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10 POINT-POLICY TO PROMOTE GROWTH & DEVELOPMENT IN ODISHA

Odisha's Story so far

Odisha is the new star on the block of states in India with a Gross Domestic Product (GDP) higher than national average. Odisha has managed to play catch up in terms of development by battling hunger, poverty, and malnutrition in the last 15 years. It has managed to become one of the most sought-after destinations for investments. Odisha is a state rich in minerals and metals, with a fifth of India's coal, a quarter of its iron ore, a third of bauxite and almost all its chromite. This has led to the establishment of many public sector undertakings (PSUs), especially those making steel and aluminium in the state.

Odisha set out to rectify its lack of infrastructure problem over the past several years, constructing highways linking the far-off mineral rich districts to the ports, as well as the twin-cities of Cuttack-Bhubaneswar which had air and rail connectivity. The state is power surplus and has 11 per cent of the entire nation's water resources (presence of the massive Hirakud dam helps). Today the state boosts of high quality roads and recently also hosted the Hockey World Cup.

While the state has been hit by 98 cyclones from 1891 to 2018, the state's intensive mobilisation to prevent losses—inspiringly called the 'zero casualty' target- during the last few cyclones (including last month's Titli) has earned kudos.
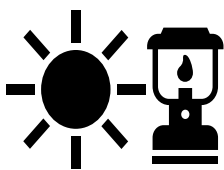
The vast hinterland ripe for industrial townships, big factories and big business houses have found the ease of getting clearances—all regulatory departments are housed under one roof and provide time-bound approvals—and also allotting cheap land appears lucrative. Compare that to states like Gujarat and Maharashtra where land itself comes at a premium, or states like Kerala and West Bengal with their reactionary political landscape, and you can see why the likes of Tatas and Birlas have been making a beeline for erstwhile Kalinga.

While its resources USP could bring in conventional industries like steel and aluminium makers, the potential areas for developing businesses range from aerospace and defence manufacturing, food processing and IT.

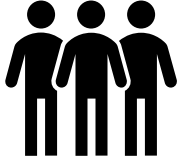## 10-point policy development agenda

Education: Odisha has 11 state universities, 5 private universities, 102 government autonomous colleges, 287 aided, 120 block grant colleges, 294 un-aided colleges and 143 self-financing colleges. Of the 11 state universities, one (Utkal University) was accredited with A+ ranking in 2016 and 6 others with A grade. The Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) of Odisha remains at a lowly 17.5%. The ambitious target of 30% GER will take much more than just establishing new institutions. This can be done by offering students, especially in the tribal regions additional coaching for popular streams such as engineering which will help them get into the stream of their choice. Tie-ups with private players in this regard will help expand the outreach of the state government. Employing existing engineers for coaching will generate employment.

Solar Energy for Electrification: In total, the state has a total commissioned solar energy of 77.64MW, out of which 10.72MW was added in the FY 2016/17. With the household electrification at 56%, Orissa is actively looking to invest in ensuring that power 24x7 is delivered and solar has been looked at as an important prospect in that regard. The Rooftop solar panel is a great initiative, however it's a long-term prospect and a favourable domestic rooftop policy with subsidized solar panels can be rolled out. A short-term initiative in this regard could be promoting off-grid solar by

distribution of solar lamps to the households with no access to electricity and power grids. Among these households, where there are school – going children, they should be given two lamps.

Migrant Labour Policy: Migration has been considered as the persistent problem of Odisha for a long time. The State suffers from distress migration mostly from south west regions including KBK districts. The number of migrant workers from Odisha to other States is rising steadily. Compared to 55,000 workers migrating from Odisha in 2007, 1.46 lakh left the State in 2015. 87,000 seasonal migrant workers left Odisha to other States in 2008, which rose to 1.05 lakh in 2012, 1.2 lakh in 2013 and 1.35 lakh in 2014. Maximum migrants were from the Balangir district all these years (45,000 in 2015). This trend can definitely be reversed by developing a scheme for minimum guarantee income and assured employment in Odisha for persons with Odia domicile.

Animal Husbandry and Fisheries: The Union Budget 2019 offered a helping hand to the Animal Husbandry and Fisheries sector. The government announced increased allocation for Rashtriya Gokul Mission and 2% interest subvention for farmers engaged in these sectors. As such, the government has increased the allocation of the Rashtriya Gokul Mission to Rs. 750 crores in the present year. This is an opportune time for Odisha to enhance and improve upon its existing segment in animal husbandry and fisheries.
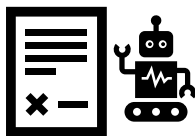
Clean Drinking Water and ODF initiatives: With only 43.78 pc of the households having access to toilets and 68 lakh people in the State can't have access to water of even the bare minimum norm of 40 litres per capita per day (IPCD), it is imperative that steps be taken in this regard. Women's Health and menstrual hygiene should also be made part of the WASH initiative in the state. Tie-up with private players could be the key to it.

Digital Hub: Odisha has vast potential in terms of becoming the digital hub of eastern India. Software and Hardware giants need to be encouraged to make investments in the region. This would also lead to a stoppage in the brain drain from the state as well as incentivise the workers who have left the state to come back.

EU-Odisha Partnership Summit: Odisha is fast emerging as an investment destination, and its an opportune time to host an EU-Odisha summit in order to invite prospective foreign investments in the region. This would propel the state in becoming a manufacturing and food processing hub.

Blockchain and scope of smart contracts: Blockchain is a revolutionary idea and has changed the way in which transactions are conducted. The blockchain technology can be used to build smart contracts. This concept can be applied to public documents to improve transparency and accountability.

Start – Up revolution: the spirit of entrepreneurship and innovation should be encouraged. There should be a plan to make Odisha as a destination for entrepreneurs and innovators. A conclave could be organised inviting the budding entrepreneurs to exchange ideas on how Odisha can help them

achieve their goals. The start-up policy needs to have a special focus on the women entrepreneurs.

Impetus to Indigenous art forms: Odisha has a rich heritage in terms of its indigenous art forms and it needs to be preserved. Guilds should be formed for every art form, and its products need to be promoted in the international market. The EU-Odisha partnership could also be instrumental in promoting this.

Localised Branding

The above initiatives shall be launched with localised branding and taglines.

Ancillary Programs

Some of the other initiatives that could be complementary to the above initiatives are as follows:

Development of Odisha as a tourist destination:
Odisha is already a big tourist magnet, but further steps need to be taken to increase the inflow of tourists, like offering single window clearances to the Hospitality sector.

Futuristic Villages:
keeping in line with Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam's idea of PURA (Providing Urban Amenities to Rural Areas), villages could be developed as independent units by means of technology and digitalisation.

Smartphone Distribution:
To implement the above-mentioned idea of futuristic villages, smartphones can be distributed to the villages free of cost in collaboration with a private player. The phone could have in built apps to reach out to various government services, thereby promoting e-governance.

Farming on lands adjacent to Railway crossing:
the tracts of land adjacent to railway lines and crossing could be utilised for small farming. This would go a long way in cleaning up of he railway tracks and alternative mechanisms for waste recycling could also be developed.

Sarvajanik Mahila Sabitri Pujan:
The women of the state could be brought together on Sabitri Puja by providing in each locality free pooja arrangements and food for fasting women. This would be an initiative like Bal Gangadhar Tilak's initiative of making Ganesh Puja sarvajanik or recent Telangana initiatives for women in a bid to build solidarity.

Shantipoorna Samadhan Odisha:
Alternative dispute resolution mechanism like Mediation needs to be encouraged from community level to the government level.

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