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UPA discrimination on Orissa

No IIT, no fund

From Sanjaya Jena, Bhubaneswar

“The recent reply of Union Minister of State for Human Resource Development on the floor of the Parliament regarding establishment of IITs in the country has come as a shock to us.”

The backout of the union government from its promise to set up an Indian Institute of Technology in Orissa has resulted in widespread protests in the state. Social organisations and political parties—especially the ruling BJP and BJD—are contemplating to organise statewide protest rallies in the state after the ongoing Parliament session is over.

“The union government, which had earlier backed out from many of its promises, has once again betrayed the people of Orissa by changing its mind on setting up an IIT in the state. We will certainly protest this kind of injustice meted out to the state,” BJP national secretary Dharmendra Pradhan said.

The BJD and BJP Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha members staged a dharna in front of the Parliament to register their protest.

It is worthwhile mentioning here that while replying to a calling attention motion moved by MPs from Orissa demanding an Indian Institute of Technology, Minister of State for Human Resource Development D. Purandeshwari said that the union government had approved three IITs for Bihar, Andhra Pradesh and Rajasthan. The new IITs were decided on recommendations of the Planning Commission and Prime Minister's Scientific Advisory Council, the minister said.

“The union minister of state for Human Resource Development Mohammed Fatmi had said in August, 2006 in Patna that an Indian Institute of Technology would be set up in Orissa. Then, why was the decision changed?” Shri Tripathy asked.

However, minister Smt Purandeshwari denied that Shri Fatmi had made such a statement. “Setting up a new IIT would cost over Rs 1,000 crore,” she said in Parliament, adding, the government had never decided to set up such an institute in Orissa.

Dissatisfied with Smt Purandeshwari's reply, the BJP and BJD members staged a walkout.

Taking up the demand for the setting-up of an Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) in Orissa, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik has written a letter to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh. Meanwhile, BJP has taken to streets with a dharna staged before Raj Bhawan alleging central apathy.

In a letter dispatched to the Prime Minister, Shri Patnaik urged the Centre to ensure setting-up of an IIT in the state during the 11th Five-Year Plan.

“The recent reply of Union Minister of State for Human Resource Development on the floor of the Parliament regarding establishment of IITs in the country has come as a shock to us,” Shri Patnaik said in the letter.

He further said that there was a proposal to open a branch of IIT, Kharagpur, in Bhubaneswar for which the state government had promised a land of nearly 300 acres. It appears that even this

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▪ News Analysis proposal has been turned down, he added.

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The recent decision of government of India to locate IITs in states which already had got the benefit of many central institutes indicates that objective criteria has not been followed in deciding the locations of the three IITs, Shri Patnaik argued.

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