

districts of Maharashtra. The industrialists also showed interest to set up industries, but in the absence of a direct link between Chandrapur and Bombay—the capital of Maharashtra—not many industries could be set up and the development came to a halt, Garhchirauli is the only 'no-industry' district in Maharashtra. The train to Bombay goes via Vardha and the quota allotted to this station is for two berths only. Similarly, for going to Madras also, the quota is for two berths. Recently, a new train has been introduced between Madras and Ahmedabad, but there is no quota for either Chandrapur or Garhchirauli, though the people can travel from there upto Bhusaval. Similarly, there is no reserved quota for the people of this district in Navjeevan Express and Hyderabad-Madras Express.

About three years back, the Hon. Railway Minister had made an announcement to start 'Sevagram Express' between Vardha and Bombay. In the announcement relating to the introduction of new trains, the name of 'Sevagram Express' has not even been mentioned, what to speak of starting it. The people of Vidarbha are disappointed on this account. If the narrow gauge line between Chandrapur and Gondia is converted into broad gauge, it would not only facilitate movement of minerals, iron, coal, wood and rice, which are available in abundance in that area, to other parts of the country, but also help in the large scale development of the area. I also request to extend the Nagpur-Dadar Express upto Gondia. Nagpur is in the Centre of the country and one can get trains in all the directions from there, but because of limited quota of reserved berths at Gondia not many people benefit at the moment.

It is essential for the development of Vidarbha region that the Hon. Minister sends a team of Senior Railway Officials so that they could find out from the people's representatives the difficulties and try to resolve them and thereby maintain the required balance. They should also help in implementing the proposed projects by sanctioning mere funds so that the development of Vidarbha is done according to the policy of uniform development of all regions.

- (iv) Need to assess the grave situation in Agra district arising out of the shortage of drinking and irrigation water and to extend necessary financial assistance to the State therefor

SHRI GANGA RAM (Firozabad) : Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the entire Agra district has been facing acute shortage of drinking and irrigation water as a result of severe drought during the past few months. The summer season is yet to set in, but the rivers, rivulets, ponds and wells have started drying up. The water level of Government and private tubewells has receded. Slush has started coming out of tubewells instead of water. The canals are also in deplorable condition. There is hue and cry because of acute shortage of water in the rural areas of Jagner, Khairagarh, Bah, Fatehabad, Firozabad and Kirawali. Due to erratic power supply the tubewells are not functioning properly. When in the near future summer will be at its peak, the situation will worsen and there will be famine like conditions in the said area which would be impossible for the administration to tackle. The arrangement of overhead water tanks, water pipelines and handpumps has failed. Instead of this, wells can be dug up in every village at low cost so that adequate drinking water could be made available. The administration should be asked to reconsider it and take effective steps to deal with this situation. There is a suggestion to lift water from the Chambal river near Bah and Pinahat and store it in water tanks and then supply it to nearby villages free of cost through the pipelines. A Barrage should be constructed near Pinahat to store water which could be consumed as and when required. Besides, a 1000 MW power station should also be set up so that power shortage could be met. There is need for work on war-footing in this respect. The Central Government should immediately send a survey team to help the State Government in controlling the situation.

- (v) Demand for new fast trains from Banaras to Bombay and from Allahabad to Ahmedabad

SHRI DAL CHANDER JAIN (Damoh): Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, Sagar is situation on Bina-Katni section of Central Railways.

It has a University, a very important centre of Defence Department and a big business centre. Many cement factories are also situated in Damoh. But in the absence of direct fast trains for Bombay, Calcutta and Ahmedabad, the people of this place have to go to Bina or Katni to catch the trains for these cities. Many a times the passengers miss the trains and as a result they have to face lot of inconvenience.

Therefore, two fast trains may be introduced. One between Banaras and Bombay via Allahabad, Katni, Bina, Bhopal, Itarasi and another between Allahabad and Ahmedabad via Katni, Bina and Kota.

[English]

- (vi) Need to accept the recommendations of Fourth Pay Commission regarding grant of ex-gratia payment to CPF retirees

SHRI BASUDEB ACHARIA (Bankura): Sir, I draw the attention of the House to the plight of these retired employees of the railways who had retired on Provident Fund terms and could not exercise option to pension scheme.

These handful of retired employees were happy to learn that the IVth Pay Commission had recommended grant of Ex-gratia payment of Rs 300/- per month to all CPF retirees whose basic pay was below Rs. 500, payment of 50 per cent of the above mentioned ex-gratia amount to widows of CPF retirees and another chance for option to pension scheme to such retirees.

But these retired employees are worried because so far Government have not announced acceptance of the above recommendations. I am receiving many anxious enquiries from these retired employees about Government's decisions on the recommendations of the commission relating to CPF retirees.

I may mention here that the number of PF retirees is decreasing due to death etc. I therefore urge upon the Government to immediately issue orders for grant of ex-gratia

amount and option to pension scheme etc. to PF retirees before it is too late to do so.

- (vii) Need to avoid discrimination in the matter of issuance of passports to the people of Punjab

SHRI BALWANT SINGH RAMOO-WALIA (Sangrur): Sir, nearly about 35,000 Passport applications are pending in Regional Passport offices Chandigarh and Jullunder—for those who have to go to abroad either as visitors to see their relatives or for employment purposes. There are hundreds of applicants who have been offered employment with intimation to produce their passport upto certain date. But their passports are not being issued because Chandigarh police is not giving clearance to the applicants.

This practice of getting clarification is applicable only for applicants from Punjab. It is open discrimination against the people of Punjab, is very serious. The Government should immediately intervene and set things right.

- (viii) Demand for constructing a bridge over railway crossing at Thirupallyar town in Tamil Nadu

SHRI P. R. S. VENKATESAN (Cuddalore): Sir, in my constituency Cuddalore N.T., the Railway Station in Thirupapuliur is situated at the centre of the town. Thirupapuliur town is a famous pilgrim centre. There is a railway crossing in the heart of the town which has been causing lot of difficulties to the road traffic due to frequent closing of railway gates for rail traffic. Many accidents have taken place at this railway crossing. Since this railway crossing is dividing the town separating mofussil bus stand, Government hospital, markets and many villages on one side and the local residents, temples, shops, offices, etc. on the other side, people living in the town are put to lot of difficulties.

Sir, the people of the town have been demanding for many years now, construction of a bridge over this railway crossing so that traffic congestion and accidents are