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Protests in Orissa over shifting NIS venue



[NDTV Correspondent](#)

Watch story

Thursday, December 15, 2005 (Bhubaneswar):

There is widespread discontentment in Orissa following the Union government's move to set up the National Institute of Science in Kolkata in place of Bhubaneswar.

There was a protest march to the Governor's house in Bhubaneswar on Sunday against the Centre's decision.

The Central government had in 2003 decided that the institute would be set up in Bhubaneswar, but the UPA government recently decided to shift the venue to Kolkata.

"We really don't bother whether it is set up in Kolkata or Pune or elsewhere. We just want a national level institute to come to Orissa. And we deserve it," said Supriti Mishra, a researcher.

BJP-BJD up in arms

Several organisations blocked rail and road traffic to show their resentment. Last week, MLAs of the state's ruling BJD held a *dharna* inside the assembly premises. BJD and BJP MPs from Orissa have also staged protests in the Lok Sabha.

"The institute is being shifted to Bengal for political reasons. Our rightful demand is being ignored and this has hurt the academic community, which had pinned great hopes on this national level institute," Dharmendra Pradhan, BJP MP.

The Orissa High Court has already ordered a stay on the Centre's decision to set up the NIS in Kolkata.

'No commitment'

In response, the Union government submitted an affidavit to the High Court claiming that the Centre had never made any commitment in favour of Bhubaneswar.

"I have written to the Prime Minister thrice. We have taken up the matter very seriously with the Union government. This institute must come to Orissa," said Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik.

Most people do not care for the politics of the issue, neither are they seeing it as a tussle between the UPA and NDA or between West Bengal and Orissa.

For them, it is a genuine demand for a symbol of academic excellence in a chronically backward state.

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