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Title: Need to take steps to address malnutrition in the country.

SHRIMATI APARUPA PODDAR (ARAMBAG): Thank you Madam. India is one of the fastest growing countries as far as its population and its economy are concerned. Every year 1.2 billion population is added at the rate of 1.5 per cent to 1.7 per cent. Though we are growing economically, a major part of our population is still living below the National Poverty Line.

India is highly ranked in the world by World Bank for the number of children suffering from malnutrition. The main cause for malnutrition in India is gender inequality as the social status of women is still under developed. Women who suffer from malnutrition give birth to less healthier babies.

Reports state that every second child in India is malnourished. Children from Muslim households, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes face higher rates of malnourishment. Madhya Pradesh and Jharkhand have very high rates of under-nutrition.

Many welfare schemes like the Integrated Child Development Scheme, National Children's Fund, National Health Mission have been launched by the Government of India, but still the number of malnourished children is increasing. The United Nations estimates that 2.1 million Indian children die before reaching the age of five years every year. The malnutrition rate is 42 per cent among children in India. As many as 1,500 children die everyday due to lack of a balanced diet.

The West Bengal Government under the leadership of our hon. Chief Minister, Kumari Mamata Banerjee has brought various steps like Support to Training & Employment Programme, Organizational Assistance for Women & Child Development, Integrated Programme for Street Children, Balika Samridhi Yojana.

The Government has to monitor and improve nutritional status of children in India by ensuring Nutritional Status of Women during pregnancy; dietary intake of children and lactating mothers; availability of safe, clean drinking water, sanitation and hygiene facilities; well balanced, nutritious diet to be provided through ICDS and improved medical assistance through Government and NGOs; and by providing good environment.

Madam, I would like to make a last suggestion to the Government. A Committee should be formed consisting of Members from the Central and State Governments to monitor the training programmes and schemes carried out to eradicate malnutrition, and also strict action should be taken against those who malpractice in this human cause. Thank you. ...(*Interruptions*)

HON. SPEAKER:

Shrimati Santosh Ahlawat is permitted to associate with the issue raised by Shrimati Aparupa Poddar.

Now, Shri Radheshyam Biswas.