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## 'More undergraduate pure science students

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## in IITs'

**Citing the high scientific outputs of countries like Japan and Korea, an eminent scientist said that it was time India followed suit.**

**FROM KALYAN RAY**

**DH NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI:**

From the 2006 academic sessions, all the seven Indian Institutes of Technology (IIT) may admit more undergraduate students in pure science disciplines like physics, chemistry, mathematics and biology.

Proposed by the Scientific Advisory Council to the Prime Minister (SAC-PM), headed by eminent scientist Dr C N R Rao, the scheme— one of the measures to increase India's scientific manpower strength— has received Dr Manmohan Singh's nod and was cleared by the Union cabinet on Friday.

The IITs are likely to admit students from the 2006 academic session and the students coming through the JEE would be given a five-year integrated MSc degree. However, each IIT senate would decide on the exact number of additional students, IIT Kanpur Director Dr Sanjay Dhande told Deccan Herald.

"IITs already have the faculty and facilities. May be they need to increase the hostel space and slight reorientation in their academic activities to start the courses next year," Dr Rao said.

The prime minister and the Union cabinet have also cleared another SAC-PM proposal of setting up a National Science and Engineering Research Foundation for infusing resources in university science departments. The SAC-PM has proposed annual funding to the tune of Rs 1000 crores.

### Academic flexibility

Expected to have more academic and functional flexibility compared to other research establishments, the foundation primarily relies on government funding, though corporates are allowed to chip in. However, existing project funding by individual scientific departments would continue, he said.

Explaining the concept behind the proposed foundation Dr P Balram from the Indian Institute of Science in Bangalore said that the foundation would be in the line of US National Science Foundation (NSF) to pump in additional resources in the academia.

"Scientific outputs of smaller countries like Japan and Korea are higher. So it's high time we should do something to improve our science," Dr Rao said. He however, refused to comment on the fate of the six national institutes of science proposed by former science minister M M Joshi.

The government has also agreed to establish two new science research and education institutes in Kolkata and Pune at a cost of Rs 500 crore, Dr Rao said.

### Rejuvenation

The 27-member SAC-PM had also decided to rejuvenate two technology missions on safe drinking water and scientific literacy, while starting a new one on infectious diseases to be spearheaded by the Department of Biotechnology and Indian Council of Medical Research.

During the Rajiv Gandhi era, the Centre began a technology mission on drinking water, which for various reasons had failed to achieved its objectives.

"But in the new mission we hope to provide safe drinking water to everybody within five years. The mission will be headed by the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research and the mission may take off in three months," Dr Rao said.

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