

A MESSAGE

TO THE STUDENT COMMUNITY OF IIT PALAKKAD

From the Gen Sec to the students.

A short interview with the General Secretary





This is an opinion article based on an interview with the Student's General Secretary, Muhammed Yaseen. The article highlights an issue that prevails in our institute. The opinions expressed by the General Secretary is to address the queries of some students regarding the institute and student life in general. It also stresses the importance of student participation in the institute activities.

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Being the General Secretary of IIT Palakkad, in your words, what do you think being an IITian is all about?

IITs are the premier technological institutes in the country. But, just being a student in one of these IITs does not mean a secure future. It doesn't matter even if you belong to the older IITs or the so called 1st generation IITs. Studying in an IIT and focusing solely on courses with absolutely no extracurricular or non-scholastic activities will not make you stand out among others.

So having a mind-set such as 'I got into an IIT, I'm settled in life' is not right.

College education helps you grow as a person. The years you spend here will prepare you to face the real world as an engineer.

As we all know, IIT Palakkad is a 3rd generation IIT. In the future, there is a possibility of new IITs being started. Let's say there's an n th generation IIT. Does the n matter?

1st, 2nd and 3rd generations: this is how the 23 IITs in our country have been divided based on when it was established. According to me, this classification does not indicate the quality of education provided....

...It is your (students) mind-set that makes the 3rd generation IITs 'not good enough'.

There is a difference between the old and the new ones, of course. The former has better infrastructure for research and has a wide variety of industrial connections. Newer IITs will surely catch up but it will take some time. After all, Rome wasn't built in a day. In fact, newer IITs can benefit by learning from the mistakes made by the older IITs when they were developing.

Being a student of a new IIT does not make you unprivileged; this is another thought that keeps lingering in the minds of the majority of the students i.e. 'IIT Palakkad is[, after all,] a 3rd generation IIT'. The reason why it is in the 3rd generation is because it was established recently and it's not because the quality of education is bad or that it is below average. Students must not resent being in a new IIT. Being in one only opens up a plethora of opportunities for you to shine. It shouldn't hinder your real talent and skills that could help you land a good career.

What is your message to the students of IIT Palakkad if they view our institute as a 3rd generation IIT and rant about how there's not much exposure to any activity here?

Joining a newer IIT must be seen as an opportunity to be a part of a legacy and not as a shortcoming.

The growth of the institute depends majorly on the students enrolled in the institute and

if a student does not have the drive to take initiative, then there is no use in ranting about the lack of exposure to the industry or research in a 3rd generation IIT. We need to see things from a different perspective and understand that there is nowhere to go but forward. The development and increase in popularity of the institute among companies, and the public in general, will happen only if the students adopt a mind-set for growth. Lack of participation or enthusiasm in events will not help in propelling the institute forward.

Before I took charge as the General Secretary, I had met Prof. Job Kurian to invite him for Petrichor'20. This meeting gave me a new perspective which I would like to share with everyone. The Professor, who had taught at IIT Madras, wanted to know why the students of IIT Palakkad were not as enthusiastic as the students at IITM were. He wondered why students kept to themselves most of the time, not participating in any activities of the institute besides coursework. For Prof. Kurian, who had spent years in teaching and research at IITM to have an opinion of this kind about the institute is not a good sign; especially when there are people who are striving hard to develop the institute and make it reach a level higher than the older IITs.



There are many students who believe that there is always an Administration side and a Students' side when it comes to issues. Is that true?

This is one of the most frequently heard rants among most of the students. They believe that the administration is against the well-being of students. This is not true. The administration will try its best to guide the students and listen to their opinions and at the same time adhere to the rules and regulations needed to provide quality education to the students. But the participation of students in the institute activities is pivotal. Students need to put in the effort and try to organize events or at least participate in the events organized by the institute. If there is no zeal from the students' side, then the administration cannot take charge of the student activities. If there are any concerns, the students must inform the administration (or representatives from the SAC). There might be some problems that students face that the administration may not know about. If you want more seminars or summits then you need to show your excitement at events by attending the ones already being organised. Ignoring the existing programmes and complaining that not enough events happen at the institute is not acceptable.

Low participation in events demotivates the organizers (students and faculty equally).

The least you could do is to show your appreciation for the organizers of an event by becoming a part of the audience.



According to you, what is the significance of college education? How important is it to have knowledge beyond the ones taught in courses?

You should be aware of the fact that higher education is not for studying alone. You will learn a lot of technical and soft-skills during college.

Ignoring the activities or events that take place at our institute and being a student whose sole purpose is to just study and get good grades is not advisable.

After college, you will be facing the real world. There will be no one to shield you or guide you in the right direction if you are naive.

So I request you to come out of your shell and participate. Participation helps you engage with people. Later on, you will feel a push within yourself to do more than just participate in events or talks. This is a sign to pursue further and take up responsibilities. Participate in events (technical or non-technical) that you think you can do well in and contribute to. We [the SAC] also provide ample encouragement to set up activities in case they don't already exist. It in fact boils down to the involvement from the student community



Some of you might wonder how you could take up Positions of Responsibility (PoRs) without any previous experience. There will be people to guide you when you face any obstacle while organizing a programme or when you are in a PoR. This would help you grow your management skills and develop your team player ability. This is the experience you need when you step into the raw, unfiltered world where the level of competition is higher.

Being in an IIT, you are constantly exposed to research, technology and management around you. The exposure comes in various forms.

Be it a seminar/webinar or an institute fest, there is a platform for anyone who is interested in obtaining technical knowledge or improving their soft skills. Some people are good at utilizing these opportunities to improve their knowledge and also make professional connections. But the number of people in our institute who grab these opportunities is not as large as it could be.

This is the time where you can discover your passion by exploring. You don't need to be an expert at anything when you enter college. All you need is an open mind that is ready to take on an adventure which will be rough at some stages, but when you complete the 4 years, it would've moulded you into a confident engineer and most importantly, a successful student who is ready to take on the world.

Keep in mind that student participation in talks or contests (i.e., activities apart from coursework) play an important role in increasing the number of companies that offer internships and placements. Plus, they look good on your resume too.

Life after graduation. Many students are not sure about their careers. Do you have any tips for them?

Not all students know what they plan to do after they graduate. Many will be clueless about picking the right career because they might be interested in different fields, in some cases fields that are not related to engineering. The only way to find out for sure, or at least get a clue as to what field you want to pursue a career in, is to explore. This expedition of finding the right career will be easier when you are a student. Testing out different fields by participating in events, taking up projects, leading a team or a club give you a lot of skills that cannot be acquired if you remain in your shell with an anti-growth mindset.

[End of the interview]



Conclusion

Being a young institute, IIT Palakkad has got a long way to go to be one among the top universities in India and the world. Nonetheless, you have a chance to leave a mark that would impact the future batches that join the institute.

As you might have noticed, a point that is being stressed upon is active participation. This is important because you'll get to develop your skills. Having a huge turnout in our institute programs will attract companies and increase your chances of gaining more exposure. Then, IIT Palakkad will no longer be considered as a mere 3rd generation IIT.

Thus, make use of every single opportunity you get to develop yourself and be proud that you are weaving a part of a legacy, one that should inspire many students to help empower themselves and also our country.

