

Title: Need to ensure availability of drinking water throughout the country - Laid.

SHRI BIJOY HANDIQUE (JORHAT): It is now over a quarter of a century since the United Nations Water Conference had declared that all people have the right to drinking water equal to their basic needs. Many countries in the world today, including India, lag behind. Punjab and Haryana, with far less percentage of people living below poverty line at 6.16 per cent and 8.74 per cent respectively, utilise groundwater resources in the range of 98.34 per cent and 75.61 per cent. On the other hand, in Orissa or Bihar or Assam, where the proportion of people living below poverty line is more than 40 per cent, the utilisation of groundwater is also very low, touching a range of 15.22 per cent and 35.99 per cent. Thus, broadly speaking, in our country, a substantial proportion of people are still without access to safe drinking water supply, and adequate sanitation. A recent study deplors absence of adequate attention to these two basics in the National Water Policy.

I request the Government to acknowledge water, hygiene and sanitation as the entry points for poverty reduction in both rural and urban areas.