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## Patnaik sets agenda well ahead of polls

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Posted online: Monday, June 11, 2007 at 0000 hours IST

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**BHUBANESWAR:** Naveen Patnaik, the Orissa chief minister and the party supremo of ruling Biju Janata Dal has set the agenda for the state assembly elections well ahead of two years.

"The Centre's Congress-led UPA government is the enemy of Orissa", thundered Patnaik, in his usual style of throwing surprises, at a meeting recently at Berhampur in Southern Orissa . Announcing that his party will launch a massive campaign against the Centre's neglect to the state, he urged his party men to take the message to the grass root level.

Patnaik's list of Centre's neglect to the state includes shifting of IIT to Andhra Pradesh , delay in coal royalty revision, paltry flood assistance, slow progress in setting up the All India Medical Science campus at Bhubaneswar, and poor fund allocation for the rural electrification. To run down the UPA government, the chief minister promptly announced Biju Gram Jyoti Yojna to electrify the villages and hamlets with population below 300 as the Centre's Rajiv Gramin Vidhyut Yojna does not cover these villages. Not only that the state government provided Rs.50 crore in the budget 2007-08.

Patnaik turning to be a rebel was unthinkable. For, he was basking under the praise showered by the UPA's Congress ministers like Shivraj Patil, Mani Sankar Iyer during the last three years. Such was the situation that many in Orissa were believing that Patnaik, a Doon school mate of Rajiv Gandhi, has a 10 Janpath connections.

His recent rhetoric, however, has put the Congress leaders in the state in a piquant situation. They are not in a position to attack Patnaik for the party's Central ministers have given certificates to Naveen government in the recent past.

The opposition Congress in the state was virtually pushed to defensive. Its leaders tried to defend the UPA government's role vis-a-vis the state government. The Orissa Pradesh Congress Committee (OPCC) president, Jaydev Jena, "The state has immensely benefited from the UPA government at the Centre", says Jaydev Jena , the president of Orissa Pradesh Congress Committee (OPCC). "Naveen's new stand against Centre is only to divert his government failure", he adds. Jena listed out the largesse the Centre has given to the state to drive home his point . According to the 11th Plan period, extended the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme extended to another five districts, and it has decided to set up institute of national importance like the National Institute for Science and Education Research (NISER) at Bhubaneswar and the National Institute of Handloom Technology (NIHT) at Bargarh. His list also includes the Centre's initiative to start the work of the Paradip Petro-chemical complex.

JB Patnaik, who ruled the state nearly 15 years, also came out with statistics to defend the Congress government at the Centre. Pointing out that the state has got a higher annual plan outlay under the UPA government, he says that the plan outlay has been

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increased to Rs 5105 crore as against the state's proposal for Rs 4850 crore in 2007-08.

In 2006-07, the same has been increased to Rs 3500 crore from Rs 3400 crore. The previous year, the outlay was increased to Rs 3000 crore from the proposed Rs 2800 crore by the Planning commission. Drawing a comparison with the NDA government, the former chief minister says that the state has received lesser plan outlay between 2001-02 and 2004-05. The plan outlay was cut to Rs 2500 crore from Rs.3300 crore in 2004-05 and to Rs 3200 crore from Rs.3300 in 2003-04.

In fact, the tone for the state Congress was set by the All India Congress Committee (AICC) general secretary in charge of Orissa, V.Narayan Swami. He urged the Congressmen to attack the chief minister Naveen Patnaik. He gave a call for a massive campaign to highlight misrule and non-performance of the Naveen Patnaik government.

The state elections is due in May 2009. But, it is clear from now that the next elections will be fought on the issue of Centre's attitude towards the state.

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