

## Odisha opposes withdrawal of Waltair Division from ECoR

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The Odisha government on Monday opposed the Centre's plan to shift the jurisdiction of Visakhapatnam Waltair Division of East Coast Railway (ECoR) to a new railway zone to be created in the state of Seemandhra.

The union government has assured a separate railway zone to the new state as part of a bifurcation deal and it is expected that the Visakhapatnam Waltair Division would be merged into the zone that will come into existence in Seemandhra.

"We had opposed the Centre's move earlier. It can't withdraw the Waltair Division affecting the interest of the state," said Odisha Commerce and Transport Minister Pradip Majhi.

The minister said that the Centre should accept the demand of Odisha to allocate three new divisions if the Railway Board decides to exclude Waltair Division from ECoR jurisdiction.

Majhi demanded the creation of three new divisions with headquarters at Rourkela-Jharsuguda, Jajpur-Keonjhar and Rayagada.

Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik has communicated to the railway ministry about the demands of the state government.

Union Petroleum Minister Dharmendra Pradhan had said that he had also proposed to the railway ministry to create a new division in western Odisha under ECoR that will benefit the state.

Following the re-organisation of Andhra Pradesh, the Railway Board had formed a committee to conduct a ground study on possible re-organisation of the railway.

Visakhapatnam Waltair Division, which was brought under ECoR jurisdiction in 2003, has over 30 railway stations in Odisha including Koraput and Rayagada.