

Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh,
New Delhi, India

Dear Esteemed Prime Minister:

On behalf of the Orissa Society of the Americas (OSA), the main organization of Oriyas in North America, we would like to bring to your attention the following urgent issues related to Orissa's growth and progress and the 11th Plan.

But first we would like to convey our heartfelt thanks for your recent higher education initiatives which you outlined in the last Independence Day speech; in particular, the announcement regarding 8 new IITs, 7 new IIMs, and 30 new central Universities with 16 of them going to states that do not have any central university. We sincerely hope that in picking the locations for these institutions you will keep in mind that although 60 years have passed since independence, none of the current 7 IITs, 6 IIMs or 23 central universities were established in Orissa, the 11th largest state of India in terms of population, the 9th largest in terms of area, and one of the most impoverished states of India. Yet, Orissa is trying hard and is among the current leading states in trying to industrialize and it needs your well-deserved support.

We request your attention on four related issues with respect to the 11th Plan and Orissa's attempt to modernize and bring long-overdue prosperity to its people, nay to the nation, as a whole.

1. Greenfield IIT in Orissa: As a rapidly industrializing state, we request that one of the proposed 8 new IITs be established in Orissa. As per a recent Indian Express op-ed (<http://www.indianexpress.com/story/218431.html>), Orissa is the top state in India in terms of projects under implementation in June 2007 (as present in the CMIE Capex database) with a value of Rs. 242918 crores. When calculated in per-capita terms Orissa is second behind Haryana. Quoting that article, "*Orissa is also a major gainer, particularly over the last five years. It went from rank 8 to rank 2 over the last five years. While the Indian average for projects under implementation on a per capita basis grew by 93 per cent, Orissa gained by 381 per cent over the last five years to reach Rs 61,811 of investment per capita.*" These projects under implementation in Orissa, ranging from ports, steel plants, and power plants are all related to technology.

The proposed 8 new IITs will take the total number of IITs to 15, and it would be grossly unfair to Orissa, if after all the pre-work, representations, and arguments made by our Chief Minister and our Members of Parliament from Orissa (Please see <http://www.orissalinks.com/?p=152> , <http://www.orissalinks.com/?p=184>), and all the

appeals, requests and protests already made by the people of Orissa (please see <http://iitorissa.org> for chronicles of the people's effort and the associated media coverage on this), Orissa, the 11th largest state of India in terms of population and the 9th largest in terms of area, is still excluded from establishment of an IIT on its soil.

2. Central University in KBK: In regards to your address on August 15th where you said that 16 of the 30 new central universities will be in states that do not have any, Orissa has been asking for a Central University in KBK (Kalahandi-Bolangir-Koraput) region. Thus we presume that one of these 16 central universities will be in the KBK region of Orissa. However, since KBK is a vast area, and is the most backward district cluster of India, we request that this central university in KBK have certain specific features. In particular:

(a) The central university in KBK should be **multi-campus, multi-focus** (each campus having a separate but complementary focus on one area, e.g. Engineering, Medical sciences, or Agriculture etc.), with campuses in all the District Head Quarter towns in KBK+ districts, i.e., the eight KBK districts and the adjacent Gajapati and Kandhamal districts.

(b) This university, to be established in the most backward district clusters of India, should be treated at par with the central universities in the North East in all respects (such as: it must have special quotas for tribal citizens and KBK+ residents; it must have the components that will be in the central universities in the north east.)

3. Second Central University in Orissa: Your address to the planning commission on September 14th also mentioned that the remaining $30-16=14$ central universities will be decided on the basis of competition, with respect to location and other incentives from the State Governments. Since India already has 23 central universities (unfortunately none of these are located in Orissa) and the new 30 ones will take the total to 53, and Orissa is the 11th largest state of India in terms of population and 9th largest in terms of area, and among the most backward states of India, we request that Orissa be granted a second central university. We propose that the second central university in Orissa be an upgradation of the 150 year old Ravenshaw College, now a University. Some of the arguments in favor of Ravenshaw University are as follows:

a. Ravenshaw is a unitary university; like most world class universities such as those in the United States, and like most of the existing central universities in India (such as JNU, BHU etc.), Ravenshaw does not have any affiliated colleges.

b. Ravenshaw is one of the oldest higher education institutions of India with a glorious

past. Its alumni are almost the who's who of Orissa.

c. Ravenshaw's location at the heart the millennium city of Cuttack and also in the middle of the Bhubaneswar-Cuttack metropolitan area makes it easy to access, and the presence of top-notch educational and research institutions near it gives Ravenshaw yet stronger potential of becoming a world-class knowledge hub, i.e. a world class central university. (In your address to the planning commission you had mentioned this criteria about the "eco system".)

d. Ravenshaw is already working on plans for its expansion in directions consistent with the goals of a world class university outlined by the PM.

4. Rail Connectivity to KBK and other backward areas of Orissa: As you are very well aware these areas are the most backward and poor areas of India; they have a very high tribal population; and are also infested with extremists. One of the important steps in uplifting these areas is making them well connected to the rest of India. That is where Rail connectivity comes to picture. As one of the earlier planning commissions has noted in http://planningcommission.nic.in/plans/stateplan/sdr_orissa/sdr_orich2.doc :

“Railways have always played an important role in economic development and rapid social transformation in all parts of the globe. It is one of the key economic infrastructures. However, it is most unfortunate that in a poor and backward state like Orissa, development of rail networks has received much less attention of the Central Government in the post-independence period. There are as many as seven districts like Boudh, Kandhamal, Deogarh, Nayagarh, Kendrapara, Malkangiri and Nabarangpur out of the 30 districts of the state, which do not have any railway line passing through them. In the year 1998-99, the density of railway route length per 1000 sq. km of area in Orissa was only 15.03 km as against 42.66 km in West Bengal and 19.11 km. at all-India level.”

The Railway ministry has grand plans for the 11th Plan period that includes two freight corridors, high speed rail, and metro rail in several areas and it has a budget of Rs 251,000 crores. While none of these high flying plans (2 freight corridors, high speed rail segments and metro rails) are in Orissa, we are not in a position to rue over that; rather **we request that while the rest of India marches forward with 2 freight corridors, high speed rail segments and metro rails during the 11th Plan, KBK and other adivasi areas of Orissa and India be not left behind.** The particular lines we are referring to are:

(a) Khurda – Balangir, (b) Gunupur--Theruvali, (c) Lanjigarh Rd – Bhawanipatna –

Junagarh – Nabarangpur- Jeypore – Malkangiri – Bhadrachalam Rd (Andhra Pradesh)
(d) Talcher – Bimlagarh ... etc.

We understand that Railways is already considering lines related to connectivity to ports and mineral transportation such as Talcher-Sukinda Rd and Bhadrakh-Dhamara; we are also mindful that better access to KBK area may potentially be used for undue exploitation of the KBK region, but we will all remain vigilant. Nevertheless, following the previous planning commission's observations, to uplift KBK and the other backward areas of Orissa and India out of the morass they are in, we fervently appeal and request you that rail connectivity to these areas are completed during the 11th Plan.

To you, Mr. Prime Minister, an economist and planner of development at the highest level, we do not have to point out that Rail connectivity is a core issue of development for backward areas like KBK. Without Rail connectivity, KBK will remain, well, as is. Yes, KBK will remain its backward self for decades to come, unless rail connectivity is promptly ensured, to spur economic activity through better freight and faster passenger transport.

Finally, we request that the Railway ministry establish a production unit in the KBK area of Orissa near by the various proposed steel and aluminium plants. (Currently the major production units are in Kapurthala - Punjab, Perambur - Tamil Nadu, Varanasi - Uttar Pradesh, Chittaranjan - West Bengal, Patiala - Punjab and Bangalore - Karnataka; and new ones have been announced in RaeBareilly - UP, Saran district of Bihar, Chhapra - Bihar and Alappuzha district of Kerala.)

We appreciate your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Pratap Das, President

Asutosh Dutta, Vice-President

Priyadarsan Patra, General Secretary

Sandip K. Dasverma, Treasurer

([The Orissa Society of the Americas](http://www.orissasociety.org), www.orissasociety.org)

References:

[I] On KBK Rail Connectivity: <http://www.orissalinks.com/orissagrowth/?p=489>

[II] The case for IIT in Orissa: <http://www.orissalinks.com/?p=128>, <http://iitorissa.org>

[III] On KBK Central University: <http://kbkcentral.googlepages.com>