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Title: Need to undertake drought-relief measures in Bolangir Parliamentary Constituency, Odisha.

SHRI KALIKESH N. SINGH DEO (BOLANGIR): Several States in the country and particularly Odisha are drought-prone, which causes immense damage to crops, cattle and people. As per local weather data, 27 of 30 districts in Odisha have received 56 per cent less than normal rainfall this year.

My constituency, which is extremely poor and economically backward, is severely drought-prone. This year too it faced such severe conditions that under MNREGS, additional 50 days work to families in the Bolangir and Nuapada districts had been declared by the CM. If preventive measures are not taken immediately, such situation is likely to lead to famine, which will have the worst impact on landless agricultural labourers and people from socially underprivileged communities including dalits and tribals – who constitute 70 per cent of Odisha's 37 million people. This could lead to increase in number of hunger deaths and trigger mass migration to other States. A UNDP supported study on nutritional status in Odisha's drought-affected districts revealed chronic malnutrition in 58 per cent and severe malnutrition in 11 per cent of children.

I would request immediate Government intervention in providing alternative employment, easy crop loans, construction of dams and maintenance of potable water reservoirs, development of irrigation infrastructure, emergency crisis response teams, integrated watershed management, rainwater harvesting and soil and crop management approaches through implementation of effective national and regional drought and disaster management policies be made the priority.