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- NEWS**
- HOME
- CITY
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- BUSINESS
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- BHUBANESWAR
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- BAZAAR
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- URBAN REALTY
- BOOKS
- FORECAST
- SUNDAY PIONEER**
- AGENDA
- FORAY

## Orissa may lose IIT to Andhra Pradesh

Pioneer News Service | Bhubaneswar

... as HRD requests Planning Commission to include three new IIT's in 11 Five-Year Plan

It seems that some nasty politics is overshadowing the decision of setting up of an Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) in Orissa. Union Minister for Human Resources Development Arjun Singh, a diehard Congress leader, seems determined not to oblige the BJD-led Government in the State to take the political mileage for setting up an IIT in the State.

The HRD Ministry has requested the Planning Commission to include three new IITs in the Eleventh-Plan period. The budget of each new IIT may be as high as Rs 4,000 crore, sources said. Union Minister of State for HRD MAA Fatmi, during the inaugural ceremony of a new experiment of the National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) in Patna, has said, "The proposal for IITs for Orissa and a western State, besides an IIT for Bihar, will be included in 11th Five-Year Plan."

The mention of Bihar and Orissa in the context of IIT makes sense as both States are in the bottom three (the other being Rajasthan) of HRD Ministry spending with respect to fully centrally funded higher education institutions and neither of them has an HRD-funded IIT, IIM, Central University, IISER, etc. The mention of two IITs in Orissa probably referred to a new IIT and a proposal for a branch or extension of IIT Kharagpur in Bhubaneswar.

However, even though the 11th Plan proposal is not yet finalised, confidential inquiries reveal that the three new IITs will be in Bihar, Rajasthan and Andhra Pradesh. And accordingly, the HRD Ministry has sent letters to the concerned State Governments. Moreover, reports also mention that the plans for branch campuses have been stalled.

Despite being at the bottom of the HRD funding, Ministry always skips over Orissa. Earlier, a proposed National Institute of Sciences in Bhubaneswar was shifted to Kolkata, despite protests from people all over the State and its representatives in Parliament roaring over the HRD Ministry's antipathy. Ultimately, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh had to come to the State's rescue as he granted it an NISER to be funded by the Department of Atomic Energy.

Now, the HRD Ministry has once again overlooked Orissa with respect to the IITs. This time, it seems Orissa is superseded by the Congress-ruled Andhra Pradesh, which, earlier in the year, was awarded not one but two upgrades to IIT cousins. Andhra University Engineering College and Osmania University Engineering College were earlier included in the list to be upgraded as IESTs (Indian Institute of Engineering Science and Technology). Thus, Andhra gets a new IIT and two IIT-like institutions funded by the HRD Ministry.

The people of Orissa in general and non-resident Oriyas in particular have now reasons to believe that the HRD Ministry under Arjun Singh is nourishing personal grudge against the NDA-ruled State and trying to benefit the States run by the UPA partners.

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