

Monday, November 07, 2005

still elude tsunami-hit\* \*This Shylock sold baby to get pound of flesh\*

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FORAY

## Centre changes plan, Orissa loses NIS

Supriti Mishra / Bhubaneswar

Two years ago, a group of Pune-based scientists first mooted the idea of a new-age centre for science education and research to stop brain drain to disciplines like management and for that matter to foreign countries.

On December 9, 2003, the Central Government announced its decision to establish four National Institutes of Sciences (NIS) at Bhubaneswar, Chennai, Pune and Allahabad. The University Grants Commission released a document in January 2004, referring to the steps initiated by it to set up these institutes.

The UGC chairman wrote a letter to the Vice-Chancellor of Utkal University informing him about the steps being taken for establishment of an NIS at Bhubaneswar. Even a sub-committee was constituted with all concerned V-Cs as members who met in Delhi in August 2003 to have discussions on the proposed four NIS. The then V-C of Utkal University met Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik in this regard and the latter immediately instructed the district authorities to allot land for the purpose. Informally, the location of the NIS was also decided to be Ghatikia, Bhubaneswar.

However, on September 28, 2005, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh announced the setting up of Indian Institutes of Sciences for Education and Research (IISERs) in Pune and Kolkata respectively. The concept of NIS is the same as the proposed IISERs, though they differ in names. The new list somehow did not include Orissa's name.

Orissa, it may be mentioned here, does not have any big central university or institute of national repute like IIT, IIM, IIIT or ISI. The State has often been a victim of negligible educational investment from the Centre. It was deprived of an IIT just after Independence. It took almost a decade to declare REC, Rourkela, a NIT. On the other hand, West Bengal, where an IISER is proposed, has an IIT in Kharagpur, a central university at Shanti Niketan, two additional institutes of national importance - IIM and Indian Statistical institute (ISI) - and three autonomous science and technology institutions, all in Kolkata.

Similarly, Maharashtra, where the other IISER is proposed, has the Armed Forces Medical College (AFMC) in Pune, an IIT in Mumbai, and three other autonomous science & technology institutions.

In recent years, Bhubaneswar has come up as a major information technology hub for software industry. Software majors like Infosys and Satyam have set up facilities here. However, when all other major IT cities have either an IIT or IIIT, Bhubaneswar is singularly deprived of such facilities. This despite the fact that Orissa has the ability to nurture institutes of high standards.

The State has helped create several top-notch institutions like the Institute of Physics, the Xaviers Institute of Management and the Institute of Life Sciences, all in Bhubaneswar.

Established in 1972, the alumni of the Institute of Physics have gone on to many good institutions all over the world. Many of its faculties and students have preferred it to an IIT. The XIM, established in 1987, ranks among the top business schools in India. It has faculty with PhDs from top business schools like University of Massachusetts and Stern School of Business, NYU, New York. The Institute of Life Sciences, an initiative by the State Government, has now come under the administrative and financial control of Department of Biotechnology, Government of India. The write ups of researchers of this institute are often published in international journals.

Besides, there are several other research institutions in and around Bhubaneswar that do very good and useful research. They include Regional Research laboratory, Regional Medical Research Centre, Central Rice Research Institute (CRRI), Cuttack, Central Institute of Fresh Water Aquaculture (CIFA) and the National Institute of Rehabilitation Training and Research at Olatpur. In addition, two institutions - Institute of Material Sciences and Institute of Mathematics and Application - have been established by the State Government.

Mr Naveen Patnaik has now reportedly urged Union Human Resource Minister Arjun Singh to expedite the establishment of the Regional Centre of Studies in Integrated Sciences (RCSIS) in Bhubaneswar under the National Institute of Sciences framework. But knowledgeable quarters consider this as a small consolation and strongly feel that both the State and Central Governments should implement their previous decision of setting up of an NIS or an IISER in Bhubaneswar.

Thousand and thousands of signatures, both physical and electronic, are being sent to the Prime Minister and UPA chairperson Sonia Gandhi in this regard.


For any comments, queries or feedback, kindly mail us at [feedback@dailypioneer.com](mailto:feedback@dailypioneer.com) or [pioneerletters@yahoo.co.in](mailto:pioneerletters@yahoo.co.in)

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