

Appeal to fellow Oriyas: Don't take this daylight highway robbery lying down?

Dear Oriyas:

Perhaps it may have skipped your notice but recently the central government has announced the establishment of 2 Indian Institute of Science (Education and Research)-IISER in Pune and Kolkata. In December 2003, a UGC plan to establish 4 similar institutes at Pune, Bhubaneswar, Allahbad and Chennai were announced by the then Human Resources Development Minister of India. Based on the new announcement by the PM, where nothing was said about Bhubaneswar, it seems that Orissa has been deprived of an Indian Institute of Science. Unlike in the past when we heard rumors about how the first IIT was moved from Orissa to Kharagpur, this time we have *proof* in the Internet where the press announcement as well as UGC's announcement about Bhubaneswar is available even today. In USA this is referred to as daylight highway robbery. The detailed proof and other pointers on this are available at <http://www.orissalinks.com#nis> .

What is the big deal of having or not having an Indian Institute of Science in Bhubaneswar?

For a short answer one needs to look at Bangalore. Currently the only Indian Institute of Science is in Bangalore and it has had tremendous impact in Bangalore's rise as the hub of hi-tech in India. An institute like an IISc has strategic impact on the region where it is located. Note that Google and Yahoo with several billions of dollars in market capitalization were founded by Stanford University students. These companies employ thousands, all in the vicinity of Stanford. Many such examples of impacts of top notch educational and research institutions on the world as well as the local area abound.

In general, since independence, the central government of India has grossly neglected Orissa with respect to higher education and research institutes. Orissa does not have a central university, an IIT, IIM, or even an autonomous science and technology institution. (Yes, an announcement for an AIIMS-like institution was made. We are thankful for that. But nothing has happened in the ground. Also, an AIIMS is not a broad higher education institution.) Perhaps because of that Bhubaneswar was initially chosen as one of the sites for an Indian Inst of Science (then referred to as National Institute of Science). In contrast, West Bengal and Maharastra, the two states where the IISERs have been proposed have institutions of national importance such as IITs (Kharagpur and Mumbai), an ISI (Kolkata), an IIM (Kolkata), an AFMC (Pune), a central university (Shanti Niketan) and 3 autonomous science and technology institutions in Kolkata and 3 in Maharastra.

Although one can find some fault with our own state governments (in the present and past), this is not the time for that. This is the time for all Oriyas, whether we are congress supporters, or BJD or BJP, or CPI(M), or CPI or AGP, or JMM, etc., to unitedly oppose the injustice that has happened to us, and let our voices be heard by all of India. The state opposition parties, many of whom are aligned with the central government (such as Congress, CPI and CPI(M)) need to vehemently protest to their central party members and central ministers about this and the state government needs to do all it can, needs to raise the issues in all possible forums, and not rest until the injustice is undone. A letter or two from the CM is not quite enough, and so far there has not been any report of our MPs in Lok Sabha or Rajya Sabha doing anything about it.

At the same time, to strengthen our politicians and representatives hands, and perhaps even the PM's hand, who may have been handcuffed by coalition bullies, let us protest in a non-violent and non-harmful way against this injustice. Let us show India how a proper protest is done in a `poor' but educated, thoughtful, and peaceful state. Let us all write letters to the PM, the President, and the Congress president about this. Let us write to all national newspapers (Times of India, Hindustan times, Indian Express, The Hindu, etc.) about this injustice, the inherent problem associated with our democracy where states with more muscle (such as with larger contingent of ruling party or allied MPs) bully the weaker states, so that the rich get richer and the poor get poorer, and the need for real statesmen (and women) who rise above narrow political partisanship and think about all of India, not just about the states ruled by their party or their coalition partners. If nothing else, please cut this page from the newspaper, sign your name and address, add additional lines of your thought and mail it to the following addresses:

Dr. Manmohan Singh South Block, Raisina Hill, New Delhi, India-110011. Telephone: 91-11-23012312. Fax: 91-11-23019545 /91-11-23016857. email: <http://pmindia.nic.in/write.htm>

Smt. Sonia Gandhi President: INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS 24, Akbar Road, New Delhi – 110011 , INDIA TEL : 91-11-23019080 FAX : 91-11-23017047 email: aicc@congress.org.in

(Since many people may not read this particular newspaper, please also put a copy of this letter in your notice board, school wall, office wall, etc., so others know about this gross injustice and the 21st century version of the Gandhian way to protest about this.)

We are not begging here. Our state (different governments) has in the past initiated and helped in the establishment of first class institutions like the Xavier Institute of Management and the Institute of Physics. But it can not on its own establish an IIT or an IIM or an IISc or a central university. It just does not have the authority. For that reason, it is outrageous that the center has robbed a `poor' state. The PM and everyone involved in this decision should be ashamed of what they have done and if they have any conscience, revise their decisions immediately. We are happy that Kolkata and Pune will have an IISc, but please do not rob poor Orissa for that. Please do not take away the promise from someone who does not have anything else. Please give us back the IISc that

was announced. Please let our sons, daughters, brothers and sisters, stay in Orissa and not move to Bangalore or Kolkata or San Jose, USA, because of lack of opportunities.

Until then we Oriyas should not and will not rest. Let us all promise to keep writing to the PM and Smt. Gandhi (president of the ruling party) until this injustice is undone. Our peaceful nature is not our weakness but our strength and resolve. Like Gandhiji we should promise to show our strength and resolve by protesting, but the right way. No violence. No harm to people, property, or the economy. We do not want any harm to mother India. (i.e., No Rasta Roko, No Rail Roko, etc.) Only letters faxes and emails. Remember, the pen is mightier than the sword.

Hundreds of thousands of letters do have impact. They will haunt the PM until he corrects his mistake. But we can not think that others will do it, I don't need to do it. That way we only end up telling our grandchildren or great grand children that yes there was a proposal for an IISc in Bhubaneswar but we got cheated. They will be ashamed that we were cowards. That day should never come. Everyone of us needs to take the leadership in this protest and get signatures and addresses from his/her neighbours, friends, and families and send the letters with our signatures to the PM, President and Smt. Gandhi.

sincerely,

Chitta Baral
Professor
Arizona State University
Tempe, AZ USA.

(An Oriya who grew up in Bhubaneswar and is disheartened, outraged and has tears in his eyes because of this gross injustice to his mother Orissa.)