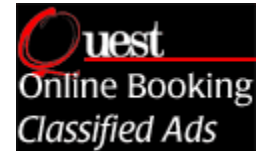




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### [Orissa Plus]

## NIS row takes a new turn

Statesman News Service

CUTTACK, Nov. 27. — The controversy and media hype over shifting of the proposed National Institute of Science (NIS) from Orissa to West Bengal may actually fizzle out due to a ludicrous anti-climax.

The Central government has stated that no decision was ever taken by it to set up any such science institution in Bhubaneswar.

The stand taken by the Central government assumes significance as the issue had already triggered a row in the Assembly with the ruling BJD-BJP combine and the Opposition parties blaming each other for the shifting of the National Institute of Science from Orissa to Kolkata.

The Assembly had decided to constitute a House Committee to put pressure on the Centre to stall any such move.

“No policy decision was finalized by the Central government for setting up any science institution at Bhubaneswar,” Mr Prem Kumar, under secretary in the Ministry of Human Resource Development, clarified in an affidavit submitted to the Orissa High Court here while seeking grant of leave to set up an Indian Institute for Science Research Education (IISRE) in Kolkata.

On 9 November, the Orissa High Court had issued an interim order directing the Union government “to stay the shifting of the proposed science institution from Bhubaneswar to any other part of eastern India.”

The Orissa State Public Interest Protection Council president, Mr Prasanta Das, had filed the petition in August 2005.

The Central government however, has clarified that the Union Cabinet had in November 2005 decided in favour of creation of two new institutions devoted to science education and research.

The Cabinet decision was taken on the recommendation of the Scientific Advisory Council to the Prime Minister.


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Subsequently, the Central government had decided to locate the two IISRE at Pune and Kolkata, the affidavit clarified while seeking vacating of the stay order.

The affidavit had further clarified that in March 2003, the UGC had come up with a proposal to establish advanced centre for science and technical education at four places, Bhubaneswar being one of them.

The UGC proposal however, was not approved by the HRD ministry after seeking opinion of the ministry of law, Mr Prem Kumar maintained in the affidavit. Earlier, the state government in a letter to the High Court stated that the UGC had in March 2003 communicated to the vice-chancellor of Utkal University, a decision to establish NIS at four places (Bhubaneswar, Pune, Allahabad and Chennai).

The state government had identified 75 acres of land at Gothapatna in Khurda district in response to the UGC's proposal and urged the Centre to initiate follow-up measures.

It now appears that there were two different proposals — one to set up four centres made during the NDA government's tenure which was rejected by the law ministry and secondly a fresh proposal of the UPA government for setting up two institutes at Pune and Kolkata.

The million dollar question is whether the law ministry had rejected the original proposal during the NDA's tenure itself or was it turned down after the United Progressive Alliance came to power.

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