

# Recent Programs for Development of Backward Regions

Those areas which have low per capital income in general.

**In India the backward areas are identified on the basis of either one or all of the following criteria:**

- The percentage of the scheduled caste and scheduled tribe population in the total population of the area,
- The ratio of population to the cultivated land,
- The percentage of the working force engaged in agriculture,
- The ratio of urban to rural population,
- Availability of transport, communications, and other services,
- Availability of water, electricity, and other facilities,
- Level of literacy, etc.

During the first decade of planning no attempt was made to specify the backward areas and pockets of underdevelopment taking into account these various indicators. Perhaps the committee on the dispersal of industries, set up by the small scale industries board in 1960, was the first to identify the backward areas for purposes of rural industrialisation. Various other committees appointed for the purpose of backward area identification included Wanchoo committee and Pande committee.

For the development of backward areas, two pronged approaches have been generally identified—area development programmes and industrialisation of backward areas.

**The various area development programmes were**

- Resource/problem-based area programmes that comprised the drought prone area programme, the command area development programme and hill area development programme.
- Target group programmes comprising the small farmers development agency (SFDA) and tribal development agency projects
- Area specific incentive programmes comprising concessional finance, investment subsidy and transport subsidy schemes and
- Comprehensive area development programmes comprising sub-plans for the hills and tribal areas.

Programmes related to the industrialization of backward areas included, location of large public sector projects in backward areas, use of the industrial licencing policy to encourage setting up of industries in backward areas, setting up of rural industries projects, establishment of industrial estates and establishment of growth centers.

## **Narendra Modi government draws up tailor-made action plan for the backward districts:**

Eyeing a rural outreach ahead of the general elections in 2019, the Narendra Modi government has drawn up tailor-made action plans for 115 identified “most-backward” districts in the country to improve their socio-economic profiles by making available basic services like healthcare, sanitation and education as well as basic physical infrastructure like roads and drinking water supply in a time-bound manner.

The 115 districts, including 35 affected by left-wing extremism, were selected on parameters like deprivation (extent of landless households), health & nutrition (institutional delivery, stunting of children and wasting in children), education (elementary dropout rate and adverse pupil-teacher ratio) and infrastructure (un-electrified homes, lack of toilets, villages not connected by road and lack of drinking water). The government’s focus is to work with states to bring a transformative change in these backward areas through rapid government-anchored programmes and interventions by 2022, the 75th year of India’s independence.

Recently, the Centre appointed one additional secretary or joint secretary rank officer as the “Prabhari” to work in a collaborative manner with the state and district teams to achieve effective convergence between various Central and state government schemes. The district collectors will be the chief executors of the action programmes in districts, which will be ranked annually based on their performance. Steps are also being taken to establish a comprehensive database and an efficient feedback mechanism for real-time monitoring with quarterly and annual goals. In 2016, India ranked 131 among 188 nations in the UN Development Programme’s human development index (HDI) with major inter-state and inter-district variations. Nearly 40% of children born in India are stunted and/or underweight while almost 50% of women are anemic. On nutrition, India even lags behind its neighbors such as Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal and China.