

Hopes come crashing for Besu and JU

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JADAVPUR UNIVERSITY and Bengal Engineering and Science University (Besu) have little chance of bagging IIT status.

Ministry of human resources development (MHRD) officials in Delhi on Thursday reportedly told the seven institutions short-listed for granting IIT or Institutes of National Importance (INI) status that there is no immediate possibility of granting them the status.

The HRD ministry had asked representatives of the institutes to attend a meeting in Delhi on Thursday. The institutes, it was learnt, would continue as state universities. There was reportedly not a word spoken about the chances of upgrading these institutes in the future.

"They told us that we'll continue to remain state universities and that the state government would continue to have a right in appointing our teachers, deciding their salaries and the intake of students. We'll continue getting state grants as we had been doing for so long," said S.K. Sanyal, pro vice-chancellor of JU.

All the institutes, however, have been asked to prepare a Rs 15 to Rs 20-crore excellence proposal" and get back to the ministry at the earliest.

"The development has not come as a shock to JU as it had always wanted to remain a state varsity. "Since our mode of governance is not affected we are happy with the outcome. We'll have to figure out the excellence proposal and bag some grants for upgrading our infrastructure and research," said Sanyal.

But Besu is bound to feel disappointed. Its academic council, on February 21, had even decided that it would opt for participato-

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ry governance — involving both the state and the Centre — once it got IIT status. HRD ministry insiders had even tipped that Besu was ranked first among the seven short-listed institutes.

Besu vice-chancellor N.R. Banerjee, however, decided to reserve his comments. "I don't have an opinion on the outcome of the meeting. I can only say that a congenial discussion between the Centre and the state government took place and that we are hopeful of a positive outcome," he said over phone from Delhi.

The seven institutes will sign a tripartite agreement with the UGC and the MHRD. They will then submit their excellence schemes every year, based on which they'll be granted the money. "We have been asked to come back to Delhi within 15 to 30 days and submit our excellence schemes for the current financial year to the MHRD secretary," said Sanyal.

The institutes, however, are not sure how much money they'll get through these schemes. "They have asked us to submit proposals under the excellence programme for monetary grants. But how far the monetary grants will be sanctioned and reach the institutions needs to be seen," Sanyal added.

The MHRD had sanctioned Rs 2,000 crore under the 10th Plan for upgrading the chosen institutes by granting them IIT or INI status. The 10th Plan period will get over on March 31 and going by Thursday's meeting, it looks like the money will stay with the MHRD. The scheme might be resuscitated in the 11th Plan, subject to a discussion with the Planning Commission.