

Title: Need for early gauge conversion of Luni-Munabao rail line in Rajasthan.

COL. (RETD.) SONA RAM CHOUDHARY (BARMER): I would like to draw the attention of the Government towards gauge conversion of Luni-Munabao rail line. Munabao is just at the border of Pakistan and this work is strategically very vital for the country from Defence point of view. It is over more than three years but the progress is just negligible. It is learnt that Rs. 39 crore was sanctioned for the work during 1997-98, of which only Rs. 1 crore was spent and the remaining funds were surrendered.

Again during the current financial year Rs. 30 crore was sanctioned but I am told that most of the amount is still unspent. Sir, this project is very important not only for the development of backward desert districts of western Rajasthan but for Defence preparedness of the country as well. Any further delay will undermine and jeopardise the national security in a fluid situation prevailing across the border.

Therefore, I shall request the Government for the following:-

- a. inordinate delay in execution of work and continuous surrender of funds during the last three years should be looked into and remedial measure taken to avoid recurrence of such lapses in future.
- b. Since the Project is connected with Defence preparedness and also development of most backward THAR desert, the execution of work should be taken up on war footing and completed at the earliest. This will also generate employment opportunities in drought-prone area which is reeling under severe drought for the third consecutive year.