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**Orissa has missed the bus again, thanks to the machinations of the Ministry of Human Resources Development. A green-field Indian Institute of Technology, which was in the pipeline for Orissa, has been surreptitiously shifted to Andhra Pradesh. Bihar retains an IIT. So does the western state of Rajasthan. But Orissa's claim seems to have gone down the drain as the Ministry of HRD has made a volte face.**



Orissa has missed the bus again, thanks to the machinations of the Ministry of Human Resources Development. A green-field Indian Institute of Technology, which was in the pipeline for Orissa, has been surreptitiously shifted to Andhra Pradesh. The Ministry of HRD has maintained a complete silence over this sudden shift, but the issue has sparked off anger and resentment in Orissa. It's the second blow for the state in less than a year. The first blow came when the National Institute of Science was shifted from Bhubaneswar to Kolkata. But the NIS furore subsided after Prime Minister Manmohan Singh laid the foundation stone of National Institute of Science Education and Research in August. And now, another storm has lashed Orisa over the IIT issue. Union minister of state for HRD M.A.A. Fatmi in August last year had said, "The proposal for one IIT for Bihar and two for Orissa and one western Indian state besides one Indian Institute of Information Technology in Bihar will be included in the 11th Five Year Plan". Fatmi's Bihar retains an IIT. So does the western state of Rajasthan. But Orissa's claim seems to have gone down the drain as the Ministry of HRD has made a volte face.

Each state of the country, of course, cannot have an IIT. But the decisions pertaining to the location of such reputed centres of excellence have to follow certain objective criteria. The Ministry of HRD cannot announce an IIT for Orissa and suddenly decide to scrap the same in a jiffy. The decision to shift the IIT appears to have been taken on grounds of political expediency. The decision does not reflect the academic realities staring at a state like Orissa where the institutions of higher



OVER ONE MILLION  
SATISFIED CUSTOMERS...  
**1,00,000**  
EXCITING  
JEWELLERY DESIGNS



learning set up by the Ministry of HRD are few and far between. At present, there are seven IITs in the country at New Delhi, Mumbai, Kharagpur, Kanpur, Roorkee, Chennai and Guwahati. Three more IITs will come up during the 11th Plan period from 2007 to 2012. Each IIT will involve an investment of Rs 4,000 crores and hence, it will be a costly exclusion for Orissa.

Chief minister Naveen Patnaik has already written a letter to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh protesting against the decision. The CM has described the decision not to locate one of the green-field IITs in Orissa as "shocking". The CM has sought the intervention of the PM to sanction one IIT for Orissa. The CM has also conveyed the state's willingness to provide 300 acres of land free of cost for this prestigious IIT project.

There is a ray of hope that the Prime Minister might intervene in favour of Orissa as he earlier did to offer an alternative to the NIS project, which was shifted to Kolkata. In his address while laying the foundation of the National Institute of Science Education and Research, the Prime Minister had said, "I am also concerned about the regional imbalance in science teaching and the development of science and technology in India. There was a time when the East was at the forefront. Today the East is lagging behind the South and the West. We need to redress this regional imbalance. It is to meet these challenges that we will be setting up the National Institute of Science Education and Research in Bhubaneswar". But the NISER is no substitute for an IIT. While the estimated project cost of the NISER is Rs 750 crores, an IIT involves an investment of Rs 4000 crores. In short, Orissa may lose Rs 3250 crores due to this decision of the Ministry of HRD.

Moreover, the NISER project has not taken off yet though top officials from the Department of Atomic Energy (DAE) visited Bhubaneswar last month to meet the chief minister.

#### CII-McKinsey Report

The Prime Minister was right when he stated that the East is lagging behind in science teaching. But the East has got tremendous potential for the future. A CII-McKinsey report named "Turning The Minerals And Metals Potential Of Eastern India Into A Goldmine" has enumerated the potential of three eastern states of Orissa, Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh and what the states can achieve in the next 15 years. Are the three states really sitting on a goldmine? A peek into the CII-McKinsey report provides some answers.

According to the report, the three eastern states of Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Orissa have the potential to unleash an unprecedented economic boom, which will have a direct and unassailable impact on all sections of their population. The report says, "The economies of Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and Orissa also have the potential to grow from \$30 billion in 2003 to \$75 billion by 2015, in which the share of metals and minerals would increase from 27 to 46 per cent. This would also result in employment for 7,00,000 additional people by 2015 and the majority would be from the rural and small town population".

Capturing the potential, however, will require a concerted and co-ordinated effort by the government and industry players.

The three states of Chhattisgarh, Jharkand and Orissa alone account for about 70% of the country's coal reserves, 55% of iron ore and 60% of its bauxite reserves. However, they have grossly underexploited this opportunity so far as is borne out by their low state domestic products and low growth rates. There is no reason why, however, these states cannot leverage their natural resources to propel their economic growth just like several mineral rich regions across the world such as Australia, South Africa, Brazil, Chile and Botswana have done. What is more the timing could not be more ideal. There are three reasons for saying this. First, India's domestic demand for metals (and hence minerals from eastern states) is poised for significant growth over the next 10-12 years making India one of the top five global markets for several metals and minerals. Secondly, the growth rate of the Chinese economy has significantly accelerated the global demand for basic materials, resulting in global growth rates for steel, aluminium and coal. Thirdly, India is uniquely positioned to play a significant part in servicing this global demand due to its low-cost advantage.

The eastern states, according to the report, would also benefit in terms of employment creation, where levels of employment in the minerals and metal sector could increase from 560 thousand to 1.4 million workers by 2015. In addition, they would be able to significantly increase their state revenues from the minerals and metal sector from \$1 billion to almost \$2.9 billion by 2015. Significant investments could also flow in and could possibly reach as much as \$20-35 billion from the steel sector, \$10-14 billion from aluminium sector and \$6-9 billion from the coal sector by 2015. Additional investment of \$20-40 billion could flow in from the power sector for coal-based generation companies.

An IIT would have been the perfect icing on the cake for the eastern states in general and for Orissa in particular.