

Title: Demanded to control the soil erosion caused by the river Ganga and Padma in West Bengal.

SHRI SOMNATH CHATTERJEE (BOLPUR): Mr. Chairman, Sir, I wanted to raise another very important issue of national importance. I had a talk with the hon. Minister for Water Resources. He was to be here. Probably, he is held up. Mr. Chairman, Sir, I was referring to the serious situation that has arisen in West Bengal primarily, and also in Bihar and Eastern Uttar Pradesh, that is, the soil erosion that is taking place. Over 32,000 hectares of land have, over the years, been washed away and has become untraceable. The serious situation is in the Districts of Malda where from Shri A.B.A. Ghani Khan Choudhury comes, and Nadia, Murshidabad and Hoogli.

Sir, the Planning Commission realising the importance of it has appointed an Expert Committee, called Keskar Committee which suggested some immediate short and long-term measures. Unfortunately, hardly they are being implemented. Task Forces are appointed. Visiting Teams are being sent. They are coming back. Only *ad hoc* measures are being taken.

Earlier, the Chief Minister had met the hon. Prime Minister and mentioned it in the National Development Council. Again yesterday he met him. A delegation of Left Front Committee Members from the State and also some Members of Parliament met the hon. Minister, Dr. C.P. Thakur. I must say he took a very fair attitude but his hands are tied. Unless the Planning Commission approves of it and the Ministry of Finance allocates the money, he cannot do anything. Therefore, this is a very serious matter. Tremendous suffering is being experienced now. Villages after villages are being washed away. Sir, what has happened is that the difference between Padma and Bhagirath, the two branches of Ganga, is 15 kilometres. Now it has become 1.4 kilometres. This is the difference. At this rate the erosion takes place, within a year or two, they become one river. The apprehension, which is rightly justified, is that either Bhagirath will be dried up or there will be tremendous flood and other things and the whole State will be in serious predicament.

We find in today's newspapers that the Chief Minister had gone and met the hon. Prime Minister and an assurance of some Rs.30 crore grant has been given. That is what the newspapers reported. I could not meet the Chief Minister. But that is a pittance and at least what has been said outside, that commitment should be made inside the House so that we know what is the real commitment.

We also urge upon the Government to take action. The hon. Minister agrees that we also do not take it as a partisan matter. Such an important matter of the country should be taken up most seriously; adequate financial provision should be made and it should be taken up with the Planning Commission. The Planning Commission should be asked to take up the matter and give their views as early as possible. I am told that some clarification has been asked for by the Planning Commission. I understand that the Ministry is supplying that. But the matter should not be delayed and the work should start before the monsoon which is coming soon.

Therefore I appeal to the government to take up this matter very seriously. I am sure the Prime Minister's Office will make a statement and this work would be taken up without any further loss of time.

(Interruptions)

SHRI MOINUL HASSAN (MURSHIDABAD): Actually, I am a Member of the affected area of West Bengal, i.e. Murshidabad. For the last five decades nearly 1.5 lakh people have been evicted from that particular district and 35,000 hectares of land has been eroded in eight districts of West Bengal. It is a national problem.

I urge upon the Government to come forward with a proper allocation. With these words, I associate myself with the other hon. Members.

(interruptions)

सम्भाषति महोदय : हम सबको मौका देंगे। कृपा करके आसन ग्रहण कीजिए।

â€¦ (व्यवधान)