Still Clinging on to that Ol' Pink Maxi

Fashion education has come a long way, but is out of tandem with the marketplace

T. NARAYAN

There will be 15 NIFT campuses this year

by **Shefalee Vasudev**

IN 1990, the Planning Commission told Rathi Vinay Jha, the founding director of the National Institute of Fashion Technology (NIFT), that the fledgling couturiers' school, then just four years old, needed to be closed down. Why? Diverting the Rs 3-crore annual fund from the handloom budget for this elitist institution was unaffordable. Twenty years later, Rajiv Takru, now the director general of NIFT, has a diametrically opposite mandate—to make India's premier fashion institute non-elitist. NIFT's expansion to 15 centres (13 now and two more this year) is to accommodate 54 per cent additional seats over three years for OBCs and other quotas following the 2008 Supreme Court ruling.

To make sense of the new challenges, a small flashback.