

Need for comprehensive Master Plan for river erosion in West Bengal

SHRIMATI RACHNA BANERJEE (HOOGHLY): Hon. Chairperson, Sir, I thank you for giving me this opportunity to speak here today.

Sir, I rise today to draw the attention of this esteemed House to a grave issue that has been plaguing the people of my constituency, Hooghly. The relentless Ganga riverbank erosion in Balagarh region is causing severe distress and devastation to the lives and livelihoods of our citizens. ? *(Interruptions)*

The Ganga River traverses through Hooghly District for approximately 78 kilometres, of which around 34 kilometres are urban and about 44 kilometres are rural. The rural stretch predominantly falls within the Balagarh Block. A more than two-kilometre stretch of the riverbank area from Guptipara Ferry Ghat onwards in Balagarh is experiencing rapid erosion, affecting nine Gram Panchayats. ? *(Interruptions)*

In the rural areas, there are several char lands. Thousands of families are losing their homes, agricultural lands and access to basic amenities due to this relentless force of nature in this whole region. Lack of proper dredging has further aggravated the situation, leading to the formation of sand bars. These sand bars obstruct the natural flow of the Ganga River, causing erosion and further damage. ? *(Interruptions)*

Chairman Sir, there is an urgent need for a comprehensive Balagarh Master Plan to undertake works to: (i) Commission a comprehensive study to evaluate the extent of erosion and understand the underlying causes and vulnerability zones; (ii) Construct and maintain robust embankments by reinforcing the vulnerable stretches; and (iii) Initiate timely dredging operations to maintain the river's depth, prevent sand bar formation, and stabilize the riverbanks. ? *(Interruptions)*

I request the Government to protect our riverbanks, safeguard our communities, restore hope to the people of Balagarh, and ensure that their plight is alleviated through timely and effective action.

Thank you so much, Sir. ? *(Interruptions)*

12.42 hrs

At this stage, Adv. Chandra Shekhar, Shri Rajesh Ranjan and some other hon. Members went back to their seats.