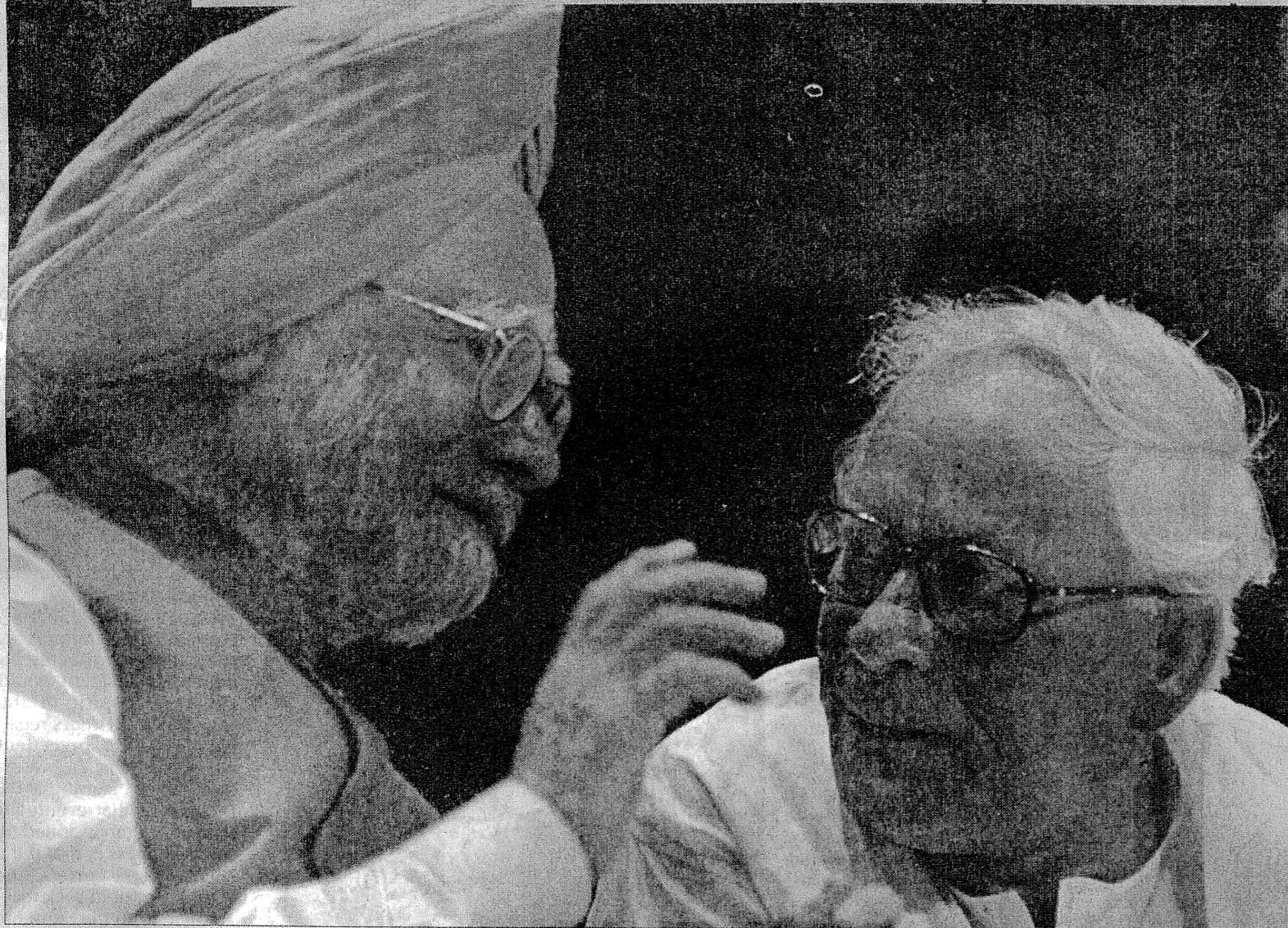


POWER PLAY



Dr Manmohan Singh with Mr Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee at the Saha Institute of Nuclear Physics in Salt Lake City, Kolkata on Tuesday. ■ RAJIB DE

STRESS ON EDUCATION

PM on studied high

Statesman News Service

KOLKATA, July 11: Dr Manmohan Singh today said his government was committed to ensuring excellence and to widening all sections' access to education.

Alluding to the current reservation-related controversy, the Prime Minister said: "We will commit adequate resources to a massive expansion of our higher education system so every section of society has adequate opportunities."

He felt we could not "claim to be a rising knowledge power if less than 8 per cent" of our college-age youths found their way into those institutions of learning.

Dr Singh, who laid the foundation of the Indian Institute of Science Education and Research at the Saha Institute of Nuclear Physics in Salt Lake City, urged state governments "comprehensively" to revamp the nation's university system.

He expressed concern about the universities' "deteriorating health... over the past two decades" which, he felt, was undermining the "base" of "our scientific research."

He said: "We will de-

bureaucratise science and technology institutions and ensure their academic autonomy. We will create exciting career opportunities for scientists so we can retain our talent at home."

The chief minister, Mr Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee, said: "The IISER is going to be a unique institution, both at Kolkata and Pune. The state government has allotted 220 acres at Haringhata."

The Union minister of state for human resources development, Mr MAA Fatmi, said the IISER would have inter-disciplinary courses in biological, mathematical and computer sciences.

Classes, beginning next month, will be held on the Kolkata campus of the Indian Institute of Technology, Kharagpur, and at the National Institute of Technical Teachers' Training and Research until the institution's buildings come up at Haringhata.

Students from the listed as well as economically backward classes will not be required to pay any tuition fees, Mr Fatmi said.

The defence minister, Mr Pranab Mukherjee, said: "Agni-III was a partial success."