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Title: Need to include Palakkad district in Kerala under Backward Region Grants Fund programme and modify the criteria for eligibility under the programme.

SHRI P.K. BIJU (ALATHUR): Palakkad and Wayanad were the two districts in Kerala that were selected for assistance for the Backward Region Grants Fund (BRGF) initially. As per the restructured criteria of BRGF, Wayanad is considered a "core" district while Palakkad comes under the "peripheral" category with only five Gram Panchayats bordering Tamil Nadu gaining eligibility for BRGF assistance. The rest of the region in Palakkad district is no longer considered for BRGF assistance. Regions like Chittoor, Tharoor and Kuzhalmandam high in SC population and Paramhikkulam and Attappadi, high in ST population have been excluded from obtaining BRGF.

As per the records, Rs. 23 crore is the amount sanctioned for the year 2014-15. At the same time there have also been directions not to take up new works. However, each Gram Panchayat in the Palaghat district has executed development works to the tune of Rs. 9 lakh annually. These are long-term plans that require a period of five years to complete. As per the projects approved by the District Planning Committee, administrative sanction has been received for works of Rs. 140 crore utilizing BRGF assistance and till date only Rs. 84 crore has been received. Even if the Rs. 23 crore sanctioned for ongoing works is considered, another Rs. 48.73 crore will be required to pay-off the remaining works in progress.

By all parameters in terms of Scheduled Caste, Tribal population and backwardness in development, Palakkad district qualified for assistance and it is unfortunate that moves are afoot to discontinue it.

I, therefore, urge the Government to have a re-look at its decision to exclude Palakkad and modify the criteria for eligibility for BRGF in order to have a wider coverage.

HON. CHAIRPERSON: Kunwar Haribansh Singh : Not present