various issues of the north eastern region.

The silver jubilee of the Institute has been organized with a number of programmes spanning over a period of one year. A series of programmes such as invited talk, seminar, alumni meet, etc. have been planned and organized as a part of the celebration. It is the occasion for the Institute to look back at what the Institute has achieved so far and to look ahead into the future based on its vision.

The publication of a souvenir to mark the occasion is a way to go down memory lane and revisit the history of the Institute. A commemorative volume outlining the remembrances and the road traversed by the Institute is planned to mark the final celebration of the silver jubilee. However, as a part of the formal inauguration of the silver jubilee programme, this inaugural volume of the souvenir has been brought out.

This inaugural volume of the souvenir contains four write-ups, one each by the present Director of the Institute and three former directors, the Institute anthem and a few photographs depicting the journey of the Institute. I, on behalf of the souvenir sub-committee, thank the Director, IIT Guwahati, Prof. T. G. Sitharam, and three former directors, namely, Prof. D. N. Buragohain, Prof. Gautam Barua and Prof. Gautam Biswas for their contribution to this volume. I also acknowledge the support and guidance received from the convener of the Silver Jubilee Celebration Committee, Prof. A. K. Sarma in bringing out this volume. The members of the souvenir sub-committee had been entrusted with various tasks in the process of bringing out this volume. I thank them for completing the tasks splendidly and helping in bringing out the volume within a very short period of time. In spite of the efforts of the sub-committee, there might be some unintended errors for which the convener owns responsibility.
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The Birth of an Institution: 

the IIT Guwahati Story

Prof. D. N. Buragohain

The Genesis

The idea of having an IIT in Assam was conceived by the All Assam Students Union (AASU) in the first half of the 1980’s during its agitation to preserve the Assamese identity against the onslaught of illegal immigration into the state. The students’ agitation culminated in the signing of an agreement between the then Prime Minister Sri Rajiv Gandhi and the AASU on the intervening night of August 14 -15, 1985, which came to be known as the Assam Accord. It was the general perception at that time that no more IITs were necessary besides the five existing IITs. But the AASU was insistent on its demand for setting up of an IIT, which was finally acceded to, and the Accord was signed, thus preparing the ground for the birth of a new IIT.

The Ground Work

Immediately after the Accord was signed, the Educational Consultants India Limited (EdCIL) was entrusted by the MHRD with the task of preparing a detailed Project Report in August 1987. In this context, an Advisory Committee of eminent persons was constituted to help EdCIL in preparing the project report. In addition, twenty-three working groups comprising experts in identified fields were constituted to draw up the details of the individual departments and areas.

Professor R. C. Malhotra, the then Deputy Director of IIT Delhi, who was the convener of the committee responsible for preparing the detailed Project Report, was appointed as part-time Project Director, to carry out the ground work necessary for setting up an IIT. In December 1988, a detailed Project Report was submitted to the Government of India.

To initiate the establishment of the IIT in Assam, the MHRD and the Government of Assam undertook the task of providing suitable and sufficient land for locating the Institute, and a ‘Site Selection Committee’ was formed. The Government of Assam had approved a site of approximately 700 acres at Misa in Nagaon district as the location of the proposed IIT. Construction materials such as steel, cement and pre-fabricated trusses were transported to this approved site for construction of temporary offices at the site. However, because of various socio-political reasons, it was not possible to acquire the land for the main campus, and thus the search for an appropriate site for locating the IIT was renewed.

Subsequently, using the guidelines laid down by the Site Selection Committee, the Government of Assam was able to identify a site measuring around 285 hectares at Amingaon, North Guwahati (the present site), which broadly met many of the specific requirements in terms of both engineering qualities and holistic considerations and could therefore be considered for locating the proposed IIT. After examining the observations and recommendations of the Site Selection Committee, the MHRD communicated the approval of the Government of India to the site at North Guwahati, to the Government of Assam. As a follow-up to this decision, the MHRD requested the Government of Assam to initiate necessary action for land acquisition.

It has to be noted that all the actions taken so far to set up the new IIT were based on the Assam Accord, and not after the formal approval of the Parliament to amend the IIT Act of 1961 to include the new IIT. Therefore, as a preliminary step towards establishing the IIT pending amendment of the IIT Act, the ‘Indian Institute of Technology Nagaon Assam Society’ was formed and registered in February 1989 with a Board of Governors to manage the affairs of the Society, when the site was initially selected at Nagaon. Subsequently, when the site was finalized at North Guwahati in 1991, the ‘Indian Institute of Technology Guwahati Assam Society’ was
formed and registered, with a new Board of Governors with the Hon’ble Governor of Assam as the Chairman of the Board. With the finalization of the site, the earlier Project Report was revised, and the revised Project Report was submitted in 1992.

During his visit to Assam during the early part of 1992, the then Prime Minister Sri P. V. Narasimha Rao announced that the academic programme of the new IIT would start from the 1992 academic session. Of course, there were a lot of other preliminary works to be completed before starting an academic programme in an IIT, the most important of which was the admission of students through JEE. Although it was not possible to start the academic programme that year, the foundation stone of IIT Guwahati was laid on the fourth of July, 1992, by the Prime Minister. Unfortunately, the foundation stone laying ceremony could not be conducted at the site because of inclement weather, and had to be done at the Raj Bhawan. Moreover, there was no approval of the Parliament to the new IIT as yet, and it was still a Society.

In the first half of May, 1994, the IIT Act was amended by both houses of Parliament to include IIT Guwahati as the sixth IIT. The Institute of Technology (Amendment) Act, 1994, was notified in the Gazette of India published on 01 September, 1994, and the Act came into force and IIT Guwahati was formally established on that day.

September 01, 1994, thus became the Foundation Day of IIT Guwahati and a new IIT was born on that day.

It is pertinent to note that setting up of IIT Guwahati was also unique in another way at that time. All the previous five IITs at Kharagpur, Bombay, Madras, Kanpur and at Delhi, in that sequence, were set up with foreign collaboration through UNESCO aid. IIT Guwahati was going to be the first fully indigenous IIT in the country, and the responsibility of bringing it up to meet the high expectations of the people from an IIT was therefore that much more overwhelming.

The First Few Years of IIT Guwahati

Professor Malhotra and his committee did a remarkably thorough and excellent job of preparing the detailed Project Report. Even then, because of problems with site selection and land acquisition, nothing could be done at site till 1993.

In 1993, the MHRD decided to appoint a full time Project Director who was to take over as Founder Director when IIT Guwahati would be established through amendment of the IIT Act. It was the usual practice in those days to select the Directors of IITs through nominations. The final selection was made after discussions with the short-listed nominated candidates. My name was nominated by IIT Bombay, and I was called by the MHRD for discussion on August 16, 1993. The panel of experts present at the discussion also included the Chairman of the Board of Governors of the IIT Assam Guwahati Society. I was informed of my selection for the job and received the appointment letter in early November, 1993. It took me a while to decide whether to take up the job because of my various professional and personal commitments at that time. I was also aware of the difficult work environment in Assam at that time because of insurgency and the advice from my friends in the state was not encouraging. Finally with the full support of my family, I decided to take up the challenge, and joined as the Project Director on February 23, 1994.

My first visit to the site was not encouraging. The land was not fully acquired, and there was encroachment in several places as there were no boundaries marked on the ground. I stayed in the guest house of the Assam Engineering Institute at Chandmari and sat in a small room in the building of the Directorate of Technical Education, Assam, at Kabilipara. I was also required to frequently visit the office of the Commissioner and Secretary, Higher Education, Assam, at Dispur, as the IIT Guwahati funds sent by the MHRD were under the control of the Secretary, Higher Education and the Finance Secretary of the Government of Assam. This was natural since no official of IIT Guwahati existed till then. But all of them were immensely helpful; making any headway would have otherwise been impossible.

The first job was to get the copies of the Detailed Project Report from Professor Malhotra, who was then the Director of IIT Kanpur. This was done in March 1994. The next job was to have a meeting of the Board of Governors of the IIT Guwahati Assam Society, so that financial control of IIT Guwahati funds could be transferred to the Director, IIT Guwahati. Initiation of the move to get the amendment of the IIT Act passed in both houses of Parliament was another important issue to be discussed in the BOG meeting. The third BOG meeting of the IIT Guwahati Assam Society was held in Delhi on April 23, 1994, to which the Hon’ble Minister of HRD, Sri Arjun Singh, was invited. The Chairman requested Sri Arjun Singh to move the proposal for amendment of the IIT Act in Parliament. He was also requested to write to the Hon’ble Minister of Environment and Forest, for permission to temporarily use the premises of the Forest Training College in Burnihat in Meghalaya on the Guwahati-Shillong road, as envisaged in the Project Report.
Amendment to the IIT Act, 1961, was approved in Loksabha in the first week of May, 1994, and in the Rajyasabha in the second week of May, 1994. However, the request for using the Forest Training College in Burnihat was turned down, which, I thought, was a blessing in disguise, as it would have been difficult to control activities at the North Guwahati site from that distance.

The Hunt for Office Space

I must place on record the immense help voluntarily rendered by the Assam Chapter of the Institution of Engineers in Guwahati, at every step of the process of building IIT Guwahati. Without the unstinted help given by the then president Sri Nagendra Nath Goswami, and the Secretary, Sri Munin Deka, of the Institution of Engineers, Guwahati, IIT Guwahati would have taken a much longer time to start its academic programme and move into its permanent site.

No suitable office space for rent was available, and it was also not available in any state government office or institution, neither in Assam Engineering College, nor in the Assam Engineering Institute, nor in the abandoned Administrative Staff College building in Beltola. Sri Goswami then offered me his office room in the Institution of Engineers building for use from 10 am to 5 pm, and also directed his office staff to help me if I needed any assistance. It also became routine for Sri Goswami to take me in his car every Saturday morning on a round to different parts of the city to look for any available premises for rent.

When nothing materialized in two months, the Institution of Engineers offered the entire first floor (except the Library room) measuring about 10,000 sq.ft, on payment of advance rent for one year. With the Board’s approval, the space was taken on rent in August 1994. Architect Nabajyoti Bora, who did his M.Des. from IIT Bombay, drew up the plans for converting the floor to officers’ rooms and work space for supporting staff free of charge.

IIT Guwahati moved into its legitimate temporary premises on September 01, 1994, the very day it was born. I too moved from the guest house of the Engineering Institute to the rented house for the Director on the same day.

Master Plan of IIT Guwahati

The Detailed Project Report prepared by the Prof. Malhotra Committee contained a campus plan for the North Guwahati site. Obviously, it was difficult to decide whether that was the plan to adopt, or there could be
a better Master Plan. The idea for holding an ‘All India Design Idea Competition for the Master Plan of IIT Guwahati’ was mooted by Architect Nabajyoti Bora in September 1994. When he briefed me about the procedure and requirements, I requested him to prepare the detailed architectural brief giving all the requirements of space and occupancy with the help of the Detailed Project Report. He agreed to complete the task in two months’ time.

What prompted the decision to hold the Master Plan competition was a little story I had come across about the Sydney Opera House – how a little known architect from Europe had won the architectural design competition for the Sydney opera house, after being rejected initially, to produce that masterpiece.

It was almost fifteen years later that I read the full story of the Sydney Opera House on the Internet. “The architect of Sydney Opera House, Jørn Utzon was a relatively unknown 38 year old Dane until January 29, 1957 when his entry, scheme number 218, was announced winner of the ‘International competition for a national opera house at Bennelong Point, Sydney’.”

The story goes that during the judging of the competition, one of the judges, renowned American architect Eero Saarinen, arrived in Sydney after the other three judges had started assessing the entries. He looked through their rejected entries and stopped at the Utzon design declaring it to be outstanding. The Expert evaluation report to the UNESCO World Heritage Committee, 2007, had this to say about the Sydney Opera House: “It stands by itself as one of the indisputable masterpieces of human creativity, not only in the 20th century but in the history of humankind.”

So, there was always a chance that given more options, one could perhaps come across a much more suitable plan. With the approval of the Board, the necessary actions for the competition was put into operation. The major problem that was encountered was the availability of a reliable contour map of the site with contours of 1m interval. The available map was with 5m contour interval. Hence a surveying firm was engaged to prepare the required map in a months’ time. Another problem was a discrepancy in the value of high flood level of the Brahmaputra at the Saraighat site obtained from two different government sources. It was decided to go ahead with the higher value.

The competition was announced in national newspapers in November 1994, and the participants were required to submit their entries by the end of December 1994, with complete models and drawings showing complete building locations and road network with drainage lines, sewerage lines, electrical and optical fibre lines, and water supply lines and cross drainage locations. The final 22 entries were displayed at IIT Delhi, from which the chairman of the Jury, Architect A. P. Kanvinde, an authority on campus architecture, selected the first and second prize winners in March 1995. An exhibition of all the competing entries was held for the public at Guwahati in July 1995, at the premises of the building which was being readied for the students’ hostel at Bhangagarh. The winning entry of M/S Suresh Goel & Associates of Delhi was finally displayed at the premises of the Institute and was appreciated by the then Chairman of the Board of Governors of the Institute and Hon’ble Governor of Assam, Sri L. N. Mishra, Hon’ble Minister of HRD Sri Madhavrao Scindia, and the Hon’ble Chief Minister of Assam, Sri Hiteswar Saikia.

The Hunt For Class Room Space And Hostel Accommodation

In the Joint Admission Board meeting for JEE 1995, held in August 1994 at IIT Delhi, a commitment was made to admit 100 students to IIT Guwahati to start the academic programme from July 1995. Till December 1994, the search for space did not succeed. The Institution of Engineers again came to the rescue of IIT Guwahati with an offer to build the second floor of the building to accommodate class rooms and labs and also faculty rooms in 4 months’ time. It was, however, necessary to assess the structural safety of the building for taking the load of an additional floor. This done, the task of building an additional floor was completed by the end of April 1995 with the payment of advance rent, and the interior was suitably done to achieve the objective.

But finding space for hostel accommodation of 100 students did not seem possible till the first week of April 1995. On April 8, 1995, the owner of a marriage hall on G. S. Road at Bhangagarh (at present, the Nemcare Hospital) was contacted and he readily agreed to hire the building out to IIT Guwahati for 3 years. It was a lucky break, for he informed me that he was about to sign an agreement with three doctors for leasing it out for a nursing home the very next day.

Ar. Nabajyoti Bora, who prepared the interior plan of class rooms, labs and facilities of the additional floor of the Institution of Engineers building, was also requested to design the alterations and modifications for the proposed students’ hostel, and the class room and hostel furniture. The next three months saw hectic activity for converting the marriage hall into a students’ hostel to accommodate 99 students with kitchen, dining, bathroom and play room facilities. CPWD came to the rescue, and completed the civil and electrical works of the proposed hostel in two months’ time. Side by side, furniture was ordered from a government department of Arunachal
The winning entry for Master Plan of IIT Guwahati

Minister of HRD, Governor of Assam and Chief Minister of Assam, looking at the Master Plan of IIT Guwahati
Pradesh (wood was cheaper and available there) for class rooms and hostel. Both the tasks were completed in time by the middle of July 1995. Looking back, it would seem that it was nothing short of a miracle to have completed all those works in time for the academic programme to start by the end of July 1995. What happened next was available for rent. The building had marble flooring year for providing hostel accommodation for the 1996 batch of students was no less miraculous. When we were desperately looking for another hostel accommodation of more than a hundred students, we were informed that a completely new building, constructed for the purpose of a Nursing Home off the R.G. Baruah Road near Ganeshguri, was available for rent. The building had marble flooring and the rooms had attached bathrooms. We took it in time to make the minor modifications needed to make it suitable for hostel accommodation.

But the academic programme could not be started on July 26, 1995 as announced, because water supply to the hostel was not adequate. With special permission from the municipal authorities, water supply to the hostel was finally drawn from the main line which had uninterrupted supply. The academic session started on 8 August 1995.

Recruitment of Faculty and Supporting Staff

The recruitment of regular engineering faculty was planned for 1995, since the first year courses were mainly science and humanities subjects except for workshop practice which could be postponed by a year. Assam Engineering College and the nearby Cotton College were requested for help in providing teachers for the science and humanities subjects.

Initial recruitment of supporting staff was on an ad hoc basis as the need for assistance in day to day activities was immediate. A Maruti Gypsy was purchased in June 1994 for easier movement into and within the North Guwahati site, as there were no roads. With it, the driver for the vehicle was appointed as the first employee of IIT Guwahati besides the Director. After moving into the proper office space of IIT Guwahati on September 1, 1994, the first office assistant was recruited with the help from the Directorate of Technical Education. The next important appointment was of an Accounts Assistant. Till then, I did not draw my own salary as I did not want to spend time on the details of salary, allowances and income tax. But all the detailed accounts of expenditure, including payment of salaries to supporting staff, was kept in my personal laptop computer together with the agenda notes and minutes of various Board and other committee meetings. One such important committee was a Purchase Committee constituted by the BOG of the Society with two Board members and the Director to advise on the purchases to be made. The first office equipment, an Intel 80486 desktop computer, was purchased during that time.

The first JEE meeting at IIT Guwahati for JEE 1995 was scheduled to be held on November 29 and 30, 1994, and that prompted a few more ad hoc appointments of supporting staff. All the ad hoc appointments were later regularized in 1997 through written tests and interview, after regular appointment of supporting staff was carried out.

After a number of engineering faculty joined the Institute in 1995, a detailed exercise was carried out to assess the number of supporting staff needed in each category all over the Institute, and after approval from the Board, the posts were advertised in newspapers. There was a consistent demand from the local graduates (graduates from North Guwahati who were either displaced from the IIT site, or had their homes nearby) for jobs in IIT. Though the demand was legitimate, we could not recruit them unless they were immediately useful for our office work. IIT Guwahati offered them computer training for two weeks free of charge, and all of them joined the training programme. IIT Guwahati did not want to compromise in quality, but expected them to make an effort to come up to the desired standard. This had the desired effect and quite a few of the local graduates joined IIT in the first two rounds of recruitment.

I had been warned about the lack of proper work culture in different establishments in Assam by several people from Assam. But it was heart-warming to observe during those first few years the dedication with which the people worked – working on Saturdays and Sundays and even up to 10 pm at night when a task had to be completed, without ever complaining. It was gratifying to notice a sense of pride with which they worked for IIT. I have nothing but words of appreciation and thanks to all of them who had worked with me during those difficult times.

The first to join as a member of faculty was Prof. Devdas Kakati (Electronics and Communication), who joined on December 31, 1994. He was earlier in IIT Madras, and had just completed his tenure as CMD of AMTRON. The next to join on lien from IIT Kanpur was Prof. Gautam Barua (Computer Science and Engineering) who joined in the last week of May, 1995. Prof. Barua, Prof. Prodig Bhattacharyya (Mathematics, IIT Madras), Prof. Mihir Kanti Chaudhury (Chemistry, NEHU) and Prof. Tarit Bose (Mechanical Engineering, IIT Madras) had been visiting IIT Guwahati from time to time after September 1994 offering their help on the academic front. Once full time faculty members were in position, it was possible to draw
up the plan for faculty recruitment and issue newspaper advertisements. Since there was a large number of applications, the short listing was done with the help of the experienced professors mentioned above.

It is to the credit of the MHRD that it realized the locational disadvantage of the place for attracting highly qualified faculty to IIT Guwahati. Apart from the disturbed situation of the state, educational facilities for the children of the faculty and job opportunities of their spouses were also limited, as there were only a few good educational institutions in Guwahati and there were no private engineering colleges in the state. It was therefore not only difficult to attract good faculty, but it would also be difficult to retain them even if they joined. Dr. S. D. Awale, the then Joint Educational Adviser (Tech.) of MHRD, informally suggested that IIT Guwahati could perhaps draw up a package of incentives in line with the incentives of IAS officers posted to the North East, and get the package implemented with the approval of the Board of Governors. This was duly done before the advertisements for faculty positions were put out.

Among the first few faculty members to join as Asstt. Professors in the second half of 1995 were Dr. Anil Sahsrabudhe, who had been working in NERIST in Arunachal Pradesh as Asstt. Professor in Mechanical Engineering. Dr. Sahsrabudhe took up the task of organizing classes of workshop practice for the students, first for one semester in Assam Engineering College, and then for stretches of one week each at Jorhat Engineering College, camping there in Jorhat at a distance of about 300 kms from Guwahati. Another member was Dr. Sukumar Nandi, who joined the department of Computer Science and Engineering, and helped Prof. Gautam Barua set up an almost flawless computer network in the temporary premises in the Institution of Engineers building, and later on in the permanent campus.

Prof. Prodig Bhattacharyya joined in early 1996 on lien from IIT Madras for three years, and Prof. Y. V. G. S. Murti, who had just retired as Professor of Physics at IIT Madras, was invited to join IIT Guwahati on contract for three years. By 1997, Prof. M. K. Chaudhury (Chemistry) and Prof. Anil Mahanta (ECE, IIT Kanpur) were also invited to join as Professors in their respective departments.

With the key faculty positions filled up with senior and experienced persons, it was now possible to go ahead with the formulation of the academic infrastructure and other administrative set-ups of IIT Guwahati. The recruitment for faculty positions and supporting staff could be undertaken thereafter on a regular basis.

One important aspect that needed immediate attention, before the students and new faculty joined, was making medical facilities available. Col. (Retd.) Dr. D. C. Borua was appointed on contract basis as the Medical officer, and a consulting room and a dispensary were set up in the ground floor of the newly-created students’ hostel at Bhangagarh. In 1996, the medical section was shifted to the first floor of the Institute premises at the Institution of Engineers building to make it accessible to students as well as employees and their families throughout the day. This arrangement continued till permanent medical officers joined the Institute in 1997. In 2000, the dispensary was set up in the first students’ hostel in the campus when students and faculty moved to the campus, and later shifted to one wing of the Guest House when it was ready in 2002.

One very important aspect that was stressed upon both faculty and students was strict adherence to the academic schedule of the number of classes to be conducted each semester. A holiday was to be compensated by taking classes on a Saturday. What was most disturbing in those days was that there were frequent Bandhs called by one organization or the other at a moment’s notice. In order to avoid loss of instruction hours on such occasions, Prof. Bhattacharyya devised a simple way during the first two years. Since all the students were staying in a single hostel, the concerned faculty members would walk down to the hostel and conduct the classes in the hostel. This was necessary to instill a sense of purpose and seriousness in faculty and students in the new Institute.

One key position that could not be filled even after repeated attempts was that of Registrar. This was finally done on approval by the Board by inviting Dr. M. C. Borgohain, who was Professor of Mechanical Engineering at Jorhat Engineering College before becoming Principal of Regional Engineering College, Silchar, and then Additional Director of Technical Education, Assam. Dr. Borgohain joined in 1997 and served the Institute till his retirement in 2003.

In 1995, the academic programme of IIT Guwahati started with only three departments: Computer Science and Engineering, Electronics and Communication Engineering and Mechanical Engineering. The department of Design and the department of Civil Engineering were to start from the 1998 academic session.

Prof. S. Nadkarni, who was the founding faculty member of the Industrial Design Centre at IIT Bombay and nurtured its growth and development since 1969, was retiring in 1997. Considering the fact that the proposed Department of Design was the only department in the
country offering undergraduate courses in design at that time, Prof. Nadkarni was immediately invited to join IIT Guwahati as a Professor on contract basis and given complete responsibility of setting up the Department of Design. With his expansive experience in the field of design, and tremendous enthusiasm for work, he was immensely helpful, not only in setting up the Design department, but also wherever matters of design and interiors had to be considered.

In keeping up with the practice of inviting senior persons to take up the initial responsibility of a new department, Prof. Utsav Kalita, who had earlier been a Professor at Regional Engineering College, Silchar, and later a senior Research Scientist at RRL Jorhat, joined IIT Guwahati in 1998 at the start of the Department of Civil Engineering.

In the same tradition, Prof. Dhiren De, who retired from IIT Kharagpur as Professor of Chemical Engineering, was invited to join IIT Guwahati when the Chemical Engineering department was started in 2002.

**The IIT Guwahati Logo**

Since it was not possible to come up with the design of a logo for the Institute on our own, a proposal to engage the noted designer from Mumbai Sri Yashwant Choudhary at a very nominal fee was placed before the Board. The Board approved the Institute’s proposal, and Sri Yashwant Choudhary was entrusted with the task of designing the IIT Guwahati logo.

The design submitted by Sri Choudhary together with its underlying interpretation was accepted by the Board, and became the IIT Guwahati logo since 1998.

“The logo of IIT Guwahati is based on the concept of sound connections between the mind, body and soul. The concept underlines the deep philosophy of cosmic beliefs in the field of Yoga (a philosophy practiced in India since the Vedic times). The triad connected with sound training and education creates a unified assimilation of true Indian values of education.”

**Academic and Administrative Infrastructure**

Since I came from IIT Bombay, the influence of IIT Bombay was unavoidable in formulating the organizational set up and rules and regulations of the Academic and Administrative framework. Prof. P Bhattacharyya did an excellent job in leading a team of faculty members to frame the curriculum, the syllabi of different subjects, the various academic committees like the Departmental and Institute Undergraduate and Postgraduate committees, the Performance Evaluation committees, students' disciplinary rules, the Gymkhana and Hostel Constitutions, attendance rules and the credit and grading systems.

Side by side, the administrative set up for Administration Section, Academic Section, Stores & Purchase Section, Finance & Accounts Section and Internal Audit Section was put in place by the team led by Prof. Kakati and Prof. Barua. The Consultancy Practice Rules were already framed and approved by the Board in 1995. The rules for sponsored projects were added later.

Right from the beginning of starting the Institute at the temporary premises in the city, I was advised by Prof. Subir Chaudhury, the then Director of IIT Calcutta, and a member of the Board of Governors, and Prof. B. Nag, the then Director of IIT Bombay, that all the services should be obtained on a contract basis. The Board supported this idea, and accordingly, the cleaning services, gardening services, security services, mess services in hostels, and guest house services (IIT Guest house was in a hired building in the city with the Director’s residence on the top floor) were given on annual contract basis. This practice has continued in later years.

In 1998, Lt. Gen. (Retd.) S. K. Sinha, became the Governor of Assam, and also became the Chairman of the Board of Governors of IIT Guwahati. During his tenure as Chairman
till May 2003, he was immensely understanding and helpful to the cause of IIT Guwahati, and was always accessible for any discussion on issues concerning the Institute.

The delegation of administrative and financial powers was done with the approval of the Board for creation of the posts of Dean of Administration, Dean of Academic Affairs, Dean of Research & Development, and Dean of Students’ Affairs. Out of these, the functions of the Dean of Administration were crucial since the faculty and staff affairs as well as streamlining the stores and purchase operations fell under his purview. This allowed the Director to give more time to the task of building the physical infrastructure of IIT Guwahati.

The first batch of students passed out in May, 1999, and it was decided to hold the first convocation of IIT Guwahati by the end of May so that the students could stay back for about three weeks without having to go home and then come back again. This tradition was adhered to in the subsequent years by holding the convocation on the last Friday of May. The convocation was held in the ground inside the transit complex.

The Hon’ble Prime Minister of India at that time, Sri Atal Bihari Vajpayee, was invited to be the Chief Guest of the first convocation of the Institute. Although the PM’s office gave a positive response in the beginning, we were informed later on of his inability to grace the occasion because of pressing commitments elsewhere.

Sri Prafulla Kumar Mahanta, the then Chief Minister of Assam, was then invited, and he accepted our invitation to grace the occasion as the Chief Guest at a very short
notice. It was perhaps befitting the occasion, since he was the President of AASU at the time of signing the Accord and had been one of the signatories.

**Physical Infrastructure – Building the Campus**

A proposal to build a transit complex at the site to accommodate office rooms, class rooms and labs was put up to the Board in 1995. But the Board was concerned about the security aspect and also felt that the expenditure would be infructuous as the space so created might not be put into proper use in future.

The IIT site in North Guwahati was handed over to IIT (CPWD took over on behalf of IIT) by the District authorities on 26 April, 1995. It was noticed afterwards that a small rectangular plot, with no access from any side, was left out of the IIT boundary just behind the ASEB sub-station. The contract for construction of the boundary wall was immediately given to CPWD. However, no security could be provided from the government side, and the site remained vulnerable.

In the beginning of 1996, a third floor was added to the Institution of Engineers building to provide additional classrooms to the second batch of students. But it was obvious that it was not possible to go on adding floors to the building without jeopardizing its structural integrity. An open ground was available by the side of the Institution of Engineers building, and it was often used for holding fairs and exhibitions. Since the ground belonged to the Text Book Corporation of Assam, the Institute approached the Commissioner and Secretary of Higher Education, Assam, and through him, the Hon’ble Minister of Education, Govt. of Assam, to explore the possibility of renting a part of the land to construct offices of the Institute on a temporary basis, which would later on be handed over to the Govt. of Assam, when the IIT campus at North Guwahati would be ready. Both the Minister and the Commissioner were sympathetic to our cause and agreed in principle to the Institute’s proposal. But a letter received from the authorities of the Text Book Corporation mentioned a rent of rupees one crore for the purpose. The idea was therefore dropped and it prompted us to renew our efforts to get a foothold in the permanent campus site.

By the end of 1996, a request was received from the CRPF authorities for a temporary camping site for the CRPF Jawans within the IIT plot. With the approval of the Board, this request was accepted, and the CRPF set up a camp at the corner of the IIT site in front of the Faculty High School. The proposal to construct a transit complex at the site was again put up to the Board in early 1997, bolstered by the presence of CRPF to address security concerns. After obtaining the Board’s approval, tenders were immediately floated for construction of approximately 10,000 sq. m. of space at a cost of about Rs. 5 crores.

In the meantime, Sri Kuladhar Saharia, who had earlier worked with NEPC, and later on as Chief Engineer of AGCC (Assam Government Construction Company), was appointed as Chief Project Engineer, and immediately afterwards, Sri T. J. Singh, Sri Prabhat Baishya and Sri Nirupam Roy were appointed as Executive Engineers and Asstt. Executive Engineer to form the basic engineering team. Prior to this, permission had been obtained from the MHRD to carry out the construction work by the IIT’s own engineering cell.

The contract for construction of the transit complex was awarded to M/S Tantia of Kolkata in April, 1997, and the construction was completed in all respects in early 1998. Unfortunately, during the construction of the transit complex, the contractor’s site engineer was abducted by insurgents and was rescued by police after three days.

Water supply to the complex was provided by boring deep tube wells at suitable locations in the campus, and also installing iron filters to remove the iron from the ground water. The deep tube wells continued to supply water to the entire campus till the main water supply system from the Brahmaputra was commissioned.

Laboratory and workshop equipment had already been ordered, together with office and class room furniture, and rooms in the transit complex were being occupied from the beginning of 1998 as and when they were completed. From the 1998–99 academic session, all the classes and labs were conducted in the transit complex. The academic office moved into the transit complex before the other offices shifted. Buses were hired to bring the students and faculty members from the city to the transit complex at 8 am and take them back to the city after 5 pm. A temporary canteen was operated by the faculty and students. There was, however, no proper road into the campus, and the transit complex had to be reached by coming up to the gate of the LPG plant and then getting down to the ground of the complex from the side of the road. A proper road was therefore constructed from the ASEB substation to the transit complex and with it a site office for the engineers.

By 1999, the total number of students was 474; there were 79 faculty members and 151 supporting staff. This number rose to 733, 97 and 205 respectively in the next
year. By 1999, there were 8 premises taken on rent for hostels including a few hotels. Faculty accommodation for all the faculty and some officers were hired in groups in housing colonies and in newly constructed buildings. As the number of faculty members increased, we had to keep our fingers crossed for availability of new flats. The Stores and Purchase Section did a splendid job in this respect.

It was obvious that nobody was enamoured with the site as it existed and it would be difficult to retain the faculty members from outside unless their stay was made comfortable. The site was full of water and marshy lands except for the site of the transit complex and the hills. There were no trees; whatever trees there might have been, were cut and removed before the site was handed over. A massive tree planting scheme had therefore to be undertaken after moving into the campus and after the construction of the roads by procuring hundreds of saplings of the required varieties from the Forest Department.

Another disturbing aspect at the site, when it was handed over, was that most of the hills that existed at the location of the present academic complex had almost vertically cut faces making them look ugly. The contractors in the city had cut them to supply earth to the city wherever it was needed.

Although there was a Master Plan, it was necessary to sit with the architect and make changes to suit our needs. While making the changes, the main road network was left untouched. Also, the drainage in the campus was obviously going to be a problem. The drainage scheme was given as a consultancy project to Dr. P. P. Mujumdar of the Civil Engineering Department of IISc Bangalore. A contract was also awarded for blasting out the rocks and ugly hills to open up the site as a plain ground.

As far as the housing was concerned, two requirements
The Roads being laid out with no trees anywhere except for the Coconut Grove (The campus site in 1998)

were placed before the architect. We did not want any residential house opening on to the main roads as in a market place. They must be placed on a feeder road or a service road so that there was more privacy and also safety for the children. Secondly, as far as possible, the buildings should be in clusters with open ground in between them, so that people could naturally meet and the children could play in the evening.

As for the academic and administrative buildings, they should be interlinked with covered pathways so that movement during rain and sun would be smooth. The original plans were accordingly modified. The administrative building and the library building were to be connected at the first floor level, and a further connection was to be made at the first floor level on the other side of the library building to the convocation hall and conference hall complex which were to be located across the road from the cricket field opposite the administrative building. This would have left the quadrangle in front of the administrative building open to a panoramic view from the topmost point of the approach road from the main gate. The administrative and library buildings were to be linked to the academic complex through the lecture hall complex using covered pathways. These were the considerations according to which the plans were finalized. The architect was asked to prepare architectural models of the main Institute buildings like the administrative building, the academic complex, the guest house and the students' hostels so that one could appreciate the designs better. However, some of the plans had to be changed later according to the exigencies of the prevalent situation.

Funds, of course, were not easily available. Initially, only Rs. 53.1 crore was sanctioned in 1994 for the remaining part of the five-year plan for IIT Guwahati. Funds for equipment were available, but funds for building space was not forthcoming. A lot of effort was therefore put into preparing a detailed table for construction work, in which details of each building, showing the plinth area, construction schedule and expenditure in each quarter and justification of the cost of construction, were provided.

When I met the financial adviser of the MHRD with my plan and told him about the estimated cost, his first reaction was that this much funds would never be available. He, however, asked me why that much fund was needed. I explained to him about the terrain and the unavoidable cost of land development in all the constructions. I also told him how, as a research student and later as a faculty member at IIT Bombay, I used to visit the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research for computer work since 1964 almost every day of the week, how I never felt like coming out of the building and sometimes spent the night there, and how the ambience was so conducive to work tirelessly. He understood what I meant, and told me that money was not a problem so long as one could give value for money. He also told me that people would appreciate good work no matter what the cost was, but they would
come down heavily if the product was substandard.

Contracts for the first three clusters of Type-D quarters, the first two clusters of Type-C buildings, the Director’s Bungalow, and the first three students’ hostels – Manas, Dihing and Kapili – were awarded in April 1998, and they were completed by May 2000. In between, on September 5, 1998, the entire campus was inundated by flood waters from the Brahmaputra except for the hills and the transit complex. By the middle of 2000, six F-type Bungalows were also completed. The dedication of the engineering personnel of IIT’s engineering cell was exemplary during the construction work. One particular incident during the construction of the D-type quarters was difficult to forget. Sri Amarendra Goswami, Executive Engineer (Electrical) came to the site in the afternoon one day to direct the electrical contractor in laying the electrical conduits during slab casting. I was informed by his family at 11 pm in the night that he had not returned home till then. There were no mobile phones in those days. When some of us were preparing to come to the site from the city, we received the information that he had returned. It was a real scare.

During the construction work from 1997 onwards, I used to come for site visit once during the week. But it became a routine on Saturdays and Sundays to come to the site accompanied by my wife, visit the different ongoing works, have working lunch with the engineering staff at the site office, and return before sunset. We all enjoyed it, and I think it was effective in getting the work done in time and in the proper way.

In 1998, I requested Dr. Amalendu Dasgupta, Chief Structural Engineer of Development Consultants Limited, Calcutta, to join the Department of Civil Engineering as a Professor for three years. He joined IIT Guwahati in 1999, and was immediately given charge of Dean of Planning and Construction. His long practical experience was of immense help during the crucial phase of construction of the important institutional buildings and in maintaining the quality of construction. The Engineering Cell worked directly under his control.

Contracts for the construction of the administrative building, the guest house and the academic complex were awarded in 2000. L&T had the contract for the administrative building and the guest house, while Gammon India Ltd. had the contract for the academic complex. The guest house was completed on January 5, 2002, in time for the first international conference to be held at IIT Guwahati from January 6, 2002. The interior furnishings and furniture had already been ordered and were in place. It was a calculated risk, but everybody rose to the occasion and delivered.

The administrative building and the entire left wing of the academic complex on the hill side were completed in
Work on Sports Ground and Subansiri Hostel in 2001

ey 2002. The Type-B quarters for supporting staff were completed by the end of 2001, and the construction of the Subansiri hostel for ladies was started by 2001.

The contract for the construction of the main roads of the campus was given to BRTF in 2000–2001. The main approach road from main gate took considerable time as it required a lot of blasting of rocks coming in its way. The work was completed in 2002.

Preparation of the sports ground, which was to be built on marshy land, was not yet complete as it required extensive earth filling. The contractor who was given the work in 2000, delayed the work on various pretexts and the contract had to be rescinded. The new contractor completed the work in a year’s time.

Shifting To The Permanent Campus

With the completion of the three students’ hostels and some of the D-type, C-type and F-type residential quarters, and the Director’s bungalow, we started shifting to the campus from the beginning of July 2000. Some of the younger and adventurous faculty members moved into the campus first. I myself moved into the campus on August 1, 2000. By the middle of August, 2000, all the faculty members and officers moved into the campus barring only a few senior professors.

All the students also shifted to the campus. Since the work of the ladies’ hostel was still to be started, one wing of the Manas hostel was blocked off for the accommodation of the girl students, while common dining room facilities were provided.

One genuine regret was that the first two batches of students did not get to stay in the campus, though they had classes for a few semesters in the transit complex.

Since the water supply in the campus had to depend on the water obtained from a number of deep tube wells, schemes for permanent water supply from the Brahmaputra and the sewerage for the campus were immediately undertaken. The architect provided the scheme for water supply for which the locations for water intake and for treatment plant were already marked on the Master Plan, while M/S M. N. Dastur & Co. of Kolkata were appointed as consultants to draw up the scheme for sewerage and sewage treatment.

Students’ Activities

When IIT Guwahati started in the temporary premises in the city, the students did not have any playing fields. They could only play small area games like volleyball and badminton and some indoor games. They needed other extra-curricular activities for relaxation. During the first year, the students organized a Diwali function in the hostel to which all the faculty members were invited. Most of the faculty members went with their families, and the students arranged a lot of fun games. Sitting there and watching the students enjoy, I suddenly felt that I was among the students at IIT Bombay. These students were no different from the students in the older IITs. Since I had constant interaction with the students and the students had easy access to me, I spoke to them about ‘Mood Indigo’, the annual cultural festival of IIT Bombay, and the annual Techno-fair and the inter-hostel competitions of IIT Bombay.

In the first year, the students were too few in number to be able to organize any cultural event to which other colleges could be invited. In the second year, more than a hundred students joined the Institute, and the students took up the matter of organizing a cultural festival in right earnest. They came up with the name of ‘Alcheringa’, meaning ‘dream time’ in Australian aborigine language, for the proposed cultural festival. They freely used my office room, where an A0 desk-jet plotter was installed, to print their posters and publicity material.
The first Alcheringa was organized in March 1997 and the second in February 1998. The auditorium of the Institution of Engineers building was used on the first occasion, and a separate pandal was constructed on the second occasion. As the festival grew in size, the venue was shifted to the campus from 1999 onwards.

The first technical fair 'Techniche' was organized near the transit complex in 1999. Both 'Alcheringa' and 'Techniche' grew in size in each successive year and became hugely successful.

After moving into the campus, the first inter-hostel cultural festival 'Manthan' was organized in 2001. As the Institute grew, more and more avenues for showcasing the students' talents came up.

**Campus Life**

As a foretaste of campus life, the 1998 Diwali festival was celebrated in the transit complex in the campus when everybody still lived in the city. All the students, faculty members and supporting staff with their families joined in the celebration, for which, three steamers were hired to take all the people, first on a river cruise, and then on to North Guwahati and back. It was the first occasion and perhaps, sadly also the last occasion, on which the entire IIT Guwahati community joined in.

The first job that was undertaken after moving into the campus, was to construct a temporary market complex in the campus near the entrance gate near ASEB sub-station, so that the residents could buy their daily needs.

While the students had their play grounds and other festivities, the faculty and the staff and their families also needed some avenues for relaxation and social interaction, and the children needed playgrounds and parks.

The 'IIT Club' was formed in May 2002 for all employees of the Institute, and its formation and constitution were approved by the Board. The activities of the club were initially carried out on the first floor lounge of the Guest House. The ladies of IIT Guwahati had been more active on the social front right after the time the faculty joined during 1995–96. Although quite a number of faculty members joined in 1995, their families hardly came to know each other unless they lived in the same complex in the city. In order to remove this drawback and introduce some kind of social interaction, the ladies, both working and non-working, formed an informal Ladies Club in 1996 and began meeting regularly on a particular day every month in somebody’s house by turns, or in a classroom in the Institute premises and had their interaction...
for an hour or so in the evening. They used to organize ‘Diwali Mela’ and celebrate Saraswati Puja every year at the Institution of Engineers building, and continued the tradition after shifting to the campus.

The informal activities of the ladies were given a formal shape by drawing up a constitution of an ‘IIT Ladies Club’, and its constitution and formation were approved by the Board in 2000 with a one-time sanction of expenditure up to a specified limit for various facilities of the club. Besides the weekly meetings and celebration of Diwali Mela, members of the Ladies Club also took upon themselves the task of looking after the welfare of the inmates of Shishugram, supply of Purabi milk to the campus and providing crèche facilities for working ladies.

The proposal of the IIT Guwahati Ladies Club to set up creche, playschool and kindergarten in the campus was approved by the Board at its 26th meeting held in January 2001, with a one-time grant for infrastructure and establishment cost, a monthly recurring grant for the salary of teachers and staff, and approval for providing various items of furniture and fixtures. The creche started functioning from a D-type quarter which was unoccupied. A kindergarten trained teacher and an ayah were employed to look after the children in the creche.

A school within the campus for the campus children was still felt as a necessity. In spite of repeated requests to the MHRD and the Kendriya Vidyalay Sangathan to set up a Kendriya Vidyalay within the campus, the KVS expressed their inability to open a school within the campus as IIT was no longer under the project mode, and the entire cost including teachers’ salaries would have to be borne by IIT if a Kendriya Vidyalay were opened. This policy of KVS changed in later years when the Central Government decided to open a large number of KVs in the North East.

With the approval of the Board, a primary school with a Kindergarten section was opened in 2002 in the site office of the Engineering Cell which had by then moved into the Administrative Building. An elaborate exercise was carried out by a five-member committee of faculty members and staff to recruit suitable teachers for the school, and the school started functioning from that year.

As a community, the campus started celebrating Magh Bihu (mid January), Holi and Bohagi Bidai and Saraswati Puja. The Saraswati Puja was celebrated by the whole community together at one place, the first year in the market complex, and later in the premises of the IITG school when the school started in 2002.

The celebration of Bohagi Bidai started for the first time in May 2002, near the B-type clusters after the B-type quarters were occupied in early 2002.
The entrance to the campus was still from the back, through the gate near the ASEB substation. The 1.3 km long approach road from the highway to the designated main entrance of the campus through a railway overbridge near the Agiathuri railway station was still not complete. The initial proposal was to construct a two lane road. The Board in its wisdom and foresight advised and approved the construction of a four lane road at double the cost. The construction was entrusted to the PWD as the road was through government land. While the road work was completed by 2002, the work of the overbridge and the approach from the campus side were delayed because of the necessity to re-lay the overhead high tension lines as underground cables, and also because of some unforeseen problems with the foundation of the overbridge.

The second hurdle was the unsettled nature of the southern boundary of the campus along the river side and a part of the western boundary because of refusal of people to move out. This was to be sorted out through negotiated settlement in later years.

With the basic and essential facilities in place, IIT Guwahati could now set out on its journey of consolidation and expansion.

Although IIT Guwahati had a handicap of almost 35 years in comparison with the older IITs, it has done remarkably well in its effort to catch up with the older IITs in these twenty-five years.

The work during the initial years was strenuous, but immensely enjoyable, since we could see the things coming up in front of our eyes. It was also extremely rewarding as my wife and I could derive a sense of satisfaction from what we saw of IIT Guwahati during our short visits in later years.

As IIT Guwahati completes its twenty-five years of existence, I humbly express my grateful thanks to all the persons – the pioneering students of the initial years, the faculty, staff, engineers of the Engineering Cell, the architectural team and the contractors – who helped in building this Institute. Without the dedication of the people who took the difficulties, dangers and the troubles in their stride in the initial years, it would not have been possible to make this IIT into what it is today.
It is indeed with pleasure that I write on the occasion of the Silver Jubilee of IIT Guwahati. I was fortunate to be associated with the Institute almost from the very beginning. In 1994–95 a new IIT was being set up after a gap of about 32 years since the last IIT at Delhi was established. There was concern as to whether the new IIT will be able to develop in a relatively under-developed region of the country and where there was social unrest. But the IIT was established, and today it is one of the leading Institutes of the country, and it is also globally recognised. Before I go into some of the decisions that were taken that helped in the development process, let me first mention two points that helped the Institute a lot in the beginning. The first was the change of the site from a location 150 km away from Guwahati with no rail or air connectivity nearby, to a site in Guwahati. Access to air connections is very important for an Institute aspiring to be globally recognised, and we have to thank the peasants in the first site who did not allow the IIT to be established there! The second point was the support we got from the Institute of Engineers enabling us to set up our temporary premises in the heart of the city. Students and their wards, newly recruited faculty, all felt comfortable seeing the Institute in the middle of the city.

Copy, Edit, and Paste

This was the strategy to build a new IIT! The IIT had an Act and Statutes to follow, but other rules, procedures, organisation structure, delegation of powers, were all missing. So we went about bringing in documents from the existing IITs (primarily from IITB and IITK as the Director and I were from these two institutions). This was the COPY part. Then we took, what we felt were the best portions from each IIT. This was the EDIT part. This resulted in documents such as: Organisational structure, delegation of powers, Ordinances for B.Tech, M.Tech, PhD, R＆D Rules, Medical Rules, Rules for leave on academic grounds, Gymkhana Rules, Hostel Rules, etc. This was the PASTE part! And an IIT was born. The key point to note was that there was no attempt to innovate. The aim was to establish an IIT as close as one could, to the existing ones. This resulted in acceptance from the other IITs. This in turn brought in acceptance from society. Innovation should come once one is well established. Innovations did come – later. Significant innovations can only come for the family of IITs as a whole, and this is very difficult to achieve. Some of the recently established IITs brought in innovation right at the beginning. An IIT did not have Departments to start with – only Schools. Another had no structure at all! They had to revert to the “traditional” schemes once they got into difficulties.

Create an “IIT” Environment

Borrowing the Rules from other IITs and using them is only the first step. To be an IIT, the “IIT Culture” has to become part of the Institute. What is this “IIT Culture”? Actually, it is the culture of every successful educational institute, in India or abroad. Here are a few of the components that come to my mind as I write this piece:

- Rules are there to ease decision making. They are not there as hindrances. So if difficulties arise, amend the rules. Build in discretionary powers in rules wherever appropriate.
- Guard the Institute’s autonomy. Rules apply as specified in the following order: Act, Statutes, Board Resolutions, Govt of India Rules. This
means that a Govt of India Rule applies only if nothing is specified about the matter in the Acts or the Statutes, and there is no Board resolution specifying a rule. The Director is the CEO and the only CEO. If an “order” comes from the Central Govt. to the Institute, it can be implemented only if the Director approves it. This prevents lower level officials in Govt offices from usurping powers they do not possess.

- Hierarchy among faculty should be as little as possible. In teaching everyone is equal. In research, the younger may be better!
- Give freedom to a teacher to conduct his/her classes. While a syllabus has to be followed, addition of topics and the emphasis to be given to any particular topic, is up to the teacher. Teacher discipline is maintained through peer review and peer pressure. Student feedback is to be taken seriously.
- Attending classes is very important, both for the student and the teacher. If a teacher misses a class, she takes a make-up class. This conveys to the students that academics is to be taken very seriously.
- Encourage UG students to take up research, projects, and other academic activities outside the classroom.
- Give a lot of emphasis to research. Ensure that there are sufficient PhD students so that every faculty has at least one student working with him/her. Put in place mechanisms so that faculty are encouraged to take up sponsored research.

And we had an IIT!

I do not wish to go into reminiscences in this write-up. I am sure history will be brought up in many other ways. I wish to add that it takes time for an Institute to grow and mature. Even though IITG had all the rules in place by year 2, and the “IIT Culture” was in place by year 4, we were still not large enough to be at par with other IITs. Growth was restricted till we moved to the campus. It took us four years to start classes on campus and six years to start living on campus (2000). Only after that could we expand rapidly. We were “allowed” to hold the Inter-IIT Sports meet in 2006, and we were “allowed” to organise the JEE examination only in 2009, fifteen years after we started operations.

After twenty-five years, IIT Guwahati is a well-established IIT. The challenge is to maintain the upward curve of progress, at least till the golden jubilee comes along!
Message on the Occasion of the Silver Jubilee Celebration

Prof. Gautam Biswas, FNA
JC Bose National Fellow and Former Director (2013-2019)

The Silver Jubilee celebration of IIT Guwahati is a very proud moment for all of us attached to this institute. This journey of 25 years has been exciting and at the end of the day we are happy that in this period of 25 years IITG is what it is today. When we said “what it is today” the imperatives that sequentially arise are:

- Where does IIT-G stand in the context of India ranking and, more importantly, global ranking?
- Where we want it to position and the way forward, which includes the following:
  - Infrastructure augmentation to encourage innovation and partnership.
  - Increasing focus on research based course and curriculum.
  - Forging collaborations with universities, industries and government.
  - Challenges to the faculty members are to go beyond traditional departmental boundaries.
- Expectations from student community:
  1. Rigorous academic study supported by excitement of innovation
  2. Appropriate ways for grievance redressal and resolving conflicts if any.

Where does IIT-G stand in the context of India ranking and, more importantly, global ranking?

The rankings of universities on a global scale have become the natural development. It was believed that such an exercise would provide the government with a way of assessing its research funding allocation, provide academics with valuable assessment tools, and help policy makers gain the support of their academic counterparts. Today, ranking issues are being raised everywhere. As such it has been observed that the ranking conducted by “QS” and “THE” have a serious effect on the perception of citizens and government. We need to discuss some issues that draw attention of the academic community of Higher Education Institutes (HEI) of the country in general and the community of IIT Guwahati in particular. The National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF) is playing a very important role for creating the awareness of quality education in the country. It is important to know where an Institute stands in the quality framework of disseminating knowledge. The quality must enable personal accomplishment of the students and encourage public welfare. Also the quality is expected to promote an excitement of innovation, spirit of curiosity, public engagement, and productive contribution to the society. It must prepare students for creating more meaningful and satisfying lives and enabling economic independence to the country. A quality higher education system must aim at becoming a joyful opportunity to grow and contribute. A highly acclaimed system is expected to provide students with broad science-based multidisciplinary education and suitable skills. At the same time one has to acquire deeper knowledge in the discipline of interest. The system has to engage faculty and students jointly for solving the scientific problems. Wherever possible the faculty and students have to get involved with local communities and function in a collaborative, and cross-disciplinary manner to address the issues for a better livelihood.

Infrastructure augmentation to encourage innovation and participation.

At IIT Guwahati we need to enhance our facilities. We have to do our best to provide more opportunities to our students. We must create more innovative courses in our
Institutes. Several departments have already joined the open educational resources movement and have participated in the national initiative for online courses on NPTEL, MOOCS and similar platforms. We must improve our infrastructure, laboratories and computational facilities. Today our infrastructure, laboratories and computational facilities are impressive but not comparable with the best in the world. We have to initiate more discussions between academia and the industry. We need to show people the kind of impact that IITs can bring about on improvements in living conditions; like cleaning up the ambience, improving urban-traffic system etc. As one of the nation’s leading Institutes, IIT Guwahati continues to contribute to nation building by nurturing talents, supporting the local community, providing solutions and knowledge to the industries and organizations. The initiative of developing a Research Park is a big step in that direction. This will trigger a unique system similar to the “Industry on Campus” scheme, which will enable companies to have research laboratories and centers within the IIT. These outlets will be operated by the companies in cooperation with the faculty members, utilizing a variety of human resources and the innate potential of a large number of students.

As a world-class university, IIT Guwahati has to implement research and innovation as a culture of learning and we have to remain committed through its internationalization efforts to develop global graduates. The Institute aims to produce quality graduates by providing transformative and conducive learning experience in all its programmes. Research and consultancy ensure opportunities to advance the frontier of knowledge and we must aim at creation of state-of-the-art resources to further enrich the research experience for students. There is a need to introduce imaginative and flexible curricular structures. This will enable creative combinations of disciplines for students to study, and would offer multiple useful entry and exit points. Postgraduate level education should aim at providing rigorous research-based specializations. The programs must provide opportunities for multidisciplinary work.

In order to become a research oriented Institute, IIT Guwahati is committed to becoming a post-graduate-focused Institute offering more innovative research-based postgraduate programmes. The recently introduced interdisciplinary MTech program in Data Science is a move in that direction. A Joint MTech program in Food Science and Technology with Gifu University Japan, a Joint PhD program in Mechanical Engineering with Gifu

Increasing focus on research based course and curriculum.
University Japan, a Joint PhD program in Bioinformatics with Heidelberg University, Germany and a Joint PhD program in Civil Engineering with Curtin University Australia are a few more forthcoming initiatives. In the near future, we should start implementing more attractive and varied modes of PhD programmes, such as Industry-based Doctoral Degrees and Double/Dual Doctoral Degrees. Such activities will not only provide flexibility in postgraduate study approaches, but at the same time will contribute to increased publications and citations, while enhancing technological development and a knowledge-driven economy.

Forging collaborations with universities, industries and government.

We have to keep bringing together leading academic people from all over the globe. Increasingly, professors from other countries are showing interest in working here as are young students from different universities/institutes in the country. It is very important to uphold this open and inviting role in the national context. It makes institutions like the IITs more relevant. We need to create awareness among our faculty members about the importance of our research, especially to bring our country at the hub of excellent industrial connections. Universities/Institutes must merge teaching and research into one body. An active researcher always modulates his teaching from the experience earned through research. Each one of us has to strive continuously to become an effective teacher and researcher. We have to be innovative and analytical even if the class strength is large. The challenges of managing large classes can be used to our advantage through flipped classrooms.

Nanotechnology is reported to have been used for producing an anti-cancer drug. Taiwan has effectively taken leaps in this area, the Taipei Medical University (TMU) and National Taiwan University (NTU) research teams report an anti-cancer therapy drug that is approved for trials by the USFDA (US Food and Drug Administration). The drug is set to inhibit histone deacetylase activity, effectively killing cancer cells, and causing fewer side effects. Treatment of diabetes includes injections of insulin on a daily basis. A step towards changing this uncomfortable process has been taken at the University of KwaZulu Natal in South Africa. They have developed a dermal patch capable of sustained, controlled insulin release into the bloodstream.

The examples above emphatically explain the role of the researchers in the world class universities in creating newer products for humankind. The universities that rise rapidly in the short term are placing themselves in the global competition system, regulating and planning themselves in accordance with the standards of world-class universities, as well as developing and expanding themselves through the all-round cooperation with world-class universities. The Indian Institutes of Technology, ever since their establishment, have been aiming to be international high-level institutes of science and technology. To this end, they have been constructing an MIT model, inviting outstanding teachers around the world to their campuses. Some Institutes (such as IIT Kanpur) started with all-round collaborations with top universities of science and technology in the United States (such as MIT, Caltech etc.) and some (such as IIT Madras) started with a hand-holding relationship with the top universities in Germany (such as Karlsruhe University, Technical University Aachen, etc.) for the training of graduate students and implementing scientific research projects. Some of them (IIT Kharagpur, IIT Bombay and IIT Delhi) got the opportunity to build laboratories jointly with Intel, Motorola, IBM, Imperial College of Science Technology and Medicine, and ONR. South-east Asian countries are extremely successful in their outcome based initiatives. Hong Kong University of Science and Technology has been ranked among the world’s top 50 universities thus taking an almost miraculous leap in development. NTU Singapore is the fastest-rising among the world’s top 50 universities, first among the world’s young elite universities, as well as the one of the top Asian universities in normalized citation impact.

Challenges to the faculty members are to go beyond traditional departmental boundaries.

Increasing student engagement is a massive task. It takes deep passion, commitment and compassion to motivate each unique student. There are ways to initiate and immerse students more actively into the teaching-learning experience that require their thoughtfulness and participation. By becoming active learners, one can hope that students will demonstrate a level of engagement that wasn’t present before. We have to come up with ideas to keep students motivated and engaged. Eventually the ambience will progress towards a dynamic academia, which can effectively resist any “negativism”.

A highly accomplished Institute must focus upon developing human capacity to create new knowledge and foster innovation. The curriculum, the research programs and processes of educating individuals must be synchronized for achieving the goals of creating a knowledge society. As academics, we have to be careful and responsible builders of humanity and society as a whole. A graduate must have understanding and requisite skills in her/his discipline of choice. Besides this main
attribute, there are a few issues of “man-making”. A graduate must know about the society in which she/he lives. The students should be encouraged to spend time with the downtrodden; they should be allowed to understand the plight of the service personnel who do not get adequate money to cover 100 percent of their food expenses. All graduates must acquire the ability to express themselves using both the spoken and the written word. They should be able to relate themselves to the art and culture of the land. Through a strategic transformation of its functional methods, IIT Guwahati must attempt to create a motivational knowledge culture and unique intellectual ecosystem that inspire creativity, innovation, generation of new knowledge and entrepreneurial environment.

Expectations from student community:
(1) Rigorous academic study supported by excitement of innovation
(2) Appropriate ways for grievance redressal and resolving conflicts if any.

Often there are issues related to performance of the students. In order to analyze that we require to understand the students. The students today, in general, strive for material well-being. They are perturbed by the inequality of the society, some of them feel acutely the ills of the society. Even then, some students have short attention span. Some follow poor daily routine, even though they have a good learning ambition to begin with. The academic community has to accommodate and understand such variations and use the diversity to create a useful and humanitarian society where everyone finds themselves able to contribute and be useful. The more we gain and grow as a society, the more we utilize our entire human resources. We expect our students to believe in innovation and research as being the main springs of growth. They are expected to convert this academic journey to intellectual transformation promoting welfare to society and humanity as a whole.

Finally we would like to address some issues specific to some recent problems pertaining to governance of the students: Each individual has his or her own story about what is important and why. A compassionate and open-minded look into these different stories can make a great difference on how we handle conflict. We have to learn to ask questions that can help us resolve the problem and understand the background of the conflict better, therefore prevent future incidents. What is important in specific situations is the improvement of the ambience. Punishment is not more important than restoring peace, growing awareness and motivating individuals for self-rectification. We need to re-cast complex issues as shared problems that can be solved cooperatively. Let us abstain from blaming and voicing negative opinions about others. Let us state clearly what we feel and want and let us invite our colleagues and the students to help each other in finding solutions. Opinions and emotive expressions should be narrated through means that facilitate a lasting and satisfying outcome. Let us keep in mind that “negativism” can only destroy society. We should learn to admire people who are positive and optimistic in their outlook, even if their philosophy seems inadequate in addressing the issues at hand. In the long run, we all have a lot to learn from them too.

We have successfully walked through a long distance of 25 years, meeting and overcoming all challenges head on. We shall move forward triumphantly to be noticed by the global academia. Then the post-silver jubilee era will be unfolding, like a blossom with beautiful petals concealing the treasures pertaining the source of beauty within. Let the coming years be filled with the events that are really good for the holistic development of the Institute. Let all the students perform well. Let all the faculty members, officers and staff members grow on their career path. Let us gain sufficient strength to help those who need our help and the let us have humility and openness to accept help from others.
C-DAC – IITG Supercomputing Facility ‘PARAM ISHAN’
INAUGURATED BY
SHRI PRAKASH JAVADEKAR
MINISTER OF HRD, GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
19TH SEPTEMBER, 2016
at IIT Guwahati

G. Gautam Biswas
Director, IIT Guwahati

Prof. Ralph Moore
Director General, C-DAC
Silver Jubilee Celebration Committee

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Prof. T. G. Sitharam, Director, IIT Guwahati

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