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Title: Need to check the erosion and flood of Ichhamati and bring it under the National River Conservation Directorate.

श्रीमती ममता ठाकुर (बनर्गोव) : माननीय स्पीकर महोदय[1], मैं आपको हार्दिक धन्यवाद देती हूँ। मैं सुश्री ममता बनर्जी जी की पार्टी से हूँ। टीटी ने मुझे यह जो ज़गह दी है, इसके लिए टीटी को हार्दिक धन्यवाद देती हूँ।

*Hon. Speaker Madam, I am the representative of West Bengal's border area Bangaon. Bangaon has turned into a significant pilgrimage place due to the presence of two legendary religious places. The religious yatra which takes place surrounding Thakurnagar of MATUA is attended by crores of devotees along with numerous common visitors. Our Hon. Prime Minister was also one such visitor.

You all must be aware that the lifeline of this area is the River Ichhamati which is acting as a connecting line between the Group of Rivers at the eastern side of Bhagirathi-Hooghly river. It is the only big source of water. Mathabhanga, Jalangi and Churni are included in the Group of Rivers. In reality, the lifeline of the border area Ichhamati is proving to be a dangerous socio-economic and environmental threat for a large tract of land. And a problem of such humongous scale can never be solved by any State Government single-handedly.

It has been found out by a geomorphological research under the initiative of Real Sensing and GIS Department Remote scholars of Vidyasagar University that every year, the Ichhamati river is eroding its bank by about three metres. As a result, extensive areas of the basin are being wiped out. On the other hand, about 20 km of the riverbed of Ichhamati has been filled with silt. As a consequence, till 2013, the river has changed its course for about 15 metres. Due to lack of river dredging, every year, the siltation is leading to massive flooding of the adjoining areas. About 20-30 lakh people are devastated each year, some are dying, some are rendered homeless, cattle are dying; agricultural land and houses are destroyed.

Renowned river expert Dr. Kalyan Rudra and West Bengal Ichhamati River Revival Assistance Committee, a non-governmental organization have been trying to draw the attention of everybody to this problem. But other than a small financial assistance in 2010, the Central Government has not extended any kind of help to the cause so far.

At present, the National River Conservation Directorate is focussing on some particular rivers. But why no steps are being taken to control flood and erosion caused by Ichhamati river? Won't the Central Government do anything to save lakhs of people, and animals who are in distress, to save the fertile agricultural tracts and households? How can the issue of river rejuvenation in the bordering areas of India-Bangladesh be overlooked for such a long time?

Thus my questions to Hon. Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation Minister are as follows –

- 1). Whether the ministry is at all interested in protecting the lives and livelihood of lakhs of ordinary people affected by the flood of an important river like Ichhamati? 2). If the Ministry has decided to any steps in this regard then what is its blueprint.
- 3). How much money has been allocated for the project?
- 4). Besides, do the Ministry have any power to sanction funds for the non-plan expenditure purpose so that erosion and flood of Ichhamati can be checked ?
- 5). River Ichhamati should be brought under the National River Conservation Directorate immediately.

With these words, I thank you Madam for allowing me to speak and conclude my speech.

माननीय अध्यक्ष :

श्री भैरों प्रसाद मिश्र,

श्री चन्द्र प्रकाश जोशी,

श्री सुधीर गुप्ता और

रोड़मल नागर को श्रीमती ममता ठाकुर द्वारा उठाए गए विषय के साथ संबद्ध करने की अनुमति प्रदान की जाती है।