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Naveen calls for IIT cause

OUR CORRESPONDENT

Bhubaneswar, May 15: Chief minister Naveen Patnaik today reiterated his demand of an IIT in the state, even as Biju Yuva Janata Dal members staged a dharna before the Raj Bhavan here.

The party was protesting the Centre's decision to not set up an IIT here but in Andhra Pradesh. Naveen, who met Union HRD minister Arjun Singh at New Delhi today, reiterated his demand.

"Orissa does not have a single institution of national excellence and the demand for IIT is a long-standing one," he said while justifying the demand. Today, activists of BJD's youth wing staged a dharna before the Raj Bhavan over the IIT issue. President of the youth wing, Ratha Das said successive governments at the Centre have treated the state unfairly. "An IIT would do a world of good to Orissa," he fumes.

Meanwhile, at New Delhi the chief minister urged the HRD minister to bring up Orissa's demand during the 11th Five Year Plan period. Relying to the CM's request, Singh assured that the demands put forth, particularly in regard to a new IIT, would be considered while finalising the proposals for the 11th plan.

During discussion, the chief minister also put forth demands for establishment of a central university in the backward KBK region and an Indian Institute of Management at Orissa.

Last week, Naveen had also written to the Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, protesting the Centre's decision to set up three new IITs in other states, while ignoring Orissa's claim.

During the day, the chief minister also met with the Union coal minister, Dasari Narayan Rao, and urged for expeditious allocation of coal blocks on a priority basis to five public sector undertakings.

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