DAMMAM: The International Indian School, Dammam is poised to undergo major changes to benefit students in the region, including possibly building its own school building to save costs, said John Thomas, Chairman of the School Managing Committee, in an exclusive interview with Saudi Gazette. He was speaking in the wake of the controversy over the hike in fees by the school.

During his six-year association with IIS Dammam as Managing Committee member and later as Chairman, he said sincere efforts were made to accomplish distinctive improvements in terms of infrastructure development, academic accomplishments and faculty enhancement. He expressed his gratitude towards his fellow managing committee members, the principal and all associated staff for their steadfast support and efforts towards the development of the school.

Thomas said that “the recent fee hike was imperative to meet the escalating operational expenses and to maintain and improve the physical facilities and academic standards”. “The school has been running at a massive operational loss for the last two years. Since its inception, IISD has had an open admission policy. This institution was established with the sole purpose of providing education to the Indian youth in the province and it is mandatory that we continue with the policy,” he said. “Due to our commitment to accommodate all admission seekers, hiring of extra villas became absolutely essential in addition to the two main campuses. The smaller sizes of the classrooms in the villas made it obligatory to re-examine the student-teacher ratio. Hence the need for the appointment of more teachers, furniture, janitorial support, placing an extra financial burden on the school revenue, without any increase in income,” Thomas explained.

“When the time came for the renewal of the agreement of the Girls Section campus, the rental amount was doubled and the Managing Committee committed itself only for two more years as part of our attempt to minimize the financial impact. Revenue from investments in the banking channels have decreased considerably. Members of the Managing Committee, motivated by the idea of our own school complex, were persistently pursuing every possibility for the last two years, to realize this dream. By the Grace of God we were able to find 40,000 square meters of land in Raka itself. We will be very fortunate if we can finalize this deal as this land is earmarked by the authorities for educational institutions, in our present vicinity, and most important of all it is very economical and cost-effective. A Higher Board delegation and Embassy Observer have already inspected the land. Legal formalities and other relevant process will begin soon,” he said.

“We have a mega dream project – completion of the Girls Section building with underground parking and playground facilities within the next two years. We will ensure participation and support of parents’ representatives with relevant expertise in the completion of the project. The Managing Committee is undertaking creative steps to streamline and upgrade our administrative/operational activities, infrastructure, and academic standards,” he added.

“Financial losses being incurred by school transport operation is a major dilemma for the school’s financial stability. A thorough study is being undertaken to find remedial measures to prevent this loss,” said Thomas.

Thomas said that from the new academic year onwards, pay scale revision and end of service benefits are also being considered for all staff members. “Another academic year is beginning. We all are looking at it with absolute confidence and vivid aspirations. The Managing Committee earnestly solicits the continued support and patronage of the parent community in all our activities and efforts for the betterment of the prevailing conditions at IIS Dammam,” he said.

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