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- CITY
- NATION
- STATES
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- ENTERTAINMENT
- WORLD
- EDIT PAGE
- OP-ED
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- EDITOR'S MAIL
- SEARCH ARCHIVES
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- BHUBANESWAR
- KOCHI
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- CHANDIGARH
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- VIVACITY
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- URBAN REALTY
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- SUNDAY PIONEER**
- AGENDA
- FORAY

Arjun hijacks plans for KBK varsity

Braja Kishore Mishra | Bhubaneswar

... Union Cabinet gives nod for setting up institution in MP

Union Minister for Human Resources and Development Arjun Singh has once again humiliated Orissa by hijacking its original plan to set up a Central Tribal University in the KBK region comprising the State's undivided districts of Koaraput, Balangir and Kalahandi.

Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik, while meeting the Minister last October, had mooted the idea of setting up a KBK central university. It was based on the theory of empowerment of tribals with higher education.

Patnaik had pleaded with the Central authorities that the concentration of tribals is the highest in KBK and their uplift hinged on education. He had pointed out that the literacy rate among the people of this region was much below 50 per cent.

He had argued that setting up a Central University in the region would go a long way in encouraging higher education among the tribal population. The university could also set up specialised centres for tribal development-related studies, as tribal development is one of the biggest challenges facing the country today.

While Arjun Singh had promised Patnaik in clear terms that his HRD Ministry would positively consider the proposal, the result is now otherwise. The Union Cabinet on Friday gave its approval for establishment of the Indira Gandhi National Tribal University at Amarkantak in Madhya Pradesh with Central Government funding.

It also approved introduction of the Indira Gandhi National Tribal University Bill, 2007 in Parliament. This will ensure establishment of a teaching and affiliating university for facilitating and promoting avenues of higher education and research facilities for the tribal population of the country.

Apart from affiliating the colleges, the university has the power to establish such number of its own regional centres in tribal areas as it may deem fit.

There will be at least one school in every regional centre to serve as a model school for the schools of the region, wherefrom the tribal students would be expected to join the local colleges, the off-campus or the university. The objectives of the university include promoting studies and research in tribal art, culture, tradition, language, custom, medicinal systems, forest based economic activities, including special studies in the flora and fauna, and advancements in technologies relating to natural resources of the tribal areas.

Now, it is abundantly clear that Singh not only hijacked Patnaik's idea but also saw to it that Orissa would never get a Central University in the KBK region on the lines of huge tribal concentration. Since the UPA is at the helm of affairs at the Centre, Singh is playing havoc with Orissa and the State is losing one after another national institutions to other States. While Minister of State of HRD MA Fatmi had announced a proposal to set up an IIT in Orissa, it was later shifted to Andhra Pradesh by Singh, on political considerations, said sources.

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