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PM coming to Orissa today amid KBK row

Monday August 28 2006 10:25 IST

BHUBANESWAR: A litany of demands, including granting special category status to Orissa, may greet Prime Minister Manmohan Singh when he lands here on Monday on a two-day visit to the State.

The PM arrives in the midst of a raging controversy over the Revised Long Term Action Plan (RLTAP) for the KBK region. The RLTAP, launched during the Congress regime in the mid-1990s, has triggered a political storm with Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik accusing the Centre of 'discontinuing' the programme, a charge denied by the Congress.

Sources said the Government would submit a memorandum of demands to the Prime Minister. The Special category status to Orissa is a long-standing demand which has been ignored by successive governments at the Centre.

An enhanced package of Rs 500-crore per annum for the KBK districts, including Rs 120 crore from the Backward Region Grants Fund (BRGF), is another major demand of the State Government. The State Government also seeks establishment of a Central university in the KBK area and tax sops for setting up industries in the region like the ones in north-eastern States.

Sources said the State Government would seek full funding from the

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Centre of the proposed Vijayawada-Ranchi Highway which would pass through 12 tribal-dominated districts of Orissa.

Not content with the announcement to set up National Institute of Science Education and Research at Bhubaneswar, the State Government wants the status of the institute on a par with those planned at Pune and Kolkata.

Other demands include enhancement of coal royalty to 20 percent of the price of coal.

The State Government also seeks 10 percent of power produced from the thermal plants to Orissa and creation of a fund for environmental protection. Last but not the least is Rs 856-crore master plan for draining out water from waterlogged areas.

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