

[Shrimati Prabhawati Gupta]

the last few year, entire North Bihar is reeling under devastating floods. The economy of the entire region has been crippled due to the damage caused to crops and other things valued at Rs. one thousand crores last year. If devastating floods continue to inundate the entire North Bihar, the fertile land of this region will turn into desert in the near future. The situation in two districts—East Champaran and West Champaran—of North Bihar is really grim. Devastation caused by floods in fertile Champaran district is difficult to describe. About 3-4 hundred rivulets originating from Nepal inundate the entire region during rainy season. If a high power dam and reservoir is constructed on Champaran-Nepal border to check the flow of water, the menace of floods can be controlled to a great extent. In addition to this, the drawbacks in the Gandak project cause waterlogging in the entire region. Implementation of the Gandak Drainage Scheme is essential for which money can be borrowed from the World Bank.

My suggestion to the Central Government is to include the flood problem of North Bihar in the national programme and to start work on the Gandak Drainage Scheme. Central Government should take up the matter of constructing large reservoirs near the originating points of rivers with the Government of Nepal in order to find a lasting solution to the perennial flood problem.

[English]

(xix) Need for early clearance of link portion of Chevatura Major Canal

SHRI B.N. REDDY (Miryalguda) ; The work in upper reaches of the Chevatura Major Canal in Krishna District of Andhra Pradesh has been completed recently and the work in the lower reaches had been completed four years ago. However, work on the reaches between 5.6 to 8.4 kms is not being permitted as it is stated to be a forest land. As reported by the Conservator of Forests, there is no forest between 5.6 and 8.4 kms. Despite that the Union Government has not yet cleared the project. As a result, about

4270 hectares of land is not getting water for irrigation for the last four years and the area has been badly affected by the drought. As a result of non-clearance of the project by the Union Government, people are very much agitated.

I, therefore, request the Union Government to clear the area for being dug and linked with the main canal so that water is available for affected areas for irrigation purposes.

(xx) Need to remove disparity in fares for Haj pilgrims

SHRI SOMNATH CHATTERJEE (Bolpur) : A large number of pilgrims from Eastern and North-eastern India go to Mecca for Haj from and via Calcutta. Pilgrims from other regions, whose travels originate from Delhi, Bombay, Madras or Srinagar are allowed to travel by chartered Air flights. But pilgrims from Calcutta are required to pay an additional sum of Rs. 2400 per person which is highly discriminatory and improper. Further, subsidy of 33 per cent in air fare given to Haj pilgrims since 1980 has now been substantially reduced to 15 per cent from 1984 which has imposed an additional burden on the poor pilgrims. The facility of issuing one free air ticket for every ten paid tickets should also be made available to the pilgrims. In the absence of proper and adequate shipping service being made available to the pilgrims, it is essential that Air flights should be provided at reasonable fares within the means of the pilgrims most of whom are poor people and spend their life savings. I urge upon the Government to treat pilgrims from all the centres at par and not to discriminate amongst them and no extra charge or fare should be levied on pilgrims whose travels originate from Calcutta and the subsidy in Air fare should be raised to 33 per cent as before.

I urge upon that the Government to take an early and favourable decision so that the Haj pilgrims going this year are not denied the minimum facilities. I also request the Government that it should frame a long term policy with regard to the travel facilities of Haj pilgrims which will benefit all concerned.