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Title: Need to supply arsenic-free potable water in West Bengal and other parts in the country.

SHRI IDRIS ALI (BASIRHAT): Madam Speaker, I am deeply grateful to our hon. Chief Minister, Madam Mamata Banerjee because due to her only I have become Member of this august House.

Madam, I am coming to the point. The contamination of ground water in India has become a major health hazard during the last few decades. Arsenic contamination of ground water is a specific problem in nine districts out of 20 districts in West Bengal. Out of which, my constituency, Basirhat, with a population of over 15 lakh people, is the first most affected area. In the past, the House has recorded the effect of the serious threat of arsenic. But with deep sorrow, I would like to inform the House that my entire constituency, that is, Basirhat, is still in black days. I wonder to inform you that more than four crore people are affected with diseases caused due to arsenic.

Madam Speaker, earlier during the BJP Government, the Central Government funded 75 per cent for the project related to this issue. Then the allocation came down to 50 per cent during the last few years and recently, unfortunately, the fund has been discontinued.

Madam, Speaker, as a result, treatment plants have become inactive and have shut down due to huge maintenance costs and abstraction of excessive percentage level of arsenic contents. Keeping in view this acute problem, before it goes out of hand, I deeply urge upon the Government to immediately pay special attention to the supply of arsenic free water to all the people of the country because it is not only the duty of the Government but it should be done on humanitarian ground, which by virtue is the right of the people. I like to warn the Central Government to take a time-bound strategic programme before it breaks out as a pervasive threat. Madam, I want to speak only two lines in Bengali.

*We know that our dynamic leader Smt. Mamata Banerjee is an embodiment of development and progress. She can be compared to Mother Teresa. She is already doing a lot for the benefit of her people and working untiringly in the interest of the common man. Thus I urge upon the Central Government to take immediate steps in this regard and supplement her initiatives. *