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Kandhamal's other dubious distinction

An extremely food insecure district

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BHUBANESWAR: Communally charged-up Kandhamal may be in news for rape and bloodshed for the last few months now, but are villagers fighting on empty stomachs? The answer appears to be in the affirmative.

UN World Food Programme (WFP) on Saturday identified Kandhamal as an 'extremely food insecure' district of Orissa, the country's poorest State.

The rate of food insecurity was so acute in Kandhamal district that it left behind the infamous NBK region (Nainland, Bolangir and Koraput) in all indicators such as food availability, access to food,

food absorption, food security index (FSI) and food security outcome index (FSOI). The district was placed at the bottom in four out of five indicators of food security.

'Food Security Atlas of Rural Orissa', which was prepared by WFP in association with New Delhi-based Institute of Human Development (IHD), was released here on Saturday.

It said the infant mortality rate in Kandhamal district was 119 per ever 1000 live births compared Orissa's 65 per 1000 live births and national IMR of 57.

Similarly, for under-five mortality, the central district of Kandhamal, lying in the eastern ghats region, has the

highest figure of 187 child deaths per 1000. FSOI, which was calculated on the basis of under-five mortality and underweight children, was the most critical in the strife-torn district.

As far as food availability is concerned, Kandhamal again is extremely insecure of the 30 districts of Orissa. No other district has been placed in this category.

Based on the twin indicators of access to safe drinking water and primary health facilities, the food absorption index shows no improvement.

The district is again ranked lowest. Rural connectivity in Kandhamal has been the poorest in Orissa.