

an>

Title: Need to restore direct booking of betel leaves at Mechada and Panskura Stations in West Bengal and consider waiver of tariff hike on betel leaves.

SHRI LAKSHMAN SETH (TAMLUK): Sir, more than five lakh people in the District of Purba Medinipur, mainly in my Tamluk Parliamentary Constituency, maintain their livelihood by cultivation of betel leaves. Betel leaves are highly perishable commodity which need speedy transportation. Earlier, betel leaves could be transported through direct booking from Mechada and Panskura Stations to various destinations. But the Railway Board, in the month of April, 2004, introduced rebooking system of betel leaves at intermediary stations. This resulted in huge burden of tariff and harassment to the cultivators. In addition to that, tariff on betel leaves has been hiked recently. Further, most of the Express trains do not stop at Mechada Station. Population of Purba Medinipur Zila is about 45 lakh. The demand of the people of the District is for stoppage of all Express trains at Mechada Station.

I would urge upon the hon. Railway Minister to look into the following matters favourably at an early date:-

1. Restoration of direct booking system of betel leaves at Mechada and Panskura Stations which was prevalent before April, 2004.
2. Waiver of tariff hike on betel leaves.
3. Stoppage of Express Trains such as 2841/2842 Coromondal Express, 2459/2460 Howrah-Mumbai Gijanjali Express, 6003/6004 Howrah-Chennai Mail, 8001/8002 Mumbai-Howrah Mail, 8311/8312 Howrah-Sambalpur Ispat Express, 8013/8014 Howrah-Tatanagar Steel Express, 2703/2704 Howrah-Secundarabad Falaknama Express, 5625/5626 Bangalore-Guwahati Express *via* Howrah, 6803-6355/6804-6356 Howrah-Tiruchirappalli-Kanyakumari Express and 2821/2822 Howrah-Bhubaneswar Dheuli Express.