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Title: Need to expedite completion of Gosikhurd Irrigation Project in Vidarbha region of Maharashtra.

SHRI VILAS MUTTEMWAR (NAGPUR): I intend to raise a very important matter concerning the development of Vidarbha region. More than two and a half decades ago an important project viz Gosikhurd Irrigation Project was started with a avowed goal of developing agriculture, augmentation of water supply and to bring about prosperity in the entire region of Vidarbha. The foundation stone of the project was laid by Late Shri Rajiv Gandhi in 1988 and assurance was given for its implementation within the shortest possible time. This project was to be executed at an estimated cost of Rs.461.19 crores which escalated to Rs.2091.13 crores in 1999, Rs.5649.09 crores in 2007, Rs.7,777.78 crores in February 2008 and it has now been estimated at Rs.13,739 crores.

The project remained unexecuted owing to the lack of funds. However, with a view to accelerate the progress, the Central Government agreed to declare this important project as a national project with the provision of Central Financial Assistance of Rs.5000 crores in 2008, 10% of which is to be met by the State Government of Maharashtra. As per the revised schedule, the project was required to be completed by 2012 but at the pace at which the work has progressed there appears to be a remote possibility of this project to be completed even in the distant future and the sufferers will be farmers who continue to be exposed to vagaries of nature. It is very unfortunate that the work on this project has not received importance it deserved by the State Government. There is complete laxity in the execution of work. Certain regions of the State are already in the grip of drought and still no concrete steps are being taken to accelerate the work on this project to avoid such a situation developing in this region. The ambitious project was expected to irrigate 2,50,800 hectares of land in Nagpur, Chandrapur and Bhandara districts and till date irrigation potential of only 36,894 hectares has been created despite spending huge expenditure. Even after 25 years of its conceptualization, the families displaced consequent on the acquisition of their land for this project are still to be rehabilitated and compensation is yet to be paid. This has caused great resentment amongst the land owners.

Therefore, I would urge upon the Government to have a thorough inquiry conducted by the experts of the Central Government to assess the reasons for not achieving the target despite spending huge amount and also to appoint an agency to regularly monitor the work and expenditure on this project with a view to ensure its early completion.