

Orissa blames Centre for fiscal crisis^{Sr 3} _{2/3}

Statesman News Service

BHUBANESWAR, March 1. — The Orissa finance minister today blamed the Centre for the state's fiscal crisis, alleging that the latter had not cleared the dues on account of pending revision of coal royalty and revision of plan ceiling.

Responding to Opposition-moved adjournment motions on the issue, Mr Ramakrushna Patnaik said the government was to get Rs 197 crore from the Centre towards the deferred payment on account of revision of plan ceiling.

The Planning Commission, he said, had recommended to the finance ministry to release at least Rs 100 crore under this head. Besides, the Centre is yet to act on the panel's recommendation that the state be given an ad hoc grant pending revision of coal royalty.

Mr Patnaik admitted that the RBI had suspended payments to the government because it had

crossed the overdraft limit of Rs 159 crore. The overdraft had once reached Rs 259 crore, though it came down to Rs 26.07 crore last evening.

Admitting that only 45.22 per cent of the plan outlay had been spent by December 2001, he said the Centre had stopped releasing funds under various schemes because the government had been unable to deposit its matching share.

The Opposition leader, Mr Ramakanta Mishra, dared the ruling BJD to withdraw its support to the NDA government on this count. The BJD-BJP combine had come to power on the promise that they would help get adequate central assistance for the state. "Now if they fail to make good their promise they should either withdraw support to the Vajpayee government or quit," Mr Mishra said.

Janata Dal-S leader, Mr Ashok Das, attributed the financial problems to the policies dictated by the World Bank.

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