

Title: Need for creation of a nodal Ministry for effective co-ordination of water resources management.

DR. V. SAROJA (RASIPURAM): Mr. Chairman, Sir, I thank you very much for giving me this opportunity. I rise here to address this august House and to bring to the notice of this august House an important issue. I request the policy makers sitting here to take note of this. We have to have farsightedness in providing drinking water to everybody in our country. According to 'Fresh Water Year 2003', the aim is to give safe drinking water. I may be permitted to read this observation.

"Yes, freshwater scarcity is a global phenomenon. But in India's case, the future is a bit more worrisome since we have only 2.45 per cent of the world's landmass supporting 16 per cent of the world's population and the freshwater resource does not exceed four per cent. There is an alarming mismatch and managing the precious freshwater resource could be any planner's challenge."

So far as freshwater is concerned, the agriculturists are the main consumers. About 80 per cent of the freshwater, which is available, is being utilised for the agricultural purposes. Apart from this, the Urban and the Rural Development Ministries are also dealing with most of the water. Therefore, I would urge upon the Government of India to look into this matter. We have to take into account the agriculturists' needs. The sprinkling and the drip irrigation systems have to be instituted. This message should be taken to the farmers so that the utilisation of the 80 per cent of the freshwater, which is available with us, may be made in a proper form for which the Government of India should create a nodal Ministry exclusively to monitor the freshwater.

At the same time, I would like to say that the hon. Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu is a pioneer in having the system of rain water harvesting everywhere in Tamil Nadu. We are doing it in Tamil Nadu. It has received the attention and appreciation of the World Bank. I would, therefore, request the Government of India to give more budgetary support not only to Tamil Nadu but also to the other States which are having rain water harvesting as their main objective.