

Interactive Session with Shri Subrata Mukherjee
Hon'ble Minister for Water Resources Investigation & Development
and Panchayat & Rural Development, Govt. of West Bengal
on "Assuring Irrigation to Small & Marginal Farmers of West Bengal"
on 19 July 2018 at 2.00 p.m. at MCCI Conference Hall
PRESS RELEASE

Merchants' Chamber of Commerce & Industry organized Interactive Session with **Shri Subrata Mukherjee**, Hon'ble Minister for Water Resources Investigation & Development and Panchayat & Rural Development, Govt. of West Bengal on "**Assuring Irrigation to Small & Marginal Farmers of West Bengal**" today at its premises.

- Addressing the members, Shri Subrata Mukherjee said that in West Bengal, small & marginal farmers constitute 96% of total farmers and hold around 80.7% of the land, the average size of land holding being 0.77 ha. He said that in West Bengal there are 4 medium & major projects e.g. Teesta, Damodar Valley, Kansabati & Mayurakshi projects with a culturable command area (CCA) of 13,03,434 hectares. There are a total of 5,08,250 minor irrigation schemes covering CCA of 23,65,351 hectares. Since the priority of the Government is to extend maximum benefits to small and marginal farmers, it is ensured that schemes are to be so located where 85% or more of the beneficiaries belong to small and marginal farmers.
- Although West Bengal receives high annual rainfall, optimum utilization of water has not been possible. Major intervention in minor irrigation has played a pivotal role in boosting agricultural production in the state. The achievable minor irrigation potential in the state has been estimated at 44.34 lakh hectares, out of which 31.34 lakh hectares expected to be drawn from ground water resources and 13.00 lakh hectare from surface water. Owing to successful implementation of irrigation, the crop intensity has increased from 177% in 2010–11 to 188% now, he added.
- He referred to "Jal Dharo Jal Bharo", a unique state Government initiative to conserve rain water in all kinds of water bodies viz. tanks, ponds, reservoirs, canals etc. as of June 2018, 2,44,149 water bodise/ water retention structures have been created in convergence with the Departments of Water Resources Investigation & Development and Panchayat & Rural Development, Govt. of West Bengal.
- He also spoke about location specific scheme for comparatively underserved areas of the state named "Jalatirtha" since 2014 – 15 in 5 Paschimanchal districts of Bankura, Birbhum, Paschim Medinipur, Jhargram & Purulia, which was later extended to Sundarban areas and hilly areas of Darjeeling & Kalimpong.
- He mentioned about a Rs. 3,000 cr. aid from World Bank for developing minor irrigation with command area of 5 hectares and above.
- The Hon'ble Minister said that Arsenic problem in 7 districts of the state is most wide spread in the world, excepting Bangladesh. He felt that water for agriculture should also be made arsenic free, like water for human consumption, otherwise fruits and vegetables grown from such tress prone to arsenic eater would also contain elements leading to cancer.

Earlier, in his Welcome Address, Shri Ramesh Agarwal, President of the Chamber said that focus should be on "Per Drop More Crop" approach, incentivizing use of efficient irrigation system. He mentioned about "Jal Dharo Jal Bharo" and "Jalatirtha" initiatives and spoke about legal bindings and high cost of ground water. He suggested subsidies to improve agricultural productivity.
