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12.34 hrs.

Title: Regarding frequent erosion caused by Ganga, Mahananda and other rivers in Bihar and West Bengal.

SHRI PRIYA RANJAN DASMUNSI (RAIGANJ): Mr. Speaker, Sir, I would like to draw the attention of the Government, through you, to a serious situation that has developed both in Bihar and West Bengal due to frequent erosion of the Ganges, Mahananda and other rivers.

Sir, Lord Ramakrishna's Dakshineswar Temple has been threatened so badly that the West Bengal Government had to send a proposal to the Central Government, but still the proposal has not been executed. I am worried about this. I personally talked to the Prime Minister in this regard. The entire temple would be under the water of the Ganges very soon.

The entire Murshidabad District, specially, in Jangipore sub-division, villages after villages for the last eight years have been washed away. No measures have been taken so far. The constituency that I represent, in Dinajpur and Malda combined, a place called Ratua and in Dinajpur a place called Goalpukur – the people who have voted irrespective of parties – 118 villages have gone. They are staying in small tents. I wrote so many letters to the Minister for a joint initiative with the Government of West Bengal and Union Government, including the State Government of Bihar, but nothing has been done.

On 22nd December I will be going there. The people there have told me that if I come there without any commitment – (Interruptions)

THE MINISTER OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS AND MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI PRAMOD MAHAJAN): That is the problem with the 'Zero Hour'. As Shri Basudeb Acharia is demanding, if I knew it I would have called the concerned Minister.

श्री बसुदेव आचार्य (बांकुरा) : आप कल बुला लीजिये।

श्री प्रमोद महाजन : ऐसा नहीं है कि मैं आपको दोबारा चांस दूंगा।

श्री सोमनाथ चटर्जी (बोलपुर) : नो गुस्सा।

SHRI PRIYA RANJAN DASMUNSI : Sir, at the place where the Fulwa river and the Ganges meet in Ratua at a point called Billaimori Mantola, not only one but 11,000 people are homeless as 18 villages have been submerged. I will be going there on 23rd and they will be taking me into a boat to go to that place. You cannot imagine that the village, that I visited before the last Session and where I had my public function, also has gone. No steps have been taken so far. I have taken up this issue with the hon. Minister so many times, but no concrete steps have been taken. I do not know how do I face the people there.

In Murshidabad, the people of his entire constituency, which Shri Moinul Hassan represents, are on the street. We have been crying for a comprehensive measure, but nothing is done. Sir, right from Dakshineswar Temple to the districts of Dinajpur, Malda and Murshidabad, no concrete measures have been taken. I want that the hon. Minister should positively respond to this matter... (Interruptions) Sir, the hon. Minister is here.

MR. SPEAKER: I have no objection if he responds.

SHRI MOINUL HASSAN (MURSHIDABAD): Sir, please allow me to speak on this for two minutes.

Sir, I already had a meeting with you in this regard. The erosion problem in West Bengal, particularly, in the three districts, namely, Nadia, Malda and Murshidabad is a grave concern. Yearly 40,000 people are evicted from their own land. The agricultural land and mangroves are already engulfed by the Padma and Ganga erosion. This has already been mentioned by the hon. Member Shri Dasmunsi.

Sir, there is no rehabilitation, no shelter on the heads of the concerned people. The Government of West Bengal is doing a lot for them but there is a meagre allocation on behalf of the Government of India. The Minister of Water Resources has also visited those areas and he is very much sympathetic to the problem. I would like to request the hon. Minister to again visit the adjacent areas right from Malda to Jalangi, do something and allocate more funds to protect the erosion of Ganga-Padma rivers.

डॉ. रघुवंश प्रसाद सिंह (वैशाली) : अध्यक्ष महोदय, वेस्ट बंगाल के साथ ही बिहार का भी मामला है।

अध्यक्ष महोदय : ठीक है, आप बैठिये, अब मंत्री जी आ गये हैं, उन्हें जवाब देने दो। मुझे आपके बारे में बड़ी चिन्ता है।

THE MINISTER OF WATER RESOURCES (SHRI ARJUN CHARAN SETHI): Sir, I am entirely in agreement with the views of the hon. Members that they have expressed here. The bank erosion of the Ganga and its tributaries as well as Mahananda is serious, there is no doubt about it. But I am not in agreement with the hon. Members that nothing has been done.

Sir, for the first time, during last year and prior to previous year, we have provided funds to the tune of Rs.30 crore under the Centrally Sponsored Schemes to West Bengal...*(Interruptions)*

Please hear me. It is certainly incumbent on the State Government to utilise the funds, and also to provide the utilisation certificate, etc. Out of Rs. 30 crore, we have already released Rs. 17.88 crore to West Bengal. I am sorry to say – please bear with me – that the required utilisation certification has not yet been received by us.
...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI SOMNATH CHATTERJEE : We will find out. ...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI ARJUN CHARAN SETHI: I would like to request the hon. Members from West Bengal, who are present here, to prevail upon the State Government to send the utilisation certificate. The moment the utilisation certificate is received by us, certainly, money will be provided.

Moreover, I have already visited some of the areas. I have undertaken an aerial view of the whole situation. I am very much concerned about the situation. But, at the same time, because it is primarily a State subject, both the State and the Central Governments must co-operate together to utilise the funds, to implement it as well as to give adequate protection.

As far as my hon. friend, Shri Dasmunsi, is concerned, yes he has written letters to me. I have already requested the State Government of West Bengal to submit a scheme. The scheme has not yet been received by us. I would request the hon. Members from West Bengal to prevail upon the State Government. The moment it is received by us, we will certainly look into it and adequate funds will certainly be provided.

SHRI PRIYA RANJAN DASMUNSI : Within 10 days, I will come back to you. ...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI ARJUN CHARAN SETHI: Sir, I am ready to meet all the hon. Members from West Bengal. I will certainly meet them and they can discuss with me. Whatever is possible will certainly be done. ...*(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER: Now, you meet him and put your points before him.

...*(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER: I cannot start a debate in the 'Zero Hour'. Please sit down. How can a debate be started in the 'Zero Hour'?

...*(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER: He has assured to give you a meeting. Please meet him and talk to him.

Now, Shri Suresh Jadhav.