

>

Tilte: Decline in per capita availability of fresh water in the country.

SHRI ADHIR CHOWDHURY (BAHARAMPUR): Madam, Speaker, I would like to draw your attention that water is treated as an elixir of life over the ages. But as our experiences indicate that in our country, availability of water has been decreasing much to the alarm of all of us.

Madam, if you go through the few statistics in regard to the availability of water, then it is sufficient for further alarming all of us. The availability of renewable fresh water in India has fallen from around 6,000 cubic meters in the year 1947 to about 2,300 cubic meters in 1997. Further, per capita availability of less than 1,700 cubic meters is termed water-stressed if it falls below 1,000 cubic meters.

Madam, nine of our 20 river basin with 200 million population is already facing water scarcity condition. The per capita storage of water in our country is 213 cubic meters while it is 6,103 cubic meters in Russia, 4,733 cubic meters in Australia. In Haryana, Punjab, Gujarat and the ground water table is declining at the rate of half a meter per year. However, still we are not able to harness the water resources of our country in a prudent manner. A total of 37 per cent of the total amount of water used in irrigation is put to productive use and a huge quantity amounting to 63 per cent of the total water in irrigation goes waste. The wastage in the domestic use is estimated to be 16 per cent to 25 per cent, in industrial workshops, 20 per cent of the total quantity is being wasted, and in the construction sector, 25 per cent is infructuous.

Madam, in view of this grave situation where availability of water per person has been declining in an alarming way, I would urge upon this Government to review our Water Policy in a fresh manner because water, again, is an elixir of our life.