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[Orissa Plus]

BJP, BJD prepare for Budget session

Statesman News Service

BHUBANESWAR, Feb 12: The budget session of the Assembly beginning tomorrow is set to be a stormy one with the ruling BJD-BJP combine preparing to train its guns on the UPA government at the Center and the Opposition parties keen on pinning the government on farmers suicides, health department scam and other controversies.

The Legislature party meetings held here today discussed strategies for the ensuing session. The BJD-BJP combine made it clear that it will launch an offensive against the center by tabling motions on price rise, reduction of BPL list, refusing to sanction an IIT for Orissa, delaying in setting up the regional center of AIIMS in Bhubaneswar etc.

Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik made specific reference to the BPL list and how 10 lakh people were to be deprived of certain benefits due to the Centers decision. He also pointed out that the state government had announced schemes to cover these people.

At the joint meeting of the BJD-BJP MLAs, Mr Ranendra Pratap Swain is said to have raised the issue of OBC quota and urged upon the government to protect students and job seekers belonging to the section with adequate reservation.

The Opposition Congress MLAs also met to work out ways of cornering the government on Vedanta controversy, farmers suicide, the contentious water to industrial units, lawlessness in the state etc.

Cabinet Decision

Pani panchayats will be entrusted with the responsibility of collecting water cess from farmers and also undertake maintenance of minor irrigation projects, said official sources.

A decision to this effect was taken by the state cabinet

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which met here today. Necessary amendment to the Act relating to water cess will be made to empower the pani panchayats in this regard.

As of now the pani panchayat (water user bodies) were collecting cess on lift irrigation points. The cabinet also decided to ensure that farmers belonging to the tail end areas of a canal system are represented in the managing committees of pani panchayats. Similarly, women representation will also be made mandatory.

In another major decision taken today, the cabinet decided to set up tehsil offices in each block of the state. There are 159 blocks which do not have a tehsil office. Each one of these blocks will now have a tehsil office and during the current year 60 new tehsil offices will be established, said official sources.

The cabinet also accorded post facto approval to several announcements made during the last session of the assembly relating to regularisation of Sikshya Sahayaks as primary school teachers, engaging the retrenched employment guarantee scheme teachers as gana sikshaks.

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