

US to extend development support to IIT-Gandhinagar

Prakash Kumar, Bengaluru, Jan 21, 2015, DHNS:

Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) in Gandhinagar, Gujarat, the home state of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, is set to be the initial beneficiary of US development support, instead of a technical institute proposed to be set up in Goa.

Months after Barack Obama administration agreed to offer expertise for establishing a new IIT in India, the Human Resource Development (HRD) Ministry is in talks with the US Agency for International Development (USAID) for developing IIT Gandhinagar, one of the eight new premier technical institutes set up during the previous United Progressive Alliance (UPA) regime.

“The talks are proceeding well and have reached a very advanced stage. Ministry and USAID are keen on signing a joint declaration of intent in this regard very soon. It may be done during the visit of US President,” sources in IIT Gandhinagar told Deccan Herald.

Earlier, the government’s plan was to establish a new IIT in Goa with the help of the US. However, suggestions began emerging from within the HRD Ministry that US support should be utilised to develop IIT Gandhinagar first, days after the Obama administration agreed to extend its support to establish “a new IIT” during Modi’s visit to the US.

The proposal to get IIT-Gandhinagar developed with the support of USAID has been approved by HRD Minister Smriti Irani, sources added. Although, the HRD Ministry first wants IIT-Gandhinagar to be developed with US support, sources said the collaboration with the USAID may also help setting up of five new IITs, announced by the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government.

To develop IIT-Gandhinagar, India has proposed to set up a joint task force which would serve as a platform for dialogue and the exchange of information on technical assistance. The task force will be chaired by a person to be appointed with mutual consent between USAID and HRD Ministry.

To help set up academics as well as research and development activities at the institute, it has been proposed to establish a consortium of the US universities, sources said.

In 1959, a consortium of nine leading US universities, including MIT, University of California, California Institute of Technology, Princeton University, Carnegie Institute of Technology, University of Michigan, and Ohio State University, helped setting up of IIT-Kanpur.

India has sought USAID’s support in development of IIT-Gandhinagar with a broad aim of intensifying Indo-US collaborations in research and development as well as entrepreneurship, sources added.