

State govt to financially help IIT-I set up satellite campus

OUR STAFF REPORTER
city.indore@fpj.co.in

As the cash-strapped Indian Institute of Technology Indore could not do it on its own, the state government has reportedly come forward to financially help the institute in setting up its proposed satellite campus in Ujjain. The MP government is in talks with the ministry of education for sharing the budget required for setting up the satellite campus in the ancient town.

"Once the state's percentage is decided, the proposal for funding the establishment of the satellite campus will be placed before state Cabinet for its approval," said a senior officer in department of higher education (DHE), Madhya Pradesh.

Additional chief secretary (Higher Education) Shailendra Singh had visited the IIT Indore campus last week and held talks with the institute authori-

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ties. The institute officers told Singh that a budget of Rs 500 crore was required to set up the satellite campus in Ujjain. They also told Singh that there was a loan of about Rs 350 crore on IIT Indore so it could not establish a campus in Ujjain from its own resources.

Singh told the institute authorities that the state government was in talks with officers of the ministry of education so that the Centre and the state could share the budget for establishing the satellite campus. He, however, stated that the institute would have to run skill-development programmes also from the satellite campus so that in-

vesting money by the state government for establishing a central institution could be justified. According to sources in the DHE, the institute agreed to run skill-development courses along with its flagship programme from the Ujjain campus so that a skilled workforce for the state can be produced.

Around six months ago, higher education minister Mohan Yadav—who is an MLA from one of the Assembly constituencies in Ujjain—had revealed that IIT Indore planned to set up a satellite campus in the ancient town. The then IIT Indore officiating director, Neelesh Kumar Jain, had

confirmed the development stating that the satellite campus would start with some PG courses from the 2022-'23 session.

Vikram Vishwavidyalaya was ready to provide space for a transit campus of IIT Indore until the institute's own premises, which is proposed on 100 acres of land at an outlay of Rs 500 crore, is set up. However, the financial issue cropped up after Suhas Joshi took over as the new director. Later it came to light that the institute actually had a loan of Rs 350 crore and so could not afford to take more loans for setting up the satellite campus. In an e-mail message to Free Press, IIT Indore said,

"Institute director Joshi is continuously in touch with the ministry of education for taking the project ahead. A detailed revised plan is being worked upon to have additional facilities of skill development, outreach activities, industrial set up, incubation and innovation, and so forth, which complements the activities of the main campus at Simrol."

The e-mail further read, "The funding for setting up of the campus is huge and hence, requires deliberation, funding from appropriate agencies and detailed planning. The process for this is already on by placing the matter before the institute's finance committee and the Board of Governors."

The e-mail also stated that since the requisite approval was required for the commencement of the courses, it might be difficult in this forthcoming semester (to start the satellite campus in Ujjain).