

## NEWS

## EDIT PAGE

- HOME
- CITY
- NATION
- STATES
- BUSINESS
- SPORTS
- ENTERTAINMENT
- WORLD
- EDIT PAGE
- OP-ED
- EDITOR'S MAIL
- SEARCH ARCHIVES

## State Editions

- BHOPAL
- BHUBANESWAR
- KOCHI
- LUCKNOW

## FEATURES

- VIVACITY
- BAZAAR
- AVENUES
- URBAN REALTY
- BOOKS
- COLUMNISTS
- FORECAST

## SUNDAY PIONEER

- AGENDA
- FORAY

### Depriving Orissa

The Pioneer Edit Desk

Whenever the Congress has come to power at the Centre, State Governments over which the party has no control have felt deprived of their legitimate share of the development cake. This feeling is the strongest in eastern India. For instance, successive Governments in Bhubaneswar have often accused New Delhi of adopting a "step motherly attitude towards backward Orissa".

That the allegation is not entirely unfounded is borne out by the fact that both the Congress's adversaries as well as a large number of apolitical intellectuals of the State have levelled it for decades. This feeling dates back to the early-1960s, when the Congress was in power both at the Centre, with Jawaharlal Nehru as Prime Minister, as well as in Orissa, with Biju Patnaik as Chief Minister. Nehru had then refused to accept Patnaik's proposal to develop Paradip as a port and link it with Orissa's iron ore-rich hinterland so that the mineral could be exported.

Despite being a Congress heavyweight, Patnaik failed in his endeavour and virtually revolted against the Centre by going ahead with the project and building an expressway to connect Daitary with Paradip. Ironically, within a few years when Paradip emerged as one of the country's major ports, the Union Government took it over.

There are numerous similar instances of the Congress, when in power at the Centre, paying scant heed for Orissa's interests; indeed, on occasions it has gone out of the way to deprive the State. This is exemplified by the UPA Government's move to deprive Orissa of a quality educational and research institution, the National Institute of Science (NIS), by reversing the NDA Government's decision to locate it at Bhubaneswar. In order to appease the Left and expand the scope of his toxic agenda, Union Human Resource Development Minister Arjun Singh has decided to shift the institute to Kolkata.

Understandably, the move has angered the State's ruling BJD-BJP alliance as well as Orissa's intelligentsia. Indeed, it is Agamee Odisha, an organisation of educationists, various professionals and social activists, which is in the forefront of the protest. Apart from being a blatant move to punish Orissa for re-electing the NDA, Mr Arjun Singh's contemptible decision is aimed at depriving Orissa from having a centre of excellence that it lacks.

This is vindictiveness at its worst. The UPA Government's stand that the Centre had never taken a formal decision to set up the NIS at Bhubaneswar hardly convinces anybody, least of all people in Orissa. Not only has former Human Resource Development Minister Muri Manohar Joshi confirmed that the Ministry had indeed decided to set up NIS at Bhubaneswar, the proposal is also reflected in last September's publication of the University Grants Commission.

Moreover, the Planning Commission has allocated Rs 100 crore for setting up four such institutes of excellence, including one in Orissa, while the State Government has identified land at Bhubaneswar. When cornered by NDA members in Parliament on Tuesday, the Government assured them that it would look into the issue afresh. But given the wily ways and the toxic mind of Mr Arjun Singh, such promises hold little hope.

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