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Home &gt; Kolkata &gt; Page One

Monday , November 27, 2006

[News](#) | [Talk](#) | [Tele Express](#) | [Rushes](#) | [All Headlines](#)

## PAGE ONE

## BESU teachers to fight for total implementation of panel report

**Indranil Chakraborty**

**Kolkata, November 26:** In the 150th year of Shibpur's Bengal Engineering and Science University (BESU), the institute's teaching faculty is locked in a battle with the state government on the issue of implementation of Anandakrishnan committee report which seeks to confer the status of Institute of National Importance on this prestigious engineering institute.

According to Partha Chatterjee, an executive council member of the teacher's association, BESU's teachers in the next council meeting will chalk out its plan of agitation for the implementation of the Anandakrishnan Committee report in toto.

There are two particular recommendations of the Anandakrishnan Committee — admission of students through a national-level entrance test and setting up of nominated governing bodies — which have become the bone of contention between the state government and the teaching faculty. While the faculty is rooting for these two basic recommendations to be implemented, the state government has sent alternative proposals for the two. While it wants the present joint entrance test system to remain in place, it also wants the governing bodies to be mostly elected.

If BESU gets the status of an Institute of National Importance (INI) it will get a substantial grant of Rs 490 crore in the 11th five year plan period and a recurring grant of around Rs 50 crore subsequently.

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The university, that has been the store house of IT human resource sourcing for the top 10 Indian IT companies, is surviving on the annual grant of only Rs 12 crore from the state government. The annual expenditure of the university is around Rs 26 crore. The university manages to meet the gap by collecting funds from its own resources.

“In the last 25 years, the state government has failed to provide resources for the creation of necessary educational infrastructure. As a result we have suffered a lot,” said Chatterjee.

The university has a rich heritage of delivering quality education and churning out the best of the engineering students in the country. Due to dearth of funds it is suffering from severe shortages of faculty members with very few recruitments taking place in the last few years.

“All this is happening because the state government does not have money to fund us. So when the MHRD has decided to create five Indian IESTs (Indian Institutes of Engineering, Science and Technology) out of the best engineering institutes in the country, we should take advantage of the new development,” Chatterjee said.

The state higher education minister Sudarshan Roy Chowdhury agrees that BESU should be awarded INI status but did not agree that the two alternative proposals of the state are the reasons for the delay.

“The state government’s proposals were that instead of creating a separate all India entrance test, the state joint entrance test which is now an all India test should remain there and secondly the institute’s mode of governance should be more participatory. The MHRD has said that they are open to discuss the two issues and never did the ministry say that they were against the proposal. Arjun Singh, Union minister for human resource development, only told me that the bill would not be placed in the current session of Parliament. He did not cite any reason,” said Roy Chowdhury. But Roy Chowdhury declined to comment on what would be the role of the state government in case the MHRD declined to accept the state government’s proposal.

“This is entirely hypothetical. And it’s not only us who have given alternative proposals. Even Kerala, where one of the institutes is vying for the status of IEST, agreed with our proposal.”

But the teachers’ council is not convinced by Roy Chowdhury’s argument. “We would fight for the total implementation of Anandkrishnan Committee report. It’s a question of survival for us and the institute,” said Chatterjee.

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