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Title : Extension of K.B.K. Scheme for development of undivided Kalahandi, Bolangir and Korapur districts of Orissa.

SHRI PRASANNA ACHARYA (SAMBALPUR): Sir, the undivided districts of Kalahandi, Bolangir and Koraput in Orissa, which are now divided into eight districts, is the most under-developed region of the country[S74].

These districts account for around 20 per cent population of the whole State of Orissa, and about 55 per cent of the population in this region are Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. This is the poorest area in India where 87.14 per cent people live below the poverty line. As per the 1999-2000 NSS data, the literacy rate there is also very low. It is only 43 per cent. The population over there also suffers from high morbidity on account of high malnutrition.

A report was submitted by a Committee on the constitution of a separate Development Board in Orissa -- which was constituted by the Government of Orissa long back when Shri Biju Patnaik was the Chief Minister. It stated that 96 per cent of the CD Blocks of this region are either very backward or backward. It stated that 49 blocks are very backward in this region, and 28 blocks are considered to be backward. The Padampur sub-division is also one of the backward areas and should be included in the KBK scheme.

One long-term action plan was also formulated for this region, which was launched by the late Prime Minister Shri Narasimha Rao in August 1995. But the long-term action plan could not achieve the objective for which it was introduced, as the desired funds for it were not provided during that period. Subsequently, the Government of India formulated a revised long-term action plan in consultation with the Government of Orissa for a period of nine years. It started from 1998-1999, and will continue up to 2006-2007. But an alarming report has appeared in the newspaper that the Government of India has almost decided to disband this long-term action plan after 2007, and that it is not going to extend this programme.

It has also been reported in the newspaper that the Government of India has referred the matter to the Planning Commission, and asked for their opinion on this matter. My contention is that those KBK areas are still the most under-developed areas of the country. There is still illiteracy, lack of proper communication, and reports of starvation deaths from that area. The problem of naxalites is also very prominent in that area as also the problem of migration. People migrate to neighbouring States, and other areas within Orissa itself to earn a livelihood. Under these circumstances -- when the people are still reeling under poverty and misery -- there is no justification in disbanding this scheme.

Therefore, my request to the Government of India is that -- if at all they are contemplating to stop this scheme, they should not extend this scheme for another nine years. This scheme should also continue in the next Five-Year Plan. The Chief Minister of Orissa, Shri Naveen Patnaik, has also requested the Government of India, and has written letters to the Government of India on this issue. He had also come to Delhi to meet the Prime Minister, the Planning Minister and other concerned Ministers to request them to continue this scheme.

I would like to draw the attention of this House, and through the hon. Minister of Parliamentary Affairs -- who is present here -- to the Planning Ministry, Government of India and the Prime Minister to seriously consider this issue, and take a decision to continue the K. B. K. scheme. Thank you.