

## India's first 'women-IIT' being set up in Maharashtra

Even as there is talk about starting new Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) and increasing the number of seats in the existing ones, a move is afoot to open the country's first all-women engineering and technology-oriented institute in Amravati, President Pratibha Patil's hometown in Maharashtra.

Sources said the Human Resource Development (HRD) ministry has sent a proposal to this effect to the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) via the planning commission and that the PMO, at whose behest the HRD ministry moved the matter, is all set to clear it once the plan panel grants its approval.

The suggestion to start India's first all-women IIT at Amravati near Nagpur in Vidarbha had in fact been mooted by Saint Gadgebaba University vice-chancellor Kamal Singh. Patil followed it up when she became the country's first woman president last July.

'A recommendatory note from the president's office was attached to the reminder of the suggestion sent to the HRD (ministry) but we don't know what happened after that,' Devi Singh Shekhawat, Pratibha Patil's husband who heads an education society in Amravati, told IANS.

'To my knowledge, the president's office doesn't keep prodding government departments about individual files but if this (women IIT) is happening without that, it is certainly gratifying', Shekhawat said.

Sources said Patil, concerned about fewer girl students making it to the IITs, personally talked to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and HRD Minister Arjun Singh about the proposal, which apparently led to the speedy progress in the matter.

The 'daughter-in-law' of Vidarbha is also being credited for expeditious sanction of funds for up-gradation of Amravati airport and introduction of three trains in Vidarbha.

Kamal Singh confirmed to IANS that she had strongly recommended setting up of the IIT in Amravati though it would be completely outside the domain of her university or even the state government.

'I received a few queries then but was not aware what happened next', she said expressing happiness about the expeditious progress in the matter.

A global research institute on traditional Indian wisdom in science, technology and community management was among several other innovative proposals sent by the vice-chancellor to the HRD ministry and the University Grants Commission, she said.

( © IANS / India eNews)