

Hon'ble Prime Minister, Union Ministers, Deputy Chairman - Planning Commission, Fellow

Chief Ministers, Ladies and Gentlemen

We have assembled here for the 57th meeting of National Development Council (NDC), for the approval of 12th Five Year Plan (FYP). Apart from deliberating on the National Plans and important questions of social and economic policy, this council reviews the working of the plan and recommends necessary measures for achieving our goals.

Bihar approaches the 12th Plan with a sense of optimism. The economy of the state has been showing a steady growth trend. During the 11th Plan, against an average growth rate of 7.94 percent of the Indian economy, Bihar's average annual growth rate was 12.11 percent at constant prices. The per capita income of Bihar grew at 10.47 percent during the Eleventh Plan as against 6.46 for India at constant prices. In 12th Five year plan, there is aim to achieve 13 percent growth rate for the state of Bihar.

It is important to note that despite such high growth rate the gap between the per capita income of Bihar and the national per capita income has kept on widening since the beginning of the planning era (1950-51). This gap has continued to widen in each succeeding plan period up to the ninth plan. From the 11th Plan period the gap has started narrowing down. But the rate of narrowing down is quite low. Despite showing an exemplary growth rate, to reach the national average of per capita income, Bihar might have to wait for 25-30 years. Special attention and thrust must be given to Bihar during 12th Plan (2012-17) to bridge wide divergence between per capita incomes effectively and efficiently.

We have studied the 12th Plan document prepared by Government of India. We welcome that the vision of the Plan has been kept as "Faster, More Sustainable and Inclusive Growth." Inclusion requires more inclusive participation of the states in the developmental process. However, we are pained to see that Gross budgetary Support to the states has been continuously declining since first plan. Even in 12th Plan GBS to state plan has reduced to 24.04% from 26.52% (11th Plan). This is contrary to the federal structure of our economy. We must try to reverse this trend and raise the GBS to states to atleast 50%.

The country has shown high growth rates in 10th and 11th Five Year Plans (7.6 percent and 7.9 per cent respectively). To sustain the growth momentum at national level, special attention to the states lagging behind in terms of income, infrastructure and investment would be essential.

Over past six years, we have been continuously trying to secure Special Category Status for Bihar. The Prime Minister graciously constituted an Inter Ministerial Group to look in to long standing demand of Bihar. In its report, the Group suggested that Bihar's Development Deficit needs special resource support to overcome the economic and infrastructure backwardness. However, the IMG didn't consider the issues spelt out with due seriousness and reached pre ordained conclusions on parameters of Special Status. Bihar being a land locked and a least developed state should have prompted the IMG to adopt a different approach altogether.

Bihar's per capita income is one third of the national average. The shortfall is attributable to a massive deficit in Central transfers compared to scale of transfers

required for fiscal equalization. Transfers awards by successive Finance Commissions and Planning Commissions have failed to ensure interstate fiscal equalization.

In addition to having the lowest per capita income, Bihar also has the lowest per capita spending on education, health, social and other economic services. The per capita development expenditure in Bihar is R 3,600 compared to the national average of R 6,100. This is in addition to the shortfall in Bihar's share of central subsidies and in investment by central government enterprises. Thus Bihar would need an additional central transfer to bring it in line with the national average of per capita development spending.

The outcome of the existing transfer system in India comprising of the formula based transfers (the aggregate of tax devolution, statutory grants recommended by the Finance Commission and plan grants under the Gadgil formula) and the discretionary non formula based grants have resulted in deprivation for a poor state like Bihar.

It is noteworthy that states which have been accorded a Special Category Status earlier have made significant development strides and are undoubtedly far ahead of Bihar's development indices. There are other similar backward states that are below the national average on key development parameters like high incidence of poverty, low per capita income, low levels of industrialization and poor levels of social and physical infrastructure. These similar backward states deserve fresh policy initiative to overcome their backwardness and reach the national averages on various development parameters. The policy frameworks for mainstreaming all these backward states deserve urgent consideration and innovative response.

High fluctuations in national growth statistics could be mitigated if more backward and poorer states are incentivized through suitable policy actions. Bihar has demonstrated rapid economic growth over last five years. Bihar aims to substantially augment contribution to national GDP; thus our development efforts must receive support through enabling policy initiatives.

Special Status for Bihar would support Bihar in multiple ways. The Centre will bear higher percentage of central share (90 per cent) of all the Centrally-sponsored schemes. This will save our commitments of state share in central schemes and help us to take more welfare based schemes from our savings. Further, by giving a tax break both for Direct and Indirect Tax it would catalyse the private investment flows. This will in turn open new avenues of private investments leading to creation of employment opportunity in the state.

We, therefore, would like to make specific requests:

- a) Grant of Special Category Status to backward states like Bihar.
- b) A revised Gadgil Formula for ensuring higher devolutions for a backward state like Bihar as an overriding priority for inclusive growth as envisaged under the Twelfth Five Year Plan.
- c) Bihar is a land locked and least developed state. An expert group may be constituted to examine and recommend appropriate policy measures to overcome developmental disabilities. The Centre should bear atleast 90% of the Central Share in all centrally sponsored Schemes.
- d) The new Direct Tax Code (DTC) permits an industrially backward State to receive a tax holiday on private investments both for Income Tax, Corporate Tax and related

Minimum Alternate Tax. Similarly in respect of the proposed tax on Goods and Services (GST) include an enabling provision in which a state like Bihar can either have a tax abatement or if the continuity VAT chain is to be maintained a provision for refund of Excise and Customs duties to the manufacturing units or to the State for being passed on to the companies.

- e) The Special Cell under Deputy Chairman, Planning Commission set up in the context of the Bihar Reorganization Act, 2000 should be activated and made functional so that based on their analysis and recommendation the intention of the Reorganisation Act can be implemented.

The special plan assistance to Bihar was initiated in the 10th Five Year Plan through Rashtriya Sam Vikas Yojana which was continued in the 11th Five Year Plan through Backward Region Grant Fund to address the infrastructure deficits of the state. It is highly desirable that the special plan assistance to Bihar is continued during the 12th Plan also. The Inter Ministerial Group has also recommended continuing the Special Plan for Bihar in the Twelfth Plan. In addition to the previous liabilities we request for providing additional 4000 Cr. per year during 12th Five Year Plan to meet the "still quite high infrastructure and development gaps between Bihar and other States".

Earlier sanction under BRGF Special plan was made by scheme wise sanctioning at the Planning Commission and Central Government level. This has caused major delay in the implementation of the project. It is suggested that the sanctioning power under the scheme be delegated to the state government.

Bihar resource gaps to meet development needs are huge. Further, entitlements created by central legislations cast enormous obligation and pressures over states financial resources. Bihar has demanded augmentation in the form of centre's financial commitments. For example, the state had demanded a funding pattern of 90:10 between centre and state for implementing the Right to Education (RTE); however it has been finally decided to be of 65:35 thereby burdening the state with additional financial obligations. The backward states find even more difficult to meet the conditionalities stipulated under the Act. The legal obligations under the Act now have no relationship to the availability of State Finance. There is a need to have a re-look on these issues.

With 89% of the population living in rural areas and 76% of the people dependent on agriculture for their livelihood, Agriculture is being accorded top priority. In 2008, the first agricultural road map was launched. Chief Minister Crash Seed Programme and Seed Village Programme were a major success. In 2011-12, the state food grain production went to a record of 170 lakhs MT, which is 43 MT more than the previous highest food grain production in 2008-09. The efforts resulted in state average productivity of Rice and Wheat surpassing the national average productivity in 2011-12. Our farmers also created world record for paddy (224 quintal per hectare) and potato (729 quintal per hectare) productivity. With an aim to provide actual price of produce to our farmers, state undertook paddy procurement and procured approx. 21 lakh MT of paddy.

Enthusiased with the achievement of the first road map we started preparation of another road map for which a Cabinet Committee on Agriculture was constituted. With farmer in the centre stage, the Agriculture Road Map 2012-2017 represents a holistic approach of agricultural development. It attempts to achieve qualitative increase in production and productivity across all sectors. The technologies and management of

resources are sustainable and it represents an integrated approach for the development of cereals, pulses, oilseeds, fruits, vegetables, sugarcane, Jute, honey, mushroom, milk, meat, eggs and fisheries, which we call as Rainbow Revolution. The basis of the production plans are rooted in drawing up regionally differentiated plan considering the uniqueness of the agro climatic zones of Bihar.

A separate electricity feeder for agriculture sector, Land management programme completing land survey and digitization of land records in 3 years and chakbandi in 5 years, adding 65 Lakh MT storage capacities in 5 years, development of modern marketing infrastructure, connecting all rural habitations of 250 population with all weather roads, plan for increasing tree cover with plantation of 24 crore trees through Hariyali Mission and agricultural education in high and intermediate schools are some of the other important component of this road map. It would require an investment of 1.5 lakh crore in next 5 years to implement the ambitious targets of this road map. Central support is needed to this initiative.

The Government of India has initiated a new program of Bringing Green Revolution in Eastern India a sub scheme under Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojna (RKVY). This is a welcome initiative, as it is high time to focus on vastly untapped potential in agricultural sector in Bihar. But the allocation under RKVY is grossly inadequate. There is need to augment allocation for Bihar. To avoid delays in timely intervention for Garma and Rabi crops, there is a need to create a corpus fund for agriculture development. To take care of the local concerns in the agriculture sector more autonomy is needed at the state level in respect of sanctioning and implementation of RKVY schemes.

If the agriculture growth rate has to be sustained, the issue of seeds has to be cautiously handled. The new seed regime in India should not only aim at keeping intact farmers rights of breeding, selecting, saving, using, exchanging, bartering, distributing and selling seeds but actively encourage farmer level self-reliance when it comes to seed. The Genetically Modified Varieties must not be registered unless its adverse effects on biodiversity, ecology and human health is studied and totally excluded. There should be no field trials of transgenic crops without the consent of the State Government.

In Bihar, Agriculture Research & Education has been strengthened with the establishment of a Bihar Agriculture University, 3 new Agriculture Colleges and one new Horticulture College. The Planning Commission has given in principle sanction for conversion of RAU in to CAU. The Rajendra Agriculture University should be made a Central Agriculture University without any further delay.

Scarcity of energy continues to be biggest handicap in achieving accelerated growth. Our per capita consumption of 127 units is about 1/7th of national average of 819 units. Massive investments in power infrastructure and increased availability of power would be required for Bihar to reach the national average during the 12th Plan. Bihar is largely dependent on power allocation from central sector generating units. Presently, the availability of power from the central sector remains around 1100 MW against allocation of 1835 MW which is insufficient to meet our demands. Our peak demand is 3000 MW, which will increase further during 12th Plan. Our power allocation from the central sector needs to be increased substantially, so that we reach the national average of per capita consumption of power.

Further the upcoming power project at Barauni Thermal Power Plant extension, the three power projects under Case II bidding at Chausa (Buxar), Pirpainti (Bhagalpur) &

Kajra (Lakhisarai) and Nabinagar stage 2 have not got coal linkage so far. Accelerated coal linkages for our projects and installation of Ultra Mega Power Plant and Nuclear plant in the state, during 12th Plan period, will help in meeting the energy requirement.

The transmission and distribution of power is matter of grave concern. The state has re-constituted Bihar State Electricity Board into 5 companies separating the work of generation, transmission and distribution. Identification of transmission and distribution constraints is underway and the state will have to step up its investment in the field of transmission and distribution substantially to minimize these constraints. Based on projection of peak load demand in 18th Electric Power Survey, new transmission works with estimated cost of Rs.6000 crores have been identified for 12th plan period. Segregation of rural loads by providing dedicated agriculture feeder for improving load management and ensuring reliable supply for irrigation purposes has been planned at an estimated cost of 3000 crores. Requisite grant from BRGF for the above purposes is essential for desired electrical infrastructure crucial for Bihar. The resources for the project for agriculture feeder can be augmented from Rural Infrastructure Development Fund. NABARD should include transmission and distribution of electricity in rural areas as a permissible item under RIDF funding.

Rajiv Gandhi Gram Vidyutikarn Yojna (RGGVY) in its present form is beset with shortcomings and inadequacies to cope with electrification of rural households as well as agro based and other rural industries particularly in the context of Bihar. Creation of much larger and robust distribution infrastructure in rural areas is required. Due to provision of single-phase line farmers and small enterprise in rural areas have not been able to get the desired benefit from the scheme. It would be desirable that three phase electric supply and higher capacity 63/100 KVA transformers are installed to boost production and productivity, which is essential for country's food security. As the revenue village was treated as unit for preparation of DPR in earlier schemes different tolas/habitations of the revenue villages have remained largely uncovered. A shift from village-based connectivity to habitation based connectivity and full-scale coverage of all habitation under the RGGVY during the 12th Plan period would be a practical approach in improving power distribution infrastructure.

Against the backdrop of an ambitious Agriculture Road Map, expansion and maintenance of irrigation network assumes central importance. Despite large investments in major and medium irrigation projects, the irrigated area served by canals have not increased significantly in the past decade. The eight major irrigation projects cleared by the Planning Commission and being executed under Accelerated Irrigation Benefit Programme (AIBP) till 11th Plan period, should receive continued support in the 12th Plan. Almost two dozen major and medium irrigations projects implemented by state resources are spilling over to the 12th Plan period. Given the low irrigation development of only 53.6% against national average of 76%, it is desirable that these spill-over projects and proposed new projects from state resources should be adopted and supported by Central Government in 12th Plan period.

State of Bihar is not getting desired benefit under Accelerated Irrigation Benefit Programme (AIBP). For speedy implementation and adequate benefits, some changes in program must be incorporated. There should be change in the 1:1 formula for sanctioning AIBP projects. The procedure of sanctioning AIBP schemes needs to be simplified and Central Assistance should be released on time. Additionally, an effective mechanism needs to be developed for faster environment and forest clearance for the projects related to irrigation, flood control and power. The National

Water Commission in addition to its role of coordination, monitoring, compliance with conditionalities, etc should also look into the inter-state water disputes, which are causing major hurdles in implementation of flood control, irrigation and hydel power projects.

With 73% of the area of the state being flood affected the Central government should support the state of Bihar with Special grant for Flood moderation which requires mitigation measures and preparedness plan not only in the state but also in the neighbouring states and Nepal. For a long term solution of floods in Bihar, the Central Government should intervene to have international agreement with Nepal for facilitating the construction of High Dams on Kosi, Kamala and Bagmati Rivers. Process of approval of schemes under Flood Management Program (FMP) must be simplified. And the approval norms need to be revisited irrespective of the cost of the project.

Currently Bihar is utilizing only 43% of replenishable dynamic ground water resources. There is vast opportunity to utilize ground water through private shallow tube wells. Bihar Ground Water Irrigation Scheme (BIGWIS) should be continued in 12th Plan Period but on the pattern as proposed under Accelerated Ground Water Irrigation Scheme prepared by CGWB, GOI which provides for 70% subsidy by central government, 20% state share and 10% beneficiaries share. In addition to BIGWIS, Direct financing can be piloted without bank linkage in Bihar. Accelerated Ground Water Irrigation Scheme should be implemented in 12th Plan.

Access to quality education for all holds the key to the realization of the 'demographic dividend'. 58% of Bihar's 10.38 crore population is below age 25 and this makes the challenge of education and skill development even more daunting. The State Government has considerably increased its expenditure on education and 19.31% of the State's Plan and Non Plan expenditure is on this sector. Even this is proving to be inadequate to meet the aspirations of the new generation in Bihar. We seek greater assistance from the Central Government to 'equalize' the historical neglect of this sector in my State. It is time the Central Government moved to a norm based per capita allocation of resources to States to meaningfully play the 'equalization' role and secure the fundamental right to education for all children in the 6-14 age groups. Bihar is supporting many initiatives for mahadalits, minorities and girls from its own resources and the Central Government guidelines are inflexible in some of these spheres. We demand greater flexibility and respect for a State Government's unique approach.

We in Bihar have tried large scale innovations to get the most deprived children to schools. Provision of scholarships, uniforms, cycles in secondary schools, non formal support systems for mahadalits and minorities, special initiatives for girls, have all resulted in a significant improvement in enrolment in schools. The transition rate from primary to upper primary has improved considerably for girls as well. Girls on cycles are a pleasant sight in Bihar's rural areas, going to Secondary schools. In fact, to honour the aspirations of the poorest families, our State Government has resolved to set up a Higher Secondary School in every Gram Panchayat. This, we are certain, will help Bihar to improve women's health and also stabilize population growth.

We have a long way to go in the field of higher education as our gross enrolment is below the national average at 11%. My State needs many more Medical and Engineering Colleges, Teacher education Institutions, Polytechnics, and other professional Colleges with courses of high employability. While we welcome the XII

Plan priority for State Universities and a larger role for State Governments in preparing the Higher Education Plan, we want it to be backed by adequate resources for States like Bihar where the need is immense.

In spite of all our efforts, we are finding it difficult to be fully prepared for the Right to Education becoming justiciable from April 2013. We demand an amendment to give us more time considering that the resources made available even by the Central Government has not been commensurate with the gap.

Similarly, for Secondary Education, though the XII Plan document speaks about merger of all initiatives, fresh efforts need to be made to actually make the Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan a success like the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan. RMSA is too complex and States have not been assisted meaningfully to make a difference in expansion of Secondary education. State ought to have far greater flexibility in developing their Plans.

The Central Government has been making a lot of publicity for direct cash transfers. We in Bihar have been successfully doing so for the last four years for provision of uniforms and cycles to students. Given the unsatisfactory outreach of Banks, we have been making cash transfers before public representatives and School Management Committee members on a fixed day in the school premises. However, Central Government SSA guidelines are coming in the way for direct cash transfer for uniforms. We will have to allow transparent and well - publicized cash disbursement.

Major improvements have been achieved in key health parameters. IMR has come down from 61 in 2005 (India-58) to 44 in 2011 (India-44). MMR has also fallen down from 312 in 2005-07 (India-254) to 261 in 2007-09 (India-212). We are committed to achieve the UN mandated MDG 4 and 5 targets. Whereas the monthly attendance of PHCs was only 39 in 2005, it has grown to more than 9000 in 2012. However, inadequate health infrastructure in Bihar remains a major concern. Bihar is way below the national norms of health infrastructure due to poor funding in this sector. Financial assistance to States should be on the basis of per capita norm based gap funding. Bihar should be allocated financial resources to fill the gap in per capita funding over the 12th Plan period.

12th Plan should also support and finance the setting up of government Medical Colleges as per National Commission on Macro-economics and Health norms for 50 lakhs population. By this norm, Bihar should have 20 medical colleges. At present it has only 11 medical colleges, including 4 in the private domain.

The results of NRHM are very positive in Bihar and the State needs to sustain the momentum over the 12th Plan period. The 12th Plan should continue enhanced assistance to States under the National Rural Health Mission on the 85:15 sharing arrangement. Further there is a need to start a National Urban Health Mission to improve public health infrastructure and services in urban areas, especially for slum dwellers and the urban poor. Universal Health Care may also be introduced at the earliest to reduce out of pocket expenditure on health. The 12th Plan should promote a wider public health approach rather than simply a 'medicalized' approach. This will entail a simultaneous thrust on clean water, sanitation, nutrition, women's empowerment, etc. and consequent behavioral change communication strategy.

Severe malnutrition among children is a matter of grave concern. We have been running Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) for more than three decades now. We have also now made education a fundamental right. The Early Childhood

Care & Education for Children less than six years of age needs to be universalized. In this context, it is now important to convert ICDS from project mode to program mode and convert Anganwadi Centres in to Anganwadi schools. It will also be desirable to undertake construction of permanent structures for Anganwadi Centres. In view of huge requirement of fund under ICDS upon universalisation, the funding pattern under all components of ICDS should be raised to 90:10.

It is now been gradually realized that the age group of 0-3 years age has profound impact on the development of a person. In the present context, ICDS does not take care of the needs of children of 0-3 years specifically, as the services are family based. Thus, Government of India should consider setting up of a dedicated "Zero to Three mission" to address the multi sectoral issues related to the children below three years.

The issue of malnourishment is not limited to childhood only. Further the issue of malnourishment has multi sectoral linkages. It has been found that malnourishment leads to 2 - 3% loss in GDP. Hence, it will be desirable that we setup a national level nutrition mission to address the issue of nutrition in a holistic way.

Multi-Sectoral Development Programme (MSDP) of Ministry of Minority Affairs deserves to be restructured and implemented in a new form so as to deliver more benefits directly to minorities in the select districts. For better targeting, there is a need to choose sub district administrative units according to well defined population criteria.

From the present area focused approach, the scheme should specifically focus on Minorities as a segment. Skill development should be the key sub-component of this programme with maximum share of the total outlay. The states should have their own empowered committees to select and approve schemes under this program.

The other flagship central scheme of minority scholarship also needs simplification and better delivery mechanism. Central government should remove the state-wise cap on numbers pertaining to scholarships and maximum income limit of the minority students should be the only criteria for selection for the scholarship. Scholarship schemes need to be universalized in terms of coverage and disbursement should follow the cash transfer method.

Mahatma Gandhi NREGA is a flagship programme for ensuring employment guarantee to job seekers in rural areas. Provisions have been made for ensuring transparency and accountability in the scheme but still there are large scale complaints across the country. There is a need to review the design of the Scheme. Minimum Wages Act 1948 provides for fixation of minimum wages by the state government. Central Government has notified wages under Mahatma Gandhi NREGA which are lower than the minimum wages fixed by the state government. The Central Government is asking the state to bear the difference in the minimum wages fixed by the state under Minimum Wages Act and the wages notified by the Central Government. This puts an additional financial burden on state. There is a need to fix the wage under the Mahatma Gandhi NREGS at par with the minimum wages fixed by the state under Minimum Wages Act.

Indira Awas Yojna (IAY) is an ambitious scheme of rural housing. Monitoring, supervision and close follow up under the scheme is suffering due to non provision of administrative expenses. It is highly desirable that a provision of 3 percent of allocation be made as administrative expense under IAY on the pattern of other centrally sponsored schemes. In view of the rise in the cost of construction material and the wages, the existing unit cost of Rs. 45000 is highly inadequate hence large numbers of

houses are incomplete. It is therefore desirable that the unit cost under IAY should be enhanced to at least Rs. 1 Lakh per house.

There are large numbers of households which do not hold homestead. The Central Government provides only Rs. 5000 towards land cost. The state govt. is contributing Rs. 15000 but due to hike in the land value it is getting difficult to arrange land for the house site under this limit. It is therefore proposed that Central Government may contribute at least Rs. 30000 per house site for families without houses.

The conduct of a large identification exercise for determination of beneficiaries requires specialized knowledge and experience that is best undertaken under the leadership and supervision of competent and independent body. It is for these reasons that the state govt. would like to strongly urge that a "BPL Commission" be notified for carrying out the identification and updation exercise of beneficiaries sought to be targeted by the National Food Security Bill and also for various beneficiaries oriented schemes.

Against a total number of 65.23 lakhs BPL families fixed by GOI for Bihar, our most recent survey has thrown up a total number of nearly 1.37 crore families, after correcting for all errors of exclusion and inclusion. Against this figure, GOI is providing food grains for only 65 lakhs families on a regular basis, thereby creating an anomalous situation. As such, state government has to provide additional food grains from its own meager resources to cover the gap. Recently Gol has allocated food grains for all BPL families in 34 most backward districts in accordance with the instructions of Central Vigilance Committee on Public Distribution, set up by the order of the Hon'ble Supreme Court. The current adhoc allocation is sufficient for the current financial year that also @ 25 kgs per family though the requirement is to supply @ 35kgs per family. As such, Gol should provide food grains for the entire identified BPL families of the state on regular basis.

Bihar aims to continue with momentum of creation of road infrastructure development. Facilitation and cooperation from central government would be crucial to reach the desired goals. Government of Bihar emphasised the need to create Eastern Economic Corridor from Raxaul to Paradeep port through the upcoming bridge on Ganga at Bakhtiarpur and a dedicated port in Eastern coast. Bihar reiterates its request for supporting this demand in 12th Plan period; provisions should be made to establish dry port in Bihar to overcome disadvantages of land locked status.

Bihar still has only 126.13 Km road /lakh population, which is much below the national average (322.77 Km/lakh population). In the 12th Plan period, Central Government should also give complete thrust to bringing the road density of Bihar at par with the national average. PMGSY roads have resulted in significant benefits to rural households because of better connectivity to markets and also easier access to health and educational facilities. In addition to connecting habitations having population more than 250 in naxal affected districts, such habitation in all the districts of the state should be covered under this scheme which would require construction of approximately 65000 KM. State Core Network has been prepared for connecting all unconnected habitations with populations above 250 in all districts. This may be included under PMGSY. We have invested about Rs 1000crore during 11th plan period in maintenance of National Highway which should be reimbursed by the Central government.

Bihar continues to be among least urbanised states of country (the level of urbanization is only 11.3%). To meet this challenge, Government of India must give due attention to urbanization in Bihar and accordingly all support must be extended to urban areas/agglomerations, especially medium towns of Bihar, for developing minimum infrastructure facilities and civil amenities like health care, housing, education facilities, drinking water and sanitation facilities, transportation etc during the 12th Plan period. We appreciate the concept of Long term urban planning, which is to be done in 12th Plan period. I would state here that the 12th Plan must strategize to prepare a comprehensive framework of urban policy and planning in view of the recommendations of the Report on Indian Urban Infrastructure and Service.

It is true that in India, the tourism sector is based on exploiting its unique endowments of biodiversity, forests, rivers, and its rich culture and heritage but the challenges in this sector lie in successfully preserving these in their original form, and making them accessible to domestic and international travelers. Bihar is a hub of religious tourism in the country. In the last 5 years or so, the State has witnessed exponential growth in tourist arrivals; domestic and foreign, both. In 2011, approximately 1 million foreign and 20 million domestic tourists have toured the State. A special and focused strategy needs to be formulated to promote cultural and heritage tourism in a state like Bihar. Central Government should take initiative to ensure declaration of Nalanda, Vaishali and Vikramshila as World Heritage Sites by UNESCO.

Bihar's "demographic dividend" can add to the economic growth if higher levels of health, education and skill development are achieved. An environment must be created in which the economy not only grows rapidly, but also expands good quality employment/livelihood opportunities to meet the needs and aspirations of the youth. To realize this quality education and skill development of new entrants to the workforce should be ensured. There is also a need to strengthen National Skill Development Mission and make State Skill Development Mission fully functional and effective during 12th Plan period.

Making development sustainable will require a national endeavour. The burden of mitigation and adaptation will vary depending on the given diversity of regions and economic compulsions. Promoting afforestation and improving forest cover is imperative however it has to be kept in perspective that India is the home to 16% of global inhabitants but in only 2.2% of its geographical area. This is further accentuated in Bihar having the highest rural population density, which is limiting our capacity to enhance forest cover. Therefore given our constraints a Green Cover instead of a mere Forest Cover may be more pragmatic approach. Importantly we need to look at a policy for compensating the loss of land committed to agriculture activity, if afforestation, social forestry or agro-forestry is undertaken on the same. In Bihar, we have launched a Hariyali Mission to increase the green cover to 15%.

Expediting and simplifying the process of environmental clearances under Forest Conservation Act and increasing the general delegation up to at least 5 Ha., as in the case of LWE (Left Wing Extremism affected) districts, will help the states in carrying out essential development schemes in areas adjacent to or surrounded by forests or in the roadside protected forests.

Bihar is home to almost half of the total population of the Gangetic Dolphin, declared as National Aquatic Animal in 2010. State government is taking steps to preserve the habitat of Dolphin; we would like to request the Government of India to support the establishment of a Dolphin Research Centre at Patna.

The role of PRI and ULB in planning, implementation and monitoring of development programmes are crucial but there is a dearth of manpower and infrastructure facilities in these PRIs/ULBs. Central government should extend financial assistance to the state initiative of Panchayat Sarkar Bhawans. Infrastructure facilities for urban wards is another area which needs support. Adequate provision of funds within the development schemes should be made for human resource and their capacity development. This would help the PRI/ULB to improve governance at local levels and effective planning, implementation and monitoring of development programmes. It is also important to make a provision of a well institutionalized audit support to PRI/ULB as they are involved in planning & implementation of various programmes like BRGF, MGNREGS and 13th Finance Commission etc.

Drinking water quality and sustainability issues continue to be a major concern for the state. Looking at the huge water quality problem in major parts of Bihar due to contamination of water by the presence of traces of Arsenic, Fluoride and Iron, the 12th Plan should support the development of appropriate, cost effective, user-friendly technological options and restore the fund sharing pattern of 75:25 (centre and state), with increased allocation for water quality mitigation. Central government should also provide Hydro-Geo-Morphological (HGM) Maps on priority basis for better ground water aquifer management. There is a need to form a separate "National Core Team" for mitigation of water quality problems to advise and assist state authorities for different cost effective and user friendly technological options.

Strategies for Disaster Risk Reduction should be incorporated in our development policies. As large part of the country is prone to multiple hazards, there is a need to work out a well thought out strategy to develop quick and effective response system. There is also a need to develop the capacity of institutions and individuals to minimize the risk and vulnerability.

There is a strong need to prepare a special plan for inclusion of certain extremely marginalized and vulnerable groups such as beggars, transgender, aboriginal tribes, de-notified tribes etc which are generally left out from our developmental net. Begging is a blot on any civilized society. It is high time that we consider launching of Beggar Free India Mission. In fact, we have to classify them as ultra poor as their poverty is not only based on lack of their access to and control over resources but also on psychological and health wise neglect and deprivation.

As one of the steps to improve governance we introduced "Right to Public Services Act." last year. It mandates the obligations of the State and the Rights of its citizens to time bound services. The objectives are to develop a culture of timeliness in delivery of public services at all levels, make public service delivery systems more transparent and accountable, check corruption and weed out intermediaries by simplifying procedures and get public services as a matter of right. With a provision for administrative and disciplinary action the Right to Service Act has helped in cutting down red tape and reducing harassment of common man. Within one year of its implementation, more than 3 Crore applications have already been received under RTPS in Bihar with 97% already been disposed.

During the 12th Plan, emphasis would be given to track major indicators pertaining to human development Bihar has constituted Human Development Mission. The overall objective is to strategize the efforts to devise interventions in such a manner so that the state can achieve the key development goals like Millennium Development Goals, National Development Goals, etc. The state is in the process to formulate

comprehensive guidelines to set goals and finalize relevant indicators, which can be monitored from time to time.

There is an urgent need to shift from a village based approach to a habitation based approach. At present revenue villages are considered as the unit of planning. In the 12th Plan, strategies need to be made for envisaging 'habitation' as the basic unit of planning and redesign all the existing schemes accordingly. This approach would help in reducing deprivations of peripheral settlements which comprise mainly of weaker sections. There is a need for making habitations as unit of planning during the 12th Plan period.

Before concluding, I would again like to reiterate that envisaged "Faster growth" is only possible if backward states are made partners in national growth. Growth will be "More Inclusive and Sustainable" only if backward states are supported by resources and enabling policy. If this is not done the slogan of "Faster, More Inclusive and Sustainable Growth" will only be a mere rhetoric and not translate into reality. Our quest is to be a contributor and not a drag to National growth. This can be achieved if our development initiatives receive the support and encouragement through enabling policy initiatives. At the end, I once again express my sincere thanks and request Planning Commission to consider the pertinent issues raised by Bihar Government.

Thanks