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**PC sidelines Orissa as usual**

Saturday March 1 2008 13:27 IST

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BHUBANESWAR: Even as Finance Minister P. Chidambaram dished out a populist Budget in an election year, Orissa missed out on several key announcements as usual.

What has hurt it most is that the Centre has once again ignored its demand for establishment of Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) even as Chidambaram announced three IITs to be set up in Bihar, Rajasthan and Andhra Pradesh. The State has also been deprived of an Indian Institute Science (IISc).

The two IIScs as mentioned in the Budget will be at Bhopal and Thiruvananthapuram. Nor has there been any evidence of any special development package or project for Orissa. Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik had demanded a package of Rs 1,300 cr. The special package of Rs 16,400 cr went to north-eastern States. Special care has been taken to nurture the north-eastern States as Prime Minister Manmohan Singh represents the area.

None of the demands in the wish-list of the State has been accepted by the Finance Minister. The State Government had sought extension of the Backward Region Grant Fund (BRGF) to all the 30 from the 19 districts. There is no indication in the Budget.

State Finance Minister Prafulla Chandra Ghadei said the key demands including a comprehensive package and increase in fund allocation for Koraput, Balangir and Kalahandi

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(KBK) districts have been ignored. One of the 16 Central universities announced should be in Orissa, he demanded. However, there have been some positive aspects too. As high as 45 percent of Rs 5,800 cr earmarked for BRGF will be spent in Bihar, Orissa and UP. Besides, allocation under NREGS has been extended to all the districts.

There are several other pluses. Chidambaram announced 30 integrated textile parks, one of which should be at Bargarh. A provision of Rs 450 cr has been made for these parks. Besides, the Life Insurance Corporation (LIC) will cover the women self-help groups (SHGs).

The Budget will augur well for attracting hotel industries in Konark as the Finance Minister has declared a five-year tax holiday for two, three and four-star hotels near any of the Unesco declared heritage sites. Besides, five-year tax holiday has also been declared for setting up hospitals in rural areas.

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