



# MINISTRY OF WATERWAYS AND ENVIRONMENT

## Press Release

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Attention: Chief-of-Staff

For immediate Release

### Koroqaqa farmers thanks Government

Saltwater intrusion on farmland in Koroqaqa Settlement in Ba has been addressed to ensure farming activities resume in affected areas.

This after the completion of a Drainage and flood mitigation works by the Ministry of Waterways and Environment in the settlement that will benefit close to 40 households and 25 sugarcane farmers.

While raising concerns of the saltwater intrusion into farms, 63 year-old sugarcane farmer Mr. Muni Kumar said cane production in his community had seen a downturn due to this, as tracts of once arable land had become inundated with seawater over time.

He said this problem has arisen from the past two years with the sea water entering through the floodgate during high tide, which then enters into farms due to improper and blockage of the farm drains.

“This has resulted into a massive decrease in the sugarcane production in this area where close to 25 farmers are affected due to the waterlogging into their farms,”

“Before, I used to harvest 240 tons of cane in one season, but from the past 2 years the production has decreased to 140 tons,” he said.

Mr. Kumar further added that not only their cane production has decreased, but also the land size has also been taken away where most of their land has been left idle due to the waterlogging.

Mr. Kumar said other farmers in the settlement have also been heavily affected by this, concerning a farmer who used to produce 400ton of cane in the past, but have harvested 80 tons only in the last crushing season relating this to the seawater intrusion on their farms.

He further acknowledged the Ministry of Waterways for their timely assistance in providing drainage works to the community that will resolve the flooding activity in the community and in their farms.

“I raised our concerns to the Minister Hon. Dr. Mahendra Reddy raising concerns on how farmers are affected here and we are thankful for his immediate action that he and his Ministry took to solve our concerns and problem here in Koroqaqa settlement in Ba,”

Meanwhile the Minister for Waterways, Environment and Agriculture Hon. Dr. Mahendra Reddy attributed this occurrence to climate change, as it had become a major contributor to the frequency of saltwater intrusion on farmlands.

He further acknowledged the determination set by his respective Ministry portfolios in delivering service to rural communities, particularly in farming communities to achieve the dedication set by the Government to ensure equal development opportunities.

“It is our core role to take immediate action to address this problem to allow farmers to fully utilize their land and further increase their production to what it used to be before,” he said.

Dr. Reddy further stated that the Ministry of Waterways will continue to assist rural households with their drainage and flood mitigation program to further boost farming activities either for agricultural or non-agricultural purposes.

Meanwhile the Drainage improvement works for Koroqaqa settlement in Ba was carried out at a total cost of \$15,300 VEP that included de-silting of existing seawall drains in that area which was silted with mud, removal of all debris, grass, shrubs and vegetation to allow unobstructed flow.