

Title: Need to formulate a policy to overcome water scarcity in the country.

SHRI BIJOY HANDIQUE (JORHAT): The future of water availability in our country is grim and alarming. Studies conducted by various research agencies, particularly in recent times, by Tata Energy Research Institute (TERI), emphasise that the country could face serious water shortages, especially in its Northern areas unless corrective measures are taken right away. Their apprehension is that water availability will stagnate at 1068 billion cubic metres per year in spite of projected population growth half a billion by 2047. Another worrying dimension of the water scenario noted in the study is that in spite of Planning Commission's estimated 95 per cent of the water resources being used up in agriculture, the large tracts of crop land remain under-irrigated. This indicates that the bulk of water is used by rich farmers growing cash crops. Worse even, benefited by cheap power it leads to over exploitation of ground water resources with the consequences that vast tracts of agricultural land are degraded leading to decline in production of traditional crops. Unless Government handles the situation with a determined political will, the country will soon land in serious water scarcity and famine.