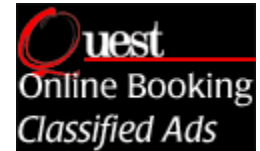




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[Orissa Plus]

Centre's claim challenged in HC

Statesman News Service

CUTTACK, Dec. 8. — The PIL over the alleged shifting of a proposed National Institute of Science (NIS) from Orissa gathered fresh heat with the Orissa State Public Interest Protection Council (OSPIPC) challenging the veracity of the claims made by Mr Prem Kumar, under secretary in the ministry of HRD, in an affidavit submitted in the High Court here. Mr Kumar had stated in the affidavit that no decision was ever taken to set up any such science institution at Bhubaneswar.

The OSPIPC has alleged that Mr Kumar had misled the court. Mr Prem Kumar in his affidavit had stated that no policy decision was finalised by the Central government for setting up any science institution at Bhubaneswar.

The PIL is expected to be taken up for hearing on 12 December. The OSPIPC president, Mr Prasanta Das, in a fresh petition has claimed that the UGC had in December 2003 communicated to the vice-chancellor of the Utkal University, a decision to establish National Institute of Science at four places (Bhubaneswar, Pune, Allahabad and Chennai). This was followed by a letter from a High Power Committee of the UGC in April 2004 indicating about preparation of a project report on it. The chief minister, Mr Naveen Patnaik, had sent at least three letters to the Prime Minister, Dr Manmohan Singh, requesting him not to shift the proposed NIS from Bhubaneswar, the petition has pointed out.

It has sought direction to implead Utkal University in the case and production of all letters that formed a part of the communication between the UGC and the HRD ministry over the proposed NIS at Bhubaneswar.

Earlier in August 2005, the OSPIPC president had filed a public interest petition seeking judicial intervention against the shifting of the proposed NIS from Bhubaneswar to Kolkata. Acting on it,



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the Orissa High Court had on 9 November 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". Subsequently, Mr Prem Kumar in an affidavit 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. Subsequently, the Central government had decided to locate the two IISRE at Pune and Kolkata, the affidavit clarified while seeking grant of leave to set up an Indian Institute for Science Research Education (IISRE) in Kolkata.

The affidavit had further stated that in March 2003, the UGC had come up with a proposal to establish a advanced centre for science and technical education at four places, one of them being in Bhubaneswar. The UGC proposal however, was subsequently not approved by the HRD ministry after seeking opinion of the law ministry, Mr Prem Kumar had maintained in the affidavit.

It may be noted that the NIS issue had dominated the state Assembly session on 23 November. The state higher education minister, Mr Samir Dey, had alleged that the UPA government did not take any follow up action after it came to power in 2004. The idea of setting up a National Institute of Sciences was mooted by the then Prime Minister, Mr AB Vajpayee and HRD minister Mr MM Joshi, the minister had pointed out. Even today the matter figured in the Assembly.

Discussion on this Orissa Plus item

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