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Title: Need to review Indo-Bangladesh Agreement on sharing of Ganga water below Farakka Barrage in West Bengal.

DR. BIKRAM SARKAR (HOWRAH): Hon. Chairman, Sir, through you, I want to draw the attention of this august House and make a mention of a very important matter, urging for an immediate review of the Indo-Bangladesh Agreement on sharing of Ganga water below Farakka Barrage in West Bengal.

I have the experience of two summers since the water sharing agreement was signed in December, 1996 and the only conclusion that can be drawn is that the water level in Ganga and River Hoogly has come down precariously. As a result of the dwindling water level in the river, Calcutta port and Haldia port in West Bengal are seriously affected. The Agreement strangely enough does not provide for sharing of available water, on an agreed proportion, on a continuous basis. Even though I was the Chairman of the Calcutta Port Trust, I did not have an opportunity or an occasion to see it. I am told that even the Minister of Surface Transport could have an access to that.

The Agreement provides that each country will draw most of water during every alternate ten days' cycle, that means, one country will get till the ten-day period, the whole of water, and the other country will be completely deprived. This is adding to the heavy siltation in the navigational channel and no amount of dredging would be able to effect desiltation at the desired level. Now, this cyclical fluctuation has resulted in heavy siltation, as I said, choking the navigational channel. No action is taken to review the situation on the basis of the experience gathered in the last two summers.

Tens and thousands of cultivators and agricultural labourers of the six riverine districts of Howrah, Hoogly, South 24 Parganas, North 24 Parganas, Nadia and Murshidabad have been suffering because of the shortage of irrigation water. Vast tracks of agricultural land are languishing. ... (Interruptions) The United Front Government at the Centre came up with a preposterous proposal of bringing water from Sankosh River in Bhutan through North Bengal to the Ganga. This is being objected to by the environmentalists. This proposal, apart from the cost involved which, is worth over Rs.1,000 crore will destroy large forest area. I want to draw the attention of the Central Government towards this. ... (Interruptions)

">SHRI SOMNATH CHATTERJEE (BOLPUR): This is a matter of international treaty between India and Bangladesh, which is a friendly country. Raising of this type of issues will give only a wrong signal. Some people are trying to scuttle this for their political advantage. It is unfortunate. This House is being utilized for this purpose. ... (Interruptions) It is a very serious matter. ... (Interruptions) We should not do politics with this. ...

DR. BIKRAM SARKAR : It is not a political matter. There is no politics in this. ... (Interruptions)

SHRI SOMNATH CHATTERJEE : It would destabilize friendship between India and Bangladesh. ... (Interruptions)

SHRI SUDIP BANDYOPADHYAY (CALCUTTA NORTH-WEST): He was an IAS officer. He was the Chairman of the Calcutta Port Trust when the Agreement was signed. Shri Chatterjee is a politician. ... (Interruptions)