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**Monday, March 03, 2008**

**Planning Commission**

**ORISSA ANNUAL PLAN 2008-09 FINALIZED**

**18:36 IST**

The size of the annual plan for 2008-09 for the State of Orissa was finalized here today at a meeting between the Deputy Chairman Planning Commission, Shri Montek Singh Ahluwalia and the Chief Minister, Shri Naveen Patnaik. The State will have a plan size of Rs.7500 crores. This would include additional Central Assistance of Rs. 100 crores (of which Rs.30 crores is grant) for projects of special interest to the State. Another Rs.100 crores of special grant was given for improving the stretch of highway between Vijaywada and Ranchi within the State.

In his remarks, Mr. Ahluwalia said the State has been improving in plan performance. He said investment climate continues to be positive but efforts should be made to engineer early execution of commitments. Investments in agriculture infrastructure and human development sector needs to be stepped up. Suitable policy measures should be taken to create a conducive environment that fosters growth of entrepreneurship and encourages private sector investments. The State Government should diversify economy with a view to insulate it from natural calamities and to divert under-employed labour force from farm sector to non-farm sector.

Attention was drawn to high incidence of poverty, unemployment and low per capita income. It was also pointed out that State's education and health indicators were still less than the national average. Efforts should be further intensified to reduce this gap during Eleventh Plan period. Attention was also drawn to high transmission & distribution losses and low rural electrification. The State Government was advised to give priority to skill development and rural connectivity.

Briefing the Commission on development strategy for the Eleventh Plan, the Chief Minister said the State would aim at a growth rate of over 9 per cent during the Plan to reduce poverty by 15 percentage points. For inclusive, broad-based & sustainable growth, agriculture and allied sector would be given priority. He said the State has achieved an annual growth rate of 8.59 per cent during the Tenth Plan period against the target of 6.2 per cent. During next financial year 60000 ha of additional land will be irrigated.

He urged the Central government for establishing educational institutions such as IIT, IIM, IIIT and Central universities in the State to meet growing needs of highly skilled manpower for upcoming industries. Exemption from income tax and Central excise tax for a period of 10 years for KBK region was also demanded. He said Central government should immediately revise royalty on coal and other minerals on ad-valorem basis and transfer entire export duty levied on major minerals to the concern States. Special category status for the State was also demanded.

**NNK : RK**

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