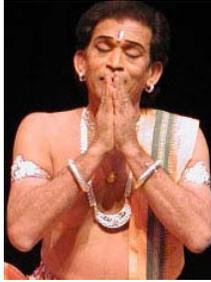


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Po. R Sitapur, Via. Uppalada

IIT Orissa hits Central wall

New Delhi:8/May/2007

Though today they have lost a battle but are hopeful of winning a war.

Members of the Lok Sabha from Orissa fought a united battle over the most emotive issue-setting up an Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) in the state.

Both BJD and BJP members joined hands to put pressure on the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government to revise its decision over IIT in Orissa.


IIT KGP, Bhubaneswar Centre

Raising the issue over a calling attention motion in Lok Sabha on May 8 here, Braja Kishore Tripathy (BJD) said the central government had initially approved setting up of an IIT in Orissa but later changed the decision on political considerations.

He said that the Minister of State for Human Resource Development (HRD) M M Fatmi, who announced at Patna in August 2006 that an IIT will be set up in Orissa.

The BJD MP asked then why the decision was changed at a later stage.

Besides an IIT, Mr. Tripathy demanded an Indian Institute of Management (IIM) and asked the UPA government to approve a proposal by IIT-Kharagpur to set up an extension campus in Bhubaneswar.

BJD member Bhartruhari Mahtab alleged that the UPA government has been ignoring Orissa over economic and social development.

He wanted to know the amount of investment of central funds for the development of education in the backward state by the HRD Ministry.

BJD's Prasana Acharya said with the huge investment percolating to Orissa to set up mega industrial projects, the justification for an IIT and IIM is a foregone conclusion.

Mr. Acharya demanded a special treatment for the educationally backward state like Orissa from the HRD Ministry.

BJP member Mahameghabahan Aira Kharbela Swain also demanding the IIT, he asked the government what the criteria for selecting locations for new IITs are.

Jual Oram from BJP also expressed concern about the callousness of the Centre in neglecting the educationally backward state like Orissa.

The government Tuesday ruled out setting up an IIT in Orissa, saying it has already approved three such institutes in Bihar, Andhra Pradesh and Rajasthan.

Replying to the issues raised by the MPs, Minister of State for Human Resource Development D Purandeshwari ruled out setting up an IIT in Orissa.

She said the three new IITs were decided on recommendations of the Planning Commission and Prime Minister's Scientific Advisory Council.

However, Mrs. Purandeshwari said Mr. Fatmi has never made such a statement.

She said that a new IIT would cost over Rs 1,000 crore, adding the government had never decided to set up such an institution in Orissa.

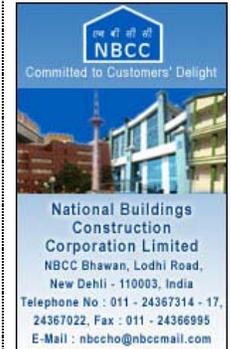
Dissatisfied with her reply, BJP and BJD along with the other NDA members staged a walkout.

Later speaking to media BJP MP Mr. Oram said that as the UPA government setting up the educational institutions on political considerations, we will continue to hammer the government over the issue of IIT-Orissa till the demand is fulfilled.

He said "we are hopeful of winning the war, though we have lost a battle today as the people of Orissa are behind us".

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