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Title: Need to recruit Odias to the 120 Infantry Battalion stationed in Bhubaneswar.

SHRI BHARTRUHARI MAHTAB (CUTTACK): Madam, there is a Territorial Army 120 Infantry Battalion, Bihar, headquartered in Bhubaneswar. It was started after 1962 India-China war when recruitment of Odias to the Infantry Battalion became very necessary. This Battalion was set up to facilitate entry of Odia people into the Army. But since the Army is holding recruitment rally in far off places like Uttarakhand and other places in the country, the Odias are not getting recruited in 120 Battalion which is stationed in Bhubaneswar.

While Odisha already has a very low representation in the Army, pushing further its interest to the fringes, the 120 Infantry Battalion is holding recruitment rallies elsewhere in the country. In the last four years, not a single Territorial Army recruitment rally has been held in our State. What is surprising is that earlier the zone was confined only to "Odisha and nearby areas" -- at that time, Bihar was not divided -- as also certain districts of Jharkhand of today. Things have come to such a pass that the representation of the people of Odisha domicile has now dropped to less than 50 per cent in 120 Territorial Army Battalion which is stationed in Bhubaneswar. It used to be 90 per cent in the past years.

The situation has worsened in the last 5-7 years. I am given to understand that the recruitment zone for 120 Battalion Territorial Army is expanded now to ten States which are under the Central Command Military Administration. It defies logic. Should we believe that Indian Army does not have any faith or conviction on the valour of Odias? Odias had laid down their lives for the country in 1962, 1965, 1971 and also during Operation Vijay. More than 14 Odias from the Officers' rank to soldiers had laid down their lives in Operation Vijay. Then, why Odias are being ignored? Why the aspirations of Odias are being stymied.