

per month, according to certain studies. It is in this background that the trade unions of the country are demanding ₹ 18,000 minimum in a month. By any yardstick, this is a genuine and modest demand from the side of the workers. This is one of the demands they raised in the country-wide general strike on 8th and 9th January. A Government which has any concern for the workers and the poor should heed to their voice. I believe, the concerned Ministers will take necessary steps in this regard.

Demand to enhance budgetary allocation and release of funds for drinking water projects in rural Meghalaya

SHRIMATI WANSUK SYIEM (Meghalaya): Sir, to achieve drinking water security and sustainability of drinking water sources in Meghalaya which are abundant, the Centre supports projects under the National Rural Drinking Water Programmes in rural habitats of the State.

Despite being one of the world's largest rain-fed regions, Meghalaya is handicapped because of hilly and non-porous terrain adversely affecting the charging of ground water formations, coupled with infrastructural backwardness and paucity of funds. The State suffers from sudden drop in allocation and release of Centre's share of funds both for implementation of new schemes but also in operation and maintenance of completed water supply schemes. Despite the recommendations of the Fourteenth Finance Commission Report for an increase in the share of States in the Centre's tax revenue pool from the earlier 32 per cent to 42 per cent, the budgetary allocations and corresponding releases under the Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation have dropped sharply to as low as ₹ 31.24 crores against the benchmark figures of ₹ 100 crores a year prior to 2014-15.

A large number of drinking water schemes, already sanctioned and accorded administrative approval by the State Government, are languishing due to paucity of adequate timely disbursements by the Centre. I urge upon the Centre to address this crucial issue concerning the welfare of the rural populace in Meghalaya at the earliest. Thank you.

Demand for urgent measures to deal with drought in Maharashtra

SHRI HUSAIN DALWAI (Maharashtra): Sir, the State of Maharashtra experiences huge variability in rainfall across various regions in the State. Major area of Maharashtra practices rain-fed farming. The net sown area under irrigation in the State of Maharashtra is about 16-18 per cent, which is even lower than the national average of 47.68 per cent.