

Food security lowest in Kandhamal

Statesman News Service

BHUBANESWAR, Oct. 25: The 'geography of hunger' mapped by way of a Food Security Atlas of Rural Orissa prepared by the Institute for Human Development reveals that Kandhamal district was at the bottom on all parameters of food security.

Kandhamal is therefore not only 'insecure' due to recurring communal riots, but also amongst the 'extremely insecure' districts in terms of food security.

In a state which claims to top the charts in terms of investments, the rural areas as revealed by the study continue to wallow in abject poverty and distress.

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"severely insecure" and "extremely insecure" category as far as food security is concerned.

The map provides a picture of ineffective intervention, bad and even poorer performance in many areas remarked Professor Abhijit Sen, member, Planning Commission who released the Atlas, prepared on behalf of the United Nations World Food Programme, here today.

Agricultural productivity in the state in general is very low as less than one-third of the culti-

vated area is under irrigation. Kandhamal has high forest cover and low net sown area resulting in low per capita agricultural production. People in Koraput, Nawarangpur, Rayagada and Malkangiri districts have the lowest access to food. They spend less than Rs 250 per person per month on consumption.

The atlas reveals a very dismal picture in terms of access to health care facilities, rural road connectivity, and access to safe drinking water.

The study also showed that under-5 mortality in the state is alarmingly high, with 28 of the total 30 districts having mortality higher than 100 per 1000 live births. Kandhamal, Gajapati, Rayagada and Malkangiri districts have under-5 mortality higher than 160.

The study showed that there is a contiguous zone of acute food insecurity along the eastern ghats and adjoining coastal districts. It has identified 18 of the 30 districts for priority intervention.

"The Atlas marks the beginning of a comprehensive food security information system for the state and will enable more rational allocation of resources to the most vulnerable areas," said Ms Mihoko Tamamura, WFP country director for India.

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