

# Campus cry for IIT clarity

A STAFF REPORTER

## Shibpur teachers stage sit-in for status on upgrade

Teachers of Bengal Engineering and Science University (BESU) on Monday staged a sit-in demonstration on campus demanding that the air be cleared on the institution's proposed Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) status.

The central committee of the Union human resource development department had come calling at the Shibpur campus on December 2, dangling the IIT carrot.

On February 23, it conducted a meeting to discuss the upgrade. But no one quite seems to know what's happening and why.

"The Centre has not breathed a word about making BESU an IIT or an Institute of

National Importance (INI). The committee recently asked us to draw up a Rs 20-crore plan identifying thrust areas of research that will contribute to the development of the nation," said Manas Hira, secretary of Bengal Engineering and Science University Teachers' Association.

BESU had submitted a project plan of Rs 900 crore to the central committee. IIT status could guarantee the varsity an annual corpus of Rs 100 crore, the association said.

The university now receives a Rs 13 crore annual grant from the state govern-

ment. The teachers' association wants the state government to throw its weight behind the BESU demand for IIT status. "We want to know what the state government's stand on the issue is. It has not yet made one clear statement," alleged Hira.

N.R. Bandopadhyaya, president of the teachers' association, pointed out how the Kerala and Assam governments had recently made a strong pitch to the human resource development department for setting up IITs in their states.

"BESU has contributed immensely to the dissemination

and creation of knowledge. The only way forward for the university is through the granting of IIT or INI status," said Bandopadhyaya.

According to the association, without proper infrastructure for research the varsity would not be able to progress. BESU now has just five research scholars, it claimed.

Rourkee Engineering, set up at the same time as BESU, has been granted IIT status.

After December's inspection, the central committee members had reportedly revealed that the 150-year-old BESU had been ranked first among the seven institutes being considered for IIT status. "If there was a ranking done, we would like to know where we stand," demanded Hira.