

Regarding rehabilitation and housing of families affected by erosion by Ganges

SHRI ISHA KHAN CHOUDHURY (MALDAHA DAKSHIN): Hon. Speaker, Sir, my erosion-prone constituency of Dakshin Maldaha in West Bengal consists of five blocks in Maldaha District and two blocks in Murshidabad district.

Since the construction of the Farakka Barrage in 1971, which is managed by the Water Resources Department, severe river erosion has occurred in Maldaha and Murshidabad Districts. The construction of the Barrage has caused huge silt and sand deposits which led to the creation of new silt land formations and caused the Ganges to change its course by 17 kilometers east towards Maldaha. More than 900 square kilometers of land has been eroded since then.

This has meant that five of the seven Blocks in my constituency namely, Farakka and Samsanganj of Murshidabad District and Manikchak, Mothabari, and Baisnabnagar of Maldaha District are heavily impacted by erosion because over the years the Ganges is constantly changing its flow and course. More than one lakh families or 7,00,000 people in this vast area have lost agricultural land and homes into the Ganges. They are facing severe problems. More than 35 primary schools and 10 secondary schools, innumerable temples, mosques, markets and Government infrastructure have been destroyed by Ganga erosion. In the last seven to eight years alone, severe erosion has started again in various parts along the river. About 5000 families from my Constituency are still living in temporary shelters and temporary colonies along the river and not on their own land.

Furthermore, there is a grave concern that the part of Ganges River in Manikchak Block of Dakshin Maldaha may soon merge with the Fulahar River channel of Ratua potentially wiping out large areas of Bhutni, Bilaimari and Ratua.

Sir, I offer a few suggestions to this burning issue of erosion caused by the Ganges. The Ganga River is a national river so the Central Government and Farakka Barrage Authority with the cooperation of the State Government of West Bengal should take back full responsibility for anti-erosion work for a 120-kilometer stretch of the Ganges. This was the case from 2005 onwards under the UPA Government. The Central Government took the responsibility for managing 40 kilometres upstream

into Malda from the Farakka Barrage and 80 kilometres in Murshidabad downstream of the Farakka Barrage.

The current erosion prevention methods using sandbags are ineffective. Large scale investment in the present Budget using boulder pitching, porcupine work and even dredging is required. New technologies and approaches such as geo-synthetic tubes need to be explored for their effectiveness to save the people.

The rehabilitation and housing for thousands of families affected by erosion, including legal land rights for 5000 families in rehabilitation colonies is required.

Thank you, Sir.

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