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Editorial

No plan to set up IIT in Orissa: Centre

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Taking strong exception to the announcement by the Centre that there is no proposal to set up Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) in Orissa in near future, the ruling BJP and BJD MPs of Orissa on Tuesday staged a walkout in the Parliament.

The irate state MPs also decided to stage a sit-in dharna inside the Parliament premises on Wednesday as a mark of protest.

The issue cropped up during a calling attention motion moved by the Orissa MPs demanding an IIT in the state.

Replying to the motion, Union minister of state for human resource development Ms D Purandeshwari said that the Centre has no proposal to set up an IIT in Orissa since it has already approved three such institutes in Bihar, Andhra Pradesh and Rajasthan.

The three new IITs were decided on recommendations of the Planning Commission and prime minister's Scientific Advisory Council, she added.

Raising the issue, BJD MP Braja Kishore Tripathy asked the reason for shelving the proposed institute even though the Union minister of state for HRD Mohd Fatmi had announced in August last year at Patna that an IIT would be set up in Orissa

However, Purandeshwari said that there was no such statement given by Fatmi in this regard.

Stating that setting up of an IIT is a costly proposition of over Rs 1000 crore, she reiterated that the Centre had never decided to set up such an institute in Orissa.

Dissatisfied with her reply, BJP and BJD members staged a walkout.

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

Supporting his party colleague Bhartruhari Mahatab said that the UPA government had been ignoring Orissa and sought to know how much funds the HRD ministry had spent for higher education in the state.

Expressing resentment Orissa BJP MP Kharbela Swain asked the government what was the criterion for selecting locations for new IITs, while his BJD counterpart Prasanna Acharya said that with many new industrial projects coming up, Orissa needed an IIT for skilled manpower.

In the meanwhile, BJD Rajya Sabha member Baijayant Panda requested all the Orissa MPs to join a sit-in dharna near the statue of Mahatma Gandhi on the premises of Parliament on Wednesday.

All BJD-BJP MPs from Orissa have decided to stage a dharna and others from the state are invited to join, he said.

He said that Orissa is being continuously neglected by the Centre, especially by the ministry of HRD.

In spite of the declaration by the HRD minister of state to have two IITs in Orissa last year, the Centre has decided to have three new IITs in Bihar, Rajasthan and Andhra Pradesh.

Describing the decision of the Centre in this regard as grossly unfortunate, Panda further observed that the long-standing demand of the state for Central institutes like IIT and Indian Institute of Management continues to be ignored by the Centre.

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