

As per the information furnished by the Ministry of Urban Development, the reported expenditure under Accelerated Urban Water Supply Programme (AUWSP) in West Bengal since its launch in 1993-94 is Rs. 3.28 crore. However, out of this amount no expenditure has been incurred in district Darjeeling under AUWSP.

Withholding of Gram Panchayat election

3490. SHRI DAWA LAMA: Will the Minister of RURAL DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether according to provision of Article 243 M (3) (a) and (3) (b), Gram Panchayats election can be held in tea garden areas of Darjeeling Hills and Panchayat Samiti elections in Darjeeling hills;

(b) if so, the reasons for withholding the said elections for years; and

(c) the action proposed by Government to conduct the elections immediately?

THE MINISTER OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT (SHRI SUNDAR LAL PATWA): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) The Government of West Bengal have intimated that since the commencement of the Constitution (73rd Amendment) Act, 1992, there were continuous agitations in respect of elections to the Panchayats in the Hill areas of Darjeeling District where the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council was functioning. After a series of discussion, elections to Gram Panchayats in these areas were held in March, 1995. The next elections to Gram Panchayats are scheduled for May, 2000.

Elections to Intermediate Panchayats could not be held and the State authorities have been negotiating with regard to holding of elections to these Panchayats.