








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Higher education, lower development

CHITTA BARAL

E DUCATION, especially higher education, seems to be in focus in the Eleventh Five Year Plan. Rightly so. The approach paper to the plan document says: "Only about 8 per cent of the relevant age group (of Indians) go to university whereas in many developing countries, the figure is between 20 and 25 per cent. There is a need to undertake major expansion... New institutions must be set up, to provide easier access to students in educationally backward districts." Similar sentiments were recently expressed by the Planning Commission Deputy Chairman Montek Singh Ahluwalia when he agreed with Shekhar Gupta ("Walk the Talk", IE, December 4) that higher education is a problem and went on to say, "What has happened is we suddenly realised that if the economy is now growing at 8 per cent, and could grow at 9 per cent, the skills the economy needs will become a constraint."

Against this backdrop, there have been reports that HRD Minister Arjun Singh has proposed the setting up of three new IITs, five IIMs, 20 Indian Institutes of Information Technology (IIITs), three Indian Institutes of Science Educational and Research (IISERs) and four Schools of Planning and Ar-

chitecture (SPAs). Even if some of these get through to the Eleventh Plan, where will they be located? Currently the distribution of existing, centrally funded institutes is skewed. In the past, decisions regarding the location of these institutions seem to have been based on whether the state was politically influential or not.

Just refer to the list of such institutions in the Moily Committee report for confirmation of this: AP (NIT, Hyderabad University (U), Maulana Azad Urdu U), Arun-

(NIT), Sikkim (none), TN (NIT, IIT, NITTR), Tripura (NIT), Uttaranchal (IIT), UP (NIT, IIM, IIT, IIIT, BHU, Allahabad U, Ambedkar U), West Bengal (NIT, IIT, IIM, Viswa Bharati, NITTR), Andaman and Nicobar Islands (none), Chandigarh (NITTR), Dadra and Nagar Haveli (none), Daman and Diu (none), Lakshadweep (none) and Puducherry (Pondicherry U).

The sizes of the above states and UTs vary and institutions in some of them are local to a significant urban population in neighbouring

(Rs 183.08), West Bengal (Rs 41.20) and Karnataka (Rs 33.4) at the top with Orissa (Rs 4.07), Rajasthan (Rs 2.59), and Bihar (Rs 1.87) at the bottom among the larger states. Not surprisingly as per the NSSO study of 2004-2005 Orissa is also at the bottom of most higher education parameters.

When this inequity is pointed out, some respond that locations of national institutes do not matter as any Indian is entitled to study anywhere in the country. What's forgotten is that institutions like IITs are drivers of growth in the region where they are located and have programmes that benefit local people. It is very important, therefore, that centrally funded institutes be distributed in an equitable manner.

But whether this will be done is the big question. Given the dismal past record, there is need to be alert. There may be an attempt to give an appearance of balance while some of the big-ticket items are once again located in the powerful states. The Planning Commission and HRD ministry must know the citizens, especially from the poorer states are watching.

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Will the HRD ministry and Planning Commission correct the regional imbalance in higher education?

achal (none), Assam (NIT, IIT, Assam U, Tezpur U), Bihar (NIT), Chhattisgarh (NIT), Delhi (IIT, JNU, U Delhi, Jamia Millia Islamia, SPA), Goa (none), Gujarat (IIM, NIT), Haryana (NIT), HP (NIT), J&K (NIT), Jharkhand (NIT, NITTR, ISM), Karnataka (NIT, IISc, IIM), Kerala (NIT, IIM), MP (IIM, NIT, NITTR, two IIITs), Maharashtra (NIT, NITIE, IIT, MG Hindi U), Manipur (Manipur U), Meghalaya (NEHU), Mizoram (Mizoram U), Nagaland (Nagaland U), Orissa (NIT), Punjab (NIT, SLIET), Rajasthan

states. For instance, institutions in Delhi are local to the people of UP and Haryana, and institutions in and around Chandigarh are local to a large populace of both Punjab and Haryana. The different institutes mentioned above have different budgets, with the IITs/IISc having the highest budgets. But the exact budget details are not easily available to make an accurate calculation of how much money the HRD ministry spends in various states. A rough calculation cited at <http://equitableindia.org>, based on the 2006-07 budget, shows Delhi

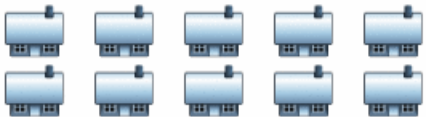
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