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[Orissa Plus]

Row in House over NIS shift

Statesman News Service

BHUBANESWAR, Nov. 23. — The ruling BJD-BJP combine and the Opposition parties today blamed each other for the shifting of National Institute of Sciences (NIS) from Orissa to Kolkata, even as the Assembly decided to constitute a House Committee to put pressure on the Centre to stall any such move. Higher education minister and senior BJP leader Mr Samir Dey alleged that the UPA government was probably shifting the institute to Kolkata under pressure from the Left parties. He was supported by the ruling BJD-BJP members, who shouted slogans against the UPA government.

Strongly protesting against the minister's accusation, OPCC president Mr Jaydev Jena charged that the NDA government, especially the BJP, was responsible for the present situation. This counter allegation sparked off an uproar from the treasury bench.

Accusing the ruling party of politicising such a sensitive issue, Mr Jena said that Congress had always extended its support to the treasury bench on issues involving the state's interest, be it railways or Paradip Oil Refinery.

Earlier, responding to a calling attention notice moved by three ruling BJD-BJP members, higher education minister Mr Dey said the idea of setting up of National Institute of Sciences had been mooted by the then Prime Minister, Mr AB Vajpayee and HRD minister Dr MM Joshi. On 23 July, 2003, the then UGC chairman, Mr A Nigvekar, in a letter to the vice chancellor of Utkal University, had communicated the decision to establish NIS at four places (Bhubaneswar, Pune, Allahabad and Chennai). He had also intimated allocation of Rs 50 crore for each proposed institute in the next five years.

The state government had identified 75 acres of land at Gothapatna in Khurda district promptly responding to the



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UGC's request and urged the Centre to initiate follow-up measures, he claimed

However, the UPA government did not take any follow up step after it came to power in 2004. Rather, it reportedly decided in August, 2005 to shift the proposed NIS to Kolkata, the minister alleged.

Meanwhile, chief minister has written three letters to Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh requesting him to set up the proposed NIS in Orissa stating that the state has no national institutes like IIT and IIM, informed Mr Dey while adding that the Central government was yet to clarify the position.

In this context, the minister suggested to the Chair to constitute a House Committee to meet the Prime Minister and convince him to establish the institute in Orissa.

Giving his consent, deputy speaker Mr Prahlad Dora directed the government chief whip to move a motion for the constitution of a House Committee for the purpose on the lines of the panel on railways.

Government chief whip Mr Kishor Mohanty said: The names of House Committee members would be announced later after a discussion in the Business Advisory Committee meeting.

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