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NIS issue unites student leaders

Pioneer News Service/ Bhubaneswar

November 20, 2005 will be remembered as a historic day in the annals of student politics in Orissa. Student leaders, cutting across party lines got together at a students' convention organised by the Agamee Odisha, a leading voluntary organisation and Utkal University Teachers' Association to demand setting up of a National Institute of Sciences (NIS) in the State.

More than 300 student leaders and students from across the state congregated in the auditorium of Utkal University to demand for the Centrally-funded national level institute in the State. They urged the UPA Government at the Centre to give Orissa its due, which was promised by the previous NDA Government.

This was for the first time in decades that student leaders of all political parties shared the same platform. The present president of the BJD students' wing Arun Sahu, president of the Congress students' front Jinesh Das, president of AISF Jyoti Ranjan Mohapartra and president of the Janata Dal (S) students' wing Amiya Pandav joined hands to voice the demand.

The convention reminded the Central Government of its decision in 2003 to establish four NISs in the country, including one in Orissa.

However, a recent declaration by the Government overlooked the previous decision, with Prime Minister stating that two Indian Institutes of Science Education and Research (IISERs) would be set up in Kolkata and Pune. Since the objective of both an IISER and a NIS is the same, this declaration has come as a shock to Oriyas across the country and abroad.

While Non-Resident Oriyas (NROs) have launched e-signature campaigns and a blog-spot has been created by Prof Chitta Baral to highlight the issue. Agamee Odisha has taken up the cause to sensitise and educate the people of the State as well as at the national level to articulate a strong voice in favour of a NIS.

The students' convention on Sunday was the second in the series of programme planned by the Agamee Odisha. The first event was organised on November 6 when intellectuals had voiced their demand for this cause. The students' meet called upon all Oriyas to get together to fight for the cause of the State.

Orissa has repeatedly neglected by the Centre, but Oriyas have also never asserted their rights, reflected Arun Sahu. Amiya Pandav felt that there is a pressing need for going to Delhi to exert pressure on the UPA chairperson Sonia Gandhi and Prime Minister Manmohan Singh to realise the State's legitimate due. Jinesh Das said that since his party is in power at the Centre, he would do all that is required in this regard.

The convention was addressed by Professor Digambar Mishra of Alabama State University, USA, Justice M Papanna, president of NALCO employees' association LM Patnaik, and noted environmentalist Nadia Chand Kanungo, all of whom stressed upon the need for a non-violent demonstration for the cause.

The meeting was also addressed by several student leaders from different colleges. Student leaders from nearly 80 colleges from the districts of Cuttack, Khurda, Puri, Jagatsinghpur, Malkangiri, Balasore, Bhadrak, Phulbani, Kendrapara, Keonjhar, Jajpur, Dhenkanal, Angul, etc. participated in the event.

The convention was presided over by the secretary of Utkal University Teachers' Association Dr SK Tripathy. Mr Sudarshan Das and Ms Supriti Mishra of Agamee Odisha also placed their views on the issue.

The convention resolved to submit memoranda to Prime Minister, UPA Chairperson, Deputy Chairman of Planning Commission, Orissa Chief Minister and Governor and Chairman of Scientific Committee (PMO).

It was also decided to launch a postcard campaign in every college, hold an hour protest rally before the Raj Bhawan, undertake innovative protests like cleaning of college campus and to organise a protest rally in New Delhi.

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