

**Title:** Need to sanction a special package for development of Western Rajasthan.

COL. (RETD.) SONA RAM CHOUDHARY (BARMER): Sir, this is with regard to development of infrastructure for education, drinking water, health, road communication, etc., in Western Rajasthan. As you are aware, Western Rajasthan, especially Barmer, Jaisalmer, Jalore, Bikaner and some parts of Jodhpur and Pali districts are most underdeveloped and drought prone for an average of eight out of every ten years. Jaisalmer and Barmer districts are reeling under severe drought for the last three years. In my Parliamentary constituency, there are about 3,500 villages, of which 3,200 have been declared "Drought-prone villages", as per the Girdawari Report submitted to the Government.

Due to severe drought conditions, most of the drinking water supply schemes have become defunct. The existing water sources are drying. People of this area fetch water from a distance of ten to fifteen kilometres against the norms of 1.6 kilometres laid down by the Government of India. Since there are no employment opportunities in the area, most of the people migrate to adjoining States of Punjab, Haryana, Gujarat and Maharashtra in search of livelihood during the lean period.

I have been requesting the Government during the tenure of the Eleventh, Twelfth and Thirteenth Lok Sabhas for a special package for Western Rajasthan on lines similar to those given to hilly areas and the North-Eastern States to alleviate their problems. I had also raised this issue on the floor of the august House of Parliament on the 3rd June, 1998.

However, nothing tangible has been done so far to alleviate the sufferings of the people. If there is a delay in giving the special package, the people will come on the streets as they have already started demanding a separate "MARU State" on the lines of Assam, Bihar and the UP hill people. Therefore, I request the hon. Prime Minister to sanction a special package to Western Rajasthan.