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NIS issue: BJD, BJP MPs protest in Parliament

Pioneer News Service / Bhubaneswar

A group of 15 MPs, belonging to Orissa's ruling alliance BJD and BJP, on Thursday staged a demonstration in front of the Mahtma Gandhi statue within the Parliament premises in New Delhi, protesting against the Union Government's move to shift the proposed National Institute of Science (NIS) from Bhubaneswar.

The MPs demanded that the proposed NIS, announced for Orissa during the previous NDA Government, be retained in the State.

Leader of the BJD in Rajya Sabha Baijayant Panda stated that it is an emotive issue for the people of Orissa. The decision for establishment of NIS was taken during the NDA regime.

But after the change of guard at the Centre, the UPA Government, possibly under pressure from Left parties, has decided to shift the NIS to Kolkata.

The MPs pointed out that the Planning Commission had allocated Rs 100 crore for four such new institutes of excellence and, accordingly, the Orissa Government has already identified and made available 75 acres of land for the purpose. Now, the "hijacking" of the NIS has evoked sharp reactions among the people of the State. Though the Chief Minister has written three letters to the Prime Minister in this regard, the PMO has not bothered to give a reply.

A delegation of the BJD and BJP MPs will also meet Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and submit a memorandum to him.

Leader of the BJD in Lok Sabha Brajakishore Tripathy said the shifting of the NIS is politically motivated and the issue will be taken up in Parliament.

State BJP president Jual Oram warned the Centre of dire consequences if Orissa's interest is ignored. State Revenue Minister Manmohan Samal was also present during the protest.

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