

Having given the nation quality technical manpower for 150 years, this heritage institute is now looking to the nation for its survival, says **Anasuya Basu**



**Will this  
BE IIT?**

**T**he air is of impatience, apprehension and uneasiness. What now? Where from here? If not, then...? The campus is under strain. And it is showing. There is a sense of intense expectation among the faculty, students and the administration.

Since the S.K. Joshi Committee came calling in December 2005, the Bengal Engineering and Science University (BESU) has been waiting with bated breath for the IIT verdict. There has been no news so far and the noises being made by the ministry of human resource development (MHRD) are at best confusing.

The vice-chancellor, along with the state education secretary, visited Delhi for a meeting with the MHRD on February 23. "The ministry has asked us and seven other institutes to identify thrust areas of research in conjunction with the needs of the nation and submit a proposal for Rs 50 crore (the institute had initially submitted a proposal for Rs 900 crore)," says vice-chancellor (VC) N.R. Banerjea.

"That is peanuts compared to what we need," adds Manas Hira, secretary of Bengal Engineering and Science University Teachers' Association (BESUTA).

What does this imply? When the university has made presentations, identified thrust areas, underlined the funds crunch and demanded a block grant and an annual grant of Rs 100 crore that any of the IITs are given, talking of Rs 50 crore at this stage is like pulling the rug from under its feet, alleges Hira.

The VC, however, remains optimistic. "The government is yet to take any decision on the IIT status. Yes, there has been a delay on its part to take a decision and this is causing much speculation and unrest. In the February meeting, the ministry only took steps to ensure a grant for the academic year 2006-7. Once we submit the proposal they will deliberate and then release the funds through UGC. One should not read too much into this."

The apprehension is mounting. The minutes of the February 23 meeting have not yet reached the university and the Shibpur campus remains in the dark.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 5 ►