

**Title:** Demanded to restore the scheme, sanctioned by the Ministry of Rural Development, to tackle the problem of arsenic-affected water in West Bengal which has recently been withdrawn by the Central Government.

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA : Mr. Speaker, Sir, a substantial percentage of population in West Bengal is living in arsenic affected areas. Since 1980 there was a scheme under which the problem of arsenic and such other problems in different States like Punjab, Haryana, Madhya Pradesh were being tackled under a scheme of submission under which cent per cent funding was done by the Central Government. But when the Government of West Bengal sent a proposal to tackle the problem of arsenic in the districts of North 24 Paraganas and South 24 Paraganas and Malda and in other eight districts ...(*Interruptions*)

SHRI AJOY CHAKRABORTY : Sir, I am from that district. Please allow me also to say on it. ...(*Interruptions*)

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA : Sir, a scheme was introduced under which the Central Government would provide 75 per cent of the assistance and the State Government has to bear the remaining 25 per cent. This scheme was being implemented. Suddenly and abruptly, without informing Parliament and even without any discussion in the Standing Committee on Rural Development, the Government of India have withdrawn this scheme. The Government of India is asking the Government of West Bengal to tackle the problem of arsenic under the Accelerated Rural Water Supply Programme. If it is undertaken under this programme, then the water supply in other districts which are not affected by arsenic will be greatly hampered. The programme to supply potable water to all will be greatly hampered. The Government of West Bengal is not able to tackle this problem. ...(*Interruptions*)

MR. SPEAKER : Shri Ajoy Chakraborty has also given notice. You can associate yourself with this.

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA : Sir, as this is a national problem, I demand action. The Central Government have withdrawn the scheme. They should restore it.

SHRI SOMNATH CHATTERJEE (BOLPUR): Shri Yerrannaidu has sanctioned it.

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA : Sir, when Shri Yerrannaidu was the Minister he sanctioned it.

SHRI K. YERRANNAIDU (SRIKAKULAM): Yes, I sanctioned it.

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA : I know that when he was the Minister of Rural Development in the United Front Government, he sanctioned this project.

MR. SPEAKER : Now are you asking him only?

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA : Sir, he is supporting this Government which has withdrawn it. I demand that the scheme which has been withdrawn abruptly by the Government of India should be restored and the Central Government should come forward and assist the Government of West Bengal to tackle the problem of arsenic. I also urge upon the Government that the hon. Minister of Rural Development should call a meeting of the Ministers of the States to discuss and tackle this problem of arsenic.

SHRI SOMNATH CHATTERJEE : Sir, the hon. Minister came from West Bengal and we had a meeting with hon. Shri Sundar Lal Patwa. He had given an assurance, following the footsteps of Shri Yerrannaidu. ...(*Interruptions*)

MR. SPEAKER : Shri Tarit Baran Topdar, you please take your seat.

SHRI SOMNATH CHATTERJEE : Sir, this is a serious national problem. For no fault of the people, they are being affected because of arsenic in the ground-level water. Therefore, a very massive scheme has been undertaken. But the Central Government suddenly withdraws this. What will happen to the State Governments? I do not know why hon. Member Shri Yerrannaidu is not standing up now to support this. This is a very serious problem.

I request the hon. Minister of Parliamentary Affairs to respond. This is not a Party matter. Even your people are affected if they are in those areas. ...(*Interruptions*)

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA : Sir, the Minister should respond. ...(*Interruptions*)

MR. SPEAKER: Shri Ajoy Chakraborty, you can associate with Shri Basu Deb Acharia.

...(*Interruptions*)

SHRI AJOY CHAKRABORTY (BASIRHAT): Sir, the problem which he has mentioned is there in a district of my constituency. ...(*Interruptions*)

MR. SPEAKER: Shri K. Yerrannaidu.

...(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: You are complicating everything, even the smaller things also.

...(Interruptions)

SHRI K. YERRANNAIDU (SRIKAKULAM): Previously, this scheme belonged to the Central Government. After the BJP came to power, this scheme was transferred to the States. Now, 75 per cent money is borne by the Central Government and 25 per cent matching fund is given by the State Government. The scheme was going in a big way. But after transferring it to the State Governments in order to take up big schemes, particularly in the arsenic areas, it has become difficult for the State Governments to run it. So, I would request that the status quo should be restored, and then, all the schemes will go in a big way.

MR. SPEAKER: Is there any response from the Government about this drinking water problem?

THE MINISTER OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS AND MINISTER OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI PRAMOD MAHAJAN): Sir, they have raised an issue and I will take it up with the Rural Development Minister. Everybody is aware that he is in the ICU at present. But I will definitely take it up. ...(Interruptions)

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MR. SPEAKER: He is taking up the matter with the Rural Development Minister.

...(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: He has assured that he will take up the matter with the Rural Development Minister.

...(Interruptions)

SHRI AJOY CHAKRABORTY : My district has been affected. I have given notice. ...(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Hon. Members, there is one more announcement.

As per the previous schedule, up to 1 o'clock, there is to be 'Zero Hour' and from 1 o'clock to 1.30 p.m., there is to be lunch break. If the House agrees, we may skip the lunch break and start with the reply of the Home Minister on Motion under Rule 184.

SEVERAL HON. MEMBERS: Yes.

MR. SPEAKER: All right.

SHRI M.V.V.S. MURTHI (VISA KHAPATNAM): Sir, we want 'Zero Hour' to continue. ...(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Yes. We will continue 'Zero Hour' up to 1 o'clock.

...(Interruptions)

SHRI M.V.V.S. MURTHI : We wanted to raise so many subjects. The House is going to come to an end in another two days. ...(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Shri Murthi, I am calling Members one by one.

SHRI M.V.V.S. MURTHI : Sir, you have to allow all of us. We have to go back to our constituencies again and tell whether we have raised those issues or not. ...(Interruptions)