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Title: Regarding erosion of river banks in Murshidabad in West Bengal.

PROF. SAUGATA ROY (DUM DUM): I have taken the trouble of staying so late for 'Zero Hour' to highlight a big problem faced by West Bengal. You know Sir, the Ganga enters West Bengal from Rajmahal bordering Malda District. Then, it comes up to the Farakka Barrage. After Farakka Barrage, the River divides into two. One is Padma which goes into Bangladesh and the other is Bhagirathi which comes up to Calcutta. The Farakka Barrage was created for supplying enough water to the Calcutta Port but unfortunately due to the agreement we have with the Bangladesh, the Port is not receiving enough water. But I am not on that problem.

The creation of the barrage in 1975 has given rise to problem of land erosion both upstream and downstream of the Farakka Barrage. Villages are just disappearing and both the banks of the rivers are breaking. In fact, in Murshidabad near Akheri Ganj, one Border Security Force post is in danger of being washed away and several villages including Bhutni Diara are in the fear of being submerged or washed away. Now, this stretch of 40 kilometres upstream and downstream of Farakka Barrage is supposed to be looked after by the Farakka Barrage Authority under the Ministry of Water Resources. Our Chief Minister wrote a letter to the Prime Minister requesting him for granting enough money for giving embankment to the Ganga and Pamda rivers. But, unfortunately, though the letter was given several months ago, nothing has happened. I saw a statement from the West Bengal Irrigation Minister. He has said that he will sit in *dharna* in Delhi if this money is not sanctioned. The situation is serious. At least, 10,000 to 12,000 villagers will be affected. Our security, because it is bordering with Bangladesh, will also be affected if the Border Security Force post vanishes.

Through you, I would appeal to the Ministry of Water Resources and the Central Government to take steps to prevent the erosion in the Ganga and the Padma Rivers.