

**Title:** Need to provide Central Assistance to the Government of West Bengal for overall Development of Sunderban region.

SHRI SANAT KUMAR MANDAL (JOYNAGAR): Sir, Sunderbans area in West Bengal has the poorest population. Cultivation, fishing, felling trees in the forests or collecting honey have been the livelihood of the Sunderbans inhabitants for decades.

15.22 hrs (Dr. Laxminarayan Pandey in the Chair)

Sunderbans Development Board was created by the State Government in 1973 for the formulation and execution of integrated programme for development of the backward Sunderbans region on the basis of assessment of the resources, endowment and the quality and coverage of the existing infrastructural facilities. Over the last two decades, the Sunderbans Development Board had formulated some schemes and programmes in this behalf. Since State funds were not adequate to tackle the basic problems of the Sunderbans region, the possibility of getting external assistance was explored and in collaboration with the World Bank sponsored International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), a development plan with the object of bringing about substantial improvement in the economic conditions of the people, particularly for the small and marginal farmers, was launched. This project resulted in improvement of agricultural production potential through establishing irrigational facilities. The IFAD assisted project expired in June, 1989.

To keep up the tempo of development, the Sunderbans Development Plan Phase-I covering a period of five years and involving a capital outlay of Rs.67.5 crore had been forwarded by the Government of West Bengal to the Government of India last year for exploring the possibility of having external assistance, as the resources of the State Government were not sufficient to meet any part of the Plan expenditure.

Sir, I therefore, request the Central Government to consider the development of this most backward area by allocating special fund for the purpose.