

the grip of shortage of rice and consequent rise in the price of rice. Not only that the price of rice has gone up but also that rice is scarcely available in the market. The so-called superfine quality of rice released from the FCI is so poor in quality that it cannot be used for consumption. Adding fuel to the fire, the Tamil Nadu Government has imposed a ban on the free movement of rice to Kerala and the Central Government have cut down the rice allocation to the State. All these have created a very serious situation demanding the immediate attention of the Government.

It should be noted that the main cultivation in Kerala is cash crops, which earn considerable amount of foreign exchange to the country. If enough quantity of rice is not made available at moderate price, the farmers will be forced to divert from foreign exchange earning cash crops to rice and other crops which will be ultimately detrimental to the national interest itself. Keralites are only rice eaters and not accustomed to wheat and it is the responsibility of the Central Government to provide enough rice to this foreign exchange earning State.

Therefore, I urge upon the Central Government to restore the rice allocation to Kerala to the previous level, direct the FCI to provide boiled rice instead of the so-called superfine quality and to direct the Tamil Nadu Government to lift the ban on the movement of rice.

(xi) Delay in President's assent to the Bill Nationalising Kumardherbi Engineering Works Ltd., Dhanbad.

SHRI A. K. ROY (Dhanbad): Mr. Chairman, we feel seriously concerned over the delay in getting Presidential assent on the Bill nationalising Kumardherbi Engineering Works (Pvt.) Ltd. in Dhanbad, Bihar which was passed unanimously by the Bihar Assembly and the Council on the 26th and 27th July, 1982. Since then the

Bill has been pending before the Central Government for the needful, Continued closure of Kumardherbi Engineering Works, a prime engineering concern of the coal belt producing various items of priority used in the railways and the colliery has become a national issue raised in the Parliament several times. The factory employing more than 3000 workers, i.e. supporting their 20,000 family members is lying closed since July, 1979 due to the mischief and mismanagement of the employer who was a part of the Bird & Co.. In the beginning, the Central Government assured taking over of the factory under IDRA and declared the factory economically viable and a national asset and the Chief Minister of Bihar announced over the radio in November, 1980 the take over based on this assurance. Effort was made so that the Provincial Government took that over to restart the factory. Ultimately, a bill to that effect was brought and passed more than three months ago. Still, the factory could not be opened as it did not get the assent of the President.

After more than three years of closure, the plight of the workers is easily imaginable. The people are literally starving. The families have got disintegrated. More than fifty workers have committed suicide. Only last month one worker gave his life before a running train. Severe drought in the countryside has further accentuated the misery. So, the delay in getting assent from the President is acting as the last cruel blow to the patience of the workers and their withering existence.

(xii) Problems of Railway Employees retired from S.R.P.F

SHRI BASUDEB ACHARIA (Bankura): Mr. Chairman, Sir, a peculiar situation has arisen out of the problems of railway employees retired under SRPF. It is a matter of grave concern because of the way their problems are being tossed around from one Ministry to another without