

units of electricity every year, it is estimated.

It is true that the country needs badly extra power for the economic development of the country. But it is a matter of regret that our engineers have not examined all aspects of the case before venturing to take the Bedthi Project.

In the first instance the people of the area have strongly objected to the taking up of this Project on several valid grounds.

Specialists after careful study have given reports that it is not desirable to take up the project on the following grounds:

Bedthi is as important to Karnataka as silent valley is for Kerala;

It is an irreparable loss if 25,000 acres of rich forest area is destroyed in addition to large area of agricultural land on account of this project;

Rich mineral deposits of limestone, copper, etc., will be merged in water;

Large cattle grazing areas and valuable medicinal herbs will be lost;

The destruction of forests will affect at the rain fall in ghat and plain areas;

22 villages will be drowned; and

The water storage in two reservoirs (nearby) may cause big earth tremor.

To put it briefly the direct and indirect loss on account of the project will be very much more than the benefit of extra power.

On account of the strong protest of the people of the area, temporary stay is given by the Chief Minister of Karnataka.

I strongly urge upon the Central Government to order the State Government to immediately drop the Bedthi Project. After completing Kali

River Project and after careful study and examination, the Project may be taken up after convincing the people of the area.

(ii) Welfare Fund for Fishermen

SHRI B. K. NAIR (Quilon): With Your permission, Sir, I wish to raise the following important matter under Rule 377.

It was gratifying to be told in answer to my Unstarred Question No. 4043 on the 14th instant that the feasibility of starting a fishermen's welfare fund is being examined by the Ministry of Agriculture. This is a matter which deserves the most earnest and urgent attention of the Government. It relates to a community which has always rendered very valuable service to the nation not only in making up to some extent out shortfall in a vital sector like proteins but also in augmenting our foreign exchange resources. Our income from export of fish and fish preparations has been increasing steadily from year to year—from just Rs. 54.5 crores in 1972-73 to over Rs. 228 crores in 1978-79. On the other hand, the lakhs of families for whom fishing is the sole means of livelihood have remained most neglected and backward. Even their bare minimum human needs like housing and drinking water have not been met adequately. In matters like health services, sanitary arrangements, education and transport facilities, their areas remain far below the average standards. Their income is meagre, much of the value of the fruits of their labours are being snatched away by unscrupulous middlemen, the trade and the owners of boats and trawlers.

I submit, therefore, that the welfare fund now under consideration should have comprehensive coverage providing insurance against contingencies like unemployment, under-employment, loss of property like dwelling houses and equipment due to natural calamities like floods, tidal waves and storms and also personal injuries and loss of life resulting from accidents occurring at sea besides pensions for old age.

I have also to request the Government that under its coverage should be included not only the men engaged in country craft but also those working in mechanised boats and trawlers.

There may not be any dearth of funds since adequate amounts can be raised through a cess levied on exports, contributions from concerned State Governments and Employers, besides provision made by the Government of India.

(iii) Need for settling the grievances of employees of departmental canteens

SHRI E. BALANANDAN (Mukundapuram): Mr. Deputy-Speaker, Sir, the Government of India has already decided that the employees of the departmental canteens of Government of India will be treated as holders of Civil posts under the Central Government. It was also enjoined in the same notification that Service rules will be framed shortly under proviso to Article 309 of the Constitution to regulate their employment. However, nothing has been done in this respect so far and the canteen employees are agitating through a strike for the following demands: (1) Pay scales on par with Central Government employees; (2) Leave, L.T.C., Medical facilities, Pension, C.E.A., etc. at par with Central Government employees; (3) conversion of Cooperative canteens to Departmental Canteens; (4) creation of canteens department under Ministry of Home Affairs; (5) Private stalls in the canteens should be abolished and (6) victimisation of Canteen Employees be removed.

In view of the situation created due to inaction on the part of Government, the canteen employees have been forced to go on strike. All efforts by their representatives to avert the strike and have a negotiated settlement of their problems have been so far of no avail.

I, therefore, call upon the Government to settle the genuine grievances of canteen employees particularly their demand for parity with other Central Government employees in all respects.

(iv) U.G.C. grants to University and College libraries for purchase of books.

DR. VASANT KUMAR PANDIT (Rajgarh): Mr. Deputy-Speaker, Sir, the University Grants Commission has been the main Central funding body for library book buying in universities and college throughout the country. Out of the overall budget 26-30 per cent is spent for book buying. UGC disbursed in the year 1978-79, Rs. 644 lakhs for the purchase of books. This comprises of Basic grant to universities of Rs. 242 lakhs. Balance amount was given for Book Bank Scheme and other schemes for the development of Humanities, Social Sciences Engineering, etc.

The last Government drastically cut the fund allocation to the UGC for the year 1979-80 and the Sixth Five Year Plan. The policy was that funds were required more for agriculture than higher education. As a result of this measure, since July-August, 1979, university and college-libraries ran out of funds and stopped purchasing books. The situation today is exactly the same. Libraries are not able to pay for books purchased in the first half of 1979 and neither have they been able to purchase any new books. Book buying has completely stopped for almost one year.

This slashing of funds will affect higher education all over the country. Libraries will not be in a position to get latest books on subjects essential for the country's progress. Research and development will suffer a set back due to the paucity of latest research findings from all over the world. After all, our academicians and scientists depend on books for their knowledge and professional growth. Students will suffer because of lack of good and recent reference material. The country cannot afford to cut down on higher education.

The cut in library grants should be immediately restored and book buying