

RAJYA SABHA

*SYNOPSIS OF DEBATE

(Proceedings other than Questions and Answers)

Monday, July 22, 2024/ Ashadha 31, 1946 (Saka)

BIRTHDAY GREETINGS

MR. CHAIRMAN: Hon. Members, I take this opportunity to extend warm birthday greetings to the hon. Leader of the Opposition and President of the Indian National Congress, **Shri Mallikarjun Kharge ji**, whose birthday was yesterday, on 21st July.

Shri Kharge ji, a senior politician in the country, has served in various constitutional positions, including as Union Cabinet Minister, Member of Lok Sabha for two terms, Minister in the Karnataka Government and Leader of Opposition of Karnataka Legislative Assembly. He had been a Member of Karnataka Legislative Assembly for nine consecutive terms from 1972 to 2009. He has been an influential labour union leader passionately advocating cause of workers.

Shri Kharge is a remarkable polyglot which enriches his engagement with diverse communities. His interest in sports, including kabaddi, hockey, and football, further exemplifies his dynamic personality. This House has often been delighted by his wit and humour which effortlessly lighten the atmosphere. He is married to Shrimati Radhabai Kharge. The couple is blessed with sons, Priyank, who is a Cabinet Minister in the Government of Karnataka, Rahul and Milind, and daughters, Priyadarshini, and Dr. Jayashree, who is married to Shri Radhakrishna, Member of Parliament, Lok Sabha. Hon. Members, on behalf of the entire House, I wish him a very happy and healthy life.

Hon. Members, I am pleased to extend birthday greetings to hon. Member of Parliament, **Shri S Niranjan Reddy**. His birthday is today. A senior advocate in the Supreme Court of India, he has served as the standing counsel for both the Election Commission of India and the Medical Council of India. Shri Niranjan Reddy has been a Member of this House representing the State of Andhra Pradesh since June 2022. Mr. Reddy's reflections in this House, especially on the three new laws pertaining to criminal jurisprudence, 75 years of our Parliamentary journey and also on the Telecommunication Bill have been enormously beneficial to this House.

Mr. Reddy has impactfully represented India as part of India's Parliamentary delegation to the World Summit of the Committee of the Future in Uruguay, Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference in Ghana and in the Inter-Parliamentary Union in Geneva.

An avid film lover, Shri Niranjan Reddy is credited with the screenplay for 'Ghazi' (2017), which won the National Film Award for Best Feature Film in Telugu. His passion also extends to conservation of art through his trust, Art @ Telangana. He is married to

Shrimati Vaidehi Reddy Sirgapoor and the couple is blessed with son, Sahil, and daughter, Akshara.

Hon. Members, on behalf of this House, I wish him a long, healthy and happy life and extend greetings to his family members.

OBITUARY REFERENCES

MR. CHAIRMAN: Hon. Members, I refer with profound sorrow to the passing away of **Shri P. Kannan**, a former Member of this House on the 5th of November, 2023. He served as a Member of this House representing the Union Territory of Puducherry from October 2009 to October 2015.

Born on 20th August, 1949 at Puducherry, Shri P. Kannan, entered public life at a very young age and rose to become a Member of Puducherry Legislative Assembly for three terms (1985 to 1996). He also served as the Speaker of Puducherry Legislative Assembly (1991 to 1996) and a Minister in the Government of Puducherry holding portfolio of Health and Family Welfare.

In the passing away of Shri P. Kannan, the country has lost one of the tallest leaders of Puducherry, an experienced legislator and an able administrator. We deeply mourn the passing away of Shri P. Kannan.

Hon. Members, I refer with profound sorrow to the passing away of hon. General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Vietnam, **His Excellency Nguyen Phu Trong**, on 19th July, 2024 in Hanoi at the age of 80 years. General Secretary Nguyen Phu Trong was the senior-most Vietnamese political leader holding that position for the last 13 years and was widely respected in Vietnam. He has served as the Chairman of the National Assembly of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam and numerous senior political positions in the country.

Apart from his wise leadership of Vietnam's progress and development over decades, General Secretary Nguyen Phu Trong had contributed to India-Vietnam friendship and to the comprehensive strategic partnership between the two countries. He came to India in 2013 on a state visit.

We express our deepest condolences to the people and leadership of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam on the passing away of General Secretary, His Excellency Mr. Nguyen Phu Trong. We send our deepest sympathy to his bereaved family and to the people of Vietnam. We also express our solidarity with the people and leaders of Vietnam in this time of grief.

(One Minute's silence was observed as a mark of respect to the memory of the departed.)

OPENING REMARKS BY THE CHAIRMAN

MR. CHAIRMAN: Hon. Members, this Session, the 265th Session of Rajya Sabha, marks a significant moment with the consideration of the maiden Budget by the newly elected Government now serving its third consecutive term after over six decades under Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi.

Hon. Members, I am confident that this august House will expectedly lead the nation by example to calibrate the political path forward marked by moderation of discourse, pledging to serve the nation and rising above partisan interests.

Undeniably, there is need to lower the temperature in our polity. This House must reflect highest standards of sanctity, propriety and protocol of parliamentary traditions that would be motivational for legislatures in the largest democracy and outside as well. World is looking up to us. Let us live up to that expectation.

Hon. Members, I have every hope that the proceedings of the House would be marked by enriching and informed debates optimally utilizing the time for national benefit. Let us uphold the principles of 'Dialogue, Discussion, Deliberation and Debate' fostering an environment conducive to robust parliamentary discourse and set an example before the nation.

Hon. Members, I seek to draw your attention to another important and concerning aspect. Many times, Members' communications to the Chairman find way in public domain and sometimes even before the same reach the addressee. This inappropriate practice of garnering public attention is at best avoided.

Hon. Members, there is nothing beyond Bharat which we cannot achieve. Let us dedicate to ever keep nation first relegating partisan interests. There is no better place than this temple of democracy to begin. Let us all commit to act in togetherness for welfare of our people.

MATTERS RAISED WITH THE PERMISSION OF THE CHAIR

1. Concern over Rising Cases of Dubious Drug Trials Having Serious Repercussions on Healthcare Sector in Country

DR. KANIMOZHI NVN SOMU: I want to bring to the notice of this House, a very serious issue raised by the Ethical Committee of the National Institute of Virology about the rising cases of dubious drug trials in India which have serious repercussions on the whole health sector. It also raises serious questions about the monitoring and quality control of the clinical studies in our country. The most important factor in such trial is the genuineness of the original product which is considered the gold standard. The allegation is that the trials are being conducted just four months before the procurement of the gold standard drug from the original manufacturer. This raises a serious question about the authenticity of the trial data. By no sleight of hand can this anomaly be brushed under the carpet. The data released by the Election Commission on 14th March has revealed 35 pharma companies in India have contributed nearly 1000 crores to political parties across the State and Centre through the companies which are being investigated for poor quality drugs which they have purchased through the bonds. As a member of the medical fraternity, I caution the Union Government to take stringent action against all those involved in this unethical practice in clinical trials and not to play with the life of the innocent people by supporting and facilitating those who conduct dubious unethical drug trials in the country. I request the hon. Minister of Health to do the needful.

(Several hon'ble Members associated.)

2. Concern over Mismanagement of Railways in Kerala Causing Distress to Railway Workers/Passengers in Region

SHRI A. A. RAHIM: No one is sensitive towards the plight of train passengers in Kerala. Recently, six passengers fainted due to an uncontrolled rush in Parasuram

Express. The similar incidents have been happening in Kerala every day. Instead of improving the services, the Central Government is interested only in renaming the trains and enhancing the passenger fares. Despite a good earning from Kerala, the Railways are not improving the infrastructure in Kerala. In a sad incident, a contract worker, named Joy lost his life in Thiruvananthapuram while cleaning a canal for railways. The state government has declared a compensation for victim's family and Municipal Corporation of Thiruvananthapuram will build a house for them. I also urge the Union Government to ensure a befitting compensation to victim's family.

(Several hon'ble Members associated.)

3. Demand to Explore Possibilities for New Rail Projects in Auraiya District of Uttar Pradesh

SHRIMATI GEETA ALIAS CHANDRAPRABHA: The people of Auraiya in Uttar Pradesh also have been waiting for rail based development for many years. Despite spending lakhs of rupees in many surveys conducted here, the people of Auraiya have not been able to get rail facilities. I request that on the basis of the survey conducted earlier, new rail projects should be implemented as soon as possible from Kannauj to Jalaun via Bidhuna-Auraiya and to Etawah via Hamirpur and Auraiya along the Bundelkhand Expressway, so that the people of Auraiya, Bidhuna and other nearby areas can get rail facilities and new possibilities of development of the region can be developed.

(Dr. Sasmit Patra, Shri Ramji, Shri Brij Lal and Shri Baburam Nishad associated.)

4. Concern over Increasing Numbers of Digital Banking Frauds in the Financial Year 2023-24

SHRIMATI PRIYANKA CHATURVEDI: According to the annual report released by RBI, banking frauds have increased more than three times, while digital transaction frauds have also increased seven times. The 75 percent of the banks affected by this are public sector banks. It is a serious matter that the general public has got technology but the government has not trained them about its use. Most of the people fall prey to fraud due to lack of information. This matter has been brought to the notice of the Information Technology Minister many times. Parallel to this, spying of phones by the government for political reasons is also a big issue. Many senior leaders have expressed their concern about this. It is hoped that the Minister will address their concerns appropriately.

(Several hon'ble Members associated.)

5. Concern over Death of Three Labourers while Working in Illegal Coal Mine (Carbo Cell) in Surendra Nagar District of Gujarat

SHRI SHAKTISINH GOHIL: The low quality Carbo Cell coal is found in Surendranagar district of Gujarat. Its illegal excavation is done there. Many young workers die due to the gas released during excavation there. Recently 3 workers have lost their lives. In such a situation, the police also talk of filing an FIR against the dead workers. In fact, the people who run such activities are very rich and have political connections. I request that the Government should give compensation to the families of the poor dead workers and a judicial inquiry should be conducted against the local mafia who carried out this illegal excavation so that they can be punished.

(Several hon'ble Members associated.)

6. Demand to Allocate Funds for Pending Public Projects in State of Tamil Nadu

SHRI P. WILSON: I rise to bring to the attention of the Central Government that several important projects in Tamil Nadu await approval and necessary funds. For example, The Chennai Metro Rail Ltd., Phase-II Project and Metro Rail projects for Coimbatore, Madurai and Tiruchi are pending for approval and funds. The NDRF funds to Tamilnadu are yet to be released so that relief works are undertaken in Tamil Nadu. The adequate funds are not being granted for educational and welfare programmes. Under the federal system, Tamil Nadu and its people are facing discrimination. So, I request that pending projects must be approved and funds be granted to Tamilnadu without any further delay.

(Several hon'ble Members associated.)

7. Demand for Special Category Status to State of Odisha

SHRI MUJIBULLAH KHAN: I would like to express my views in favour of granting special category status to Odisha. India's progress is possible only through the development of states. My leader Naveen Patnaik ji used to write letters to the Central Government repeatedly regarding granting special category status to Odisha. Our Members of Parliament raised this issue in the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha. But, the Central Government has not yet fulfilled our demand. 22% of the area in Odisha is tribal dominated area. Seven districts of our State have a coastline of about 500 km. Sea cyclones frequently bring devastation here. There is a huge loss of life and property. The State Government has been appreciated at the national and international level for making all efforts to ensure the safety of the people.

(Several hon'ble Members associated.)

8. Demand to Implement a Comprehensive National Coastal Tourism Development Policy in Country

SHRI GOLLA BABURAO: I wish to highlight the fact that we are blessed with a coastline over 9,700 kilometers. In Andhra Pradesh alone, we have 970 kilometers long coastline. The Central Government can promote the tourism sector at a massive scale, if we develop our coastal areas properly. We can develop a comprehensive policy to develop the entire beach and coastal line in almost all the States, from Gujarat to West Bengal. It will attract the huge FDI and make India an important tourist destination.

(Several hon'ble Members associated.)

9. Demand for Long-Term Solution to Prevent Loss of Life and Property Due to Floods in Bihar

DR. BHIM SINGH: The double-engine government in Bihar is moving towards reviving the glorious past of Bihar. Good work is being done in many areas. A lot of support is also being received from the Government of India. But, I want to draw the attention of the government towards a big problem of Bihar. Bihar is a state whose southern part is often drought-hit and the northern part is often flood-hit. Floods have caused a lot of loss of life and property. Despite many schemes and efforts of the government, floods occur in northern Bihar. The main reason for this is that the floodplain of Kosi, Gandak and Bagmati rivers falls in Nepal. Rainwater from Nepal comes to our

Bihar. In fact, this is an international problem and its solution should also be found at the international level. Therefore, we request the government to get North Bihar rid of this problem.

(Dr. Fauzia Khan, Dr. Sasmit Patra, Shri P. Wilson, and Shri Niranjan Bishi associated.)

10. Demand to Include History of Struggle against Emergency, in School and College Curriculum

SHRI NARESH BANSAL: I want to raise a serious issue here. Like the freedom struggle, the history of the struggle for restoration of democracy during the Emergency should also be included in the school and college curriculum. This is a dark chapter of Indian democracy. It can never be forgotten. After independence, it was also called the second freedom of democracy. The Emergency imposed by Mrs. Indira Gandhi's government in 1975 lasted for 21 months. Many people sacrificed their lives to save the democracy of the country. Most of the opposition leaders have themselves been its victims. If the struggle of those who opposed the atrocities and suppression during this period is given a proper place in the textbooks, then democratic forces will develop and the roots of democracy will be strengthened.

(Several hon'ble Members associated.)

11. Demand for Allocation of Special Economic Zones in the State of Bihar

SHRI MANOJ KUMAR JHA: The progress of the country is not possible without the progress of states like Bihar. Today, there are 378 Special Economic Zones in the entire country and 265 of them are operational. But, there is not a single Special Economic Zone in Bihar. Today's Bihar wants to be free from the colonial identity and the tag of a labour supply state. I demand from the Government that Bihar should not be seen only from the point of view of getting votes. Looking at our social and geographical conditions, we should get the status of a special state along with a special economic package. We will strongly demand this inside and outside the House.

(Several hon'ble Members associated.)

12. Concern over Effects of Global Warming in Country

SHRI BABUBHAI JESANGBHAI DESAI: I would like to draw the attention of the Hon'ble Minister to the serious issue of global warming. It is our duty to protect all the five elements of nature. It is our responsibility to correct these five elements, earth, sky, fire, air and water. We worship the Ganga-Yamuna and Saraswati rivers like mother. Along with their cleanliness, we have to clean our seashores and mountain areas as well. Due to excessive rains in Gujarat as a result of climate change, farmers' fields have been flooded with excessive water.

(Several hon'ble Members associated.)

SPECIAL MENTIONS

1. Need for an indigenized English proficiency test

SHRI KARTIKEYA SHARMA: The IELTS (International English Language Testing System) and the TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) exams are pivotal for Indian aspirants seeking education and opportunities abroad. Every year, lakhs of Indian aspirants appear for these exams, the fees for which is usually upwards of

INR 10,000 per exam. This also indicates that an hefty annual revenue of several billion dollars is being generated for foreign entities conducting these exams. This cost is exacerbated by additional expenses, such as coaching fees, study materials, repeated attempts, and lack of adequate exam centres entailing to high travel costs as well. Considering the said facts, it would only be appropriate that India comes up with an indigenous English proficiency test, catering to the needs and aspirations of Indians. I request Ministry of Education to take initiative of formulating a world-class test based on internationally-accepted standards and make joint efforts with the Ministry of External Affairs to create its acceptance throughout the countries with global education hubs. This shall not only afford ease of access for an economically challenged aspirant but also democratize the mechanism of learning English as a means of gaining higher education from foreign lands.

(Dr. Sasmit Patra, Dr. Fauzia Khan, Shri A.A. Rahim and Dr. John Brittas associated.)

2. Demand for setting up AIIMS in Kozhikode, Kerala

DR. JOHN BRITTAS: The Government has been establishing new All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) for advanced tertiary healthcare services in various States under the Pradhan Mantri Swasthya Suraksha Yojana (PMSSY) initiative, but Kerala is perhaps the only major State in the country that does not have an AIIMS. The demand to set up an AIIMS in Kerala dates back over a decade. Although, the Government of Kerala has already identified and proposed Kinalur in Kozhikode District as a suitable location, equipped with all necessary facilities to cater to the requirements for the establishment of AIIMS, a definitive decision from the Union Government is still awaited. I earnestly urge upon the Government to expeditiously grant approval for the establishment of AIIMS at Kinalur in Kozhikode district in Kerala.

(Several hon'ble Members associated.)

3. Concern over exponential increase in air fares being charged by the airline companies

SHRI HARIS BEERAN: Rule 134 of the Aircraft Rules states that there cannot be any monopoly or cartelization with regard to the airfares. The DGCA is the appropriate authority in this regard. The majority of expats in the Gulf area are engaged in blue-collar jobs. They face excessive airfares, particularly on Air India Express. It is also pertinent to note that there are numerous complaints against Air India Express regarding irregular price hikes, inconsistent flight schedules and abrupt cancellations. More than 400 flights were cancelled and re-scheduled within two weeks in May alone. Further, the user fee at Thiruvananthapuram Airport has been hiked by 50 per cent by the Airport Economic Regulatory Authority, which significantly impacts air travel and tourism sector in Kerala. In this background, I request the hon'ble Minister for the Civil Aviation to direct the DGCA to perform its statutory duties, cap the airfares and penalize those airline companies which are in breach of the Aircraft Rules.

(Several hon'ble Members associated.)

4. Demand to approve Unchahar-Amethi rail line project

SHRI PRAMOD TIWARI: The Unchahar-Amethi Rail Line Project, the foundation stone of which was laid on 26 November 2013, is still awaiting approval from the Railways. It is an important project connecting three important districts of Uttar Pradesh, viz. Amethi, Pratapgarh and Raebareli. The project envisages the construction of seven railway stations. The length of the rail route is estimated to be 66.17 km. It will

connect 81 villages on its route. The Detailed Project Report (DPR) of the project has also been prepared, but despite more than a decade having passed, the project is hanging in the balance. There is no direct means of connectivity between Unchahar and Amethi. There is also no taxi service between Atheha, Salon and Amethi. Therefore, this project will greatly benefit the people of the area. I urge the Railway Minister to approve this project as soon as possible.

(Several hon'ble Members associated.)

5. Concern over rail infrastructure and services in Kannur

DR. V. SIVADASAN: Rail infrastructure and services in Kannur require immediate attention from the Government. Due to insufficient number of tracks, trains are halted at various stations for hours. The number of train services from Kannur Station to the south and north is insufficient. The situation is such that after 9 p.m., there are no passenger trains to travel to south till early morning. The passengers who need to reach the State capital are left with few options and this situation needs to be changed immediately. The infrastructure at the Kannur Railway station is also in a pathetic condition as the number of platforms is insufficient and due to the lack of functioning lifts, even the differently-abled are forced to walk up and down the stairs. There are no toilets in platforms which cause hardship for the passengers especially women, elderly and the differently-abled. The number of general coaches in long distance trains has been cut down. This has badly affected the ordinary commuters. Urgent steps should be taken to increase the number of general coaches in all trains. I urge the Government to take immediate steps for improving the rail infrastructure and services in Kannur.

(Dr. John Brittas, Dr. Sasmit Patra, Shri Sandosh Kumar P, Shri M. Mohamed Abdulla and Shri A.A. Rahim associated.)

6. Demand to change the name of Kerala to Keralam

SHRI SANDOSH KUMAR P: The demand to change the name of the State of 'Kerala' to 'Keralam' is a long-pending request from the people of the State. 'Keralam' implies the land of Kera - coconut- tree. It was the 'Aikya Keralam' movement in the 1920s which called for a separate State based on linguistic grounds for those who speak Malayalam. In 1956, a State for Malayalam speakers was eventually formed. But the First Schedule to the Constitution used the name Kerala instead of Keralam. Last year also, the State Government had submitted this demand to the Central Government. However, the Union Home Ministry reviewed the Kerala Government's resolution and recommended some technical modifications. Since independence, many states, cities and districts have changed their names in tune with the rising demands of the people. Uttaranchal became Uttarakhand in 2007; Orissa was renamed Odisha in 2011. Bombay was renamed Mumbai; and Madras became Chennai. Hence, the Central Government can take steps to change the name of Kerala to Keralam as well. I strongly demand that the Government should take proactive steps to alter the name of the state to Keralam at the earliest.

(Several hon'ble Members associated.)

7. Concern over delay in completion of National Highway projects and its poor maintenance in Odisha

SHRI MUZIBULLA KHAN: The situation of National Highways in Odisha is currently dire, characterized by significant delays in NH projects and their poor maintenance. One prominent example is the Cuttack-Sambalpur National Highway project, which has become a source of immense frustration and inconvenience for the people of Odisha. Many NH projects in Odisha are experiencing massive delays. The maintenance of

existing NHs in Odisha is substandard, with potholes, uneven surfaces, and inadequate signage posing serious safety hazards for motorists. This lack of upkeep contributes to increased accidents and travel discomfort, disrupted daily routines, hampered logistics, and increased travel costs. I urge the Government to ensure proper maintenance of National Highways in Odisha.

(Dr. John Brittas, Dr. Sasmit Patra, Shri M. Mohamed Abdulla, Dr. V. Sivadasan and Shri A.A. Rahim associated.)

8. Need to expedite track-doubling project in Villupuram-Thanjavur mainline section of Southern Railway

SHRI M. SHANMUGAM: The people of Thanjavur delta are demanding for the track-doubling project in the Villupuram-Thanjavur mainline section via Mayiladuthurai and Kumbakonam. This line will be passing through popular tourist and religious destinations like Chidambaram, Vaitheeswaran Koil, Mayiladuthurai and Kumbakonam. The project is pending for a long time. The survey for the whole project is already completed. I would therefore urge upon the hon'ble Minister of Railways and the hon'ble Minister of Finance to make adequate budgetary allocations for this doubling project work so that the work can be started at the earliest and the project would be operational in the near future.

(Several hon'ble Members associated.)

9. Extension of defence corridor of Chitrakoot-Jhansi, Kanpur and Lucknow up to Etawah and Auraiya districts

SHRIMATI GEETA ALIAS CHANDRAPRABHA: To encourage defence production, the central government under the leadership of the respected Prime Minister has planned to select various places in the country for establishment of defence corridors. In this connection, defence corridors are proposed in Agra, Aligarh, Lucknow, Kanpur, Chitrakoot and Jhansi in Uttar Pradesh. Auraiya and Etawah districts of Uttar Pradesh are geographically located in conditions conducive to industrial development. Both the districts are among the districts with the highest literacy rate in Uttar Pradesh, but due to lack of industrial development in both the districts, the youth have to go to big cities for employment. Through you, I request the government to extend the Defence Corridor to Etawah and Auraiya districts. This will open up new possibilities of development in the region as well as provide new employment opportunities to the youth.

(Dr. John Brittas, Shri M. Mohamed Abdulla and Dr. Sasmit Patra associated.)

10. Demand of measures for welfare of duck farmers

SHRIMATI JEBI MATHER HISHAM: The bird flu scare has resurfaced in Kerala, particularly in the Alappuzha district. Thousands of birds, predominantly ducks, have either died or been culled in recent years. Besides ducks, the infection can also affect hens, quail, geese, and other ornamental birds. The virus outbreaks have become an annual issue. Early confirmation of these outbreaks is crucial to limit culling to smaller areas and prevent massive economic losses for farmers. Farmers need proper scientific advice to manage such situations effectively. Regular monitoring of wild aquatic birds and bird-poultry-wetland interface is essential to understanding the prevalence of avian influenza viruses. A year-round surveillance mechanism for migratory birds is also vital to understanding their role in spreading the virus. I urge the government to take immediate action to establish a National Institute of High-Security Animal Diseases (NIHSAD) in Alappuzha, similar to the one in Bhopal, to enable early detection and confirmation of the

virus. Additionally, a special financial aid package should be granted to support farmers who have incurred significant losses.

(Several hon'ble Members associated.)

11. Demand for Banking Licence for the District Central Cooperative Bank in Namakkal District, Tamil Nadu

SHRI K.R.N. RAJESHKUMAR: There is an urgent need for a banking license for the District Central Cooperative Bank in Namakkal District, Tamil Nadu. Considering the district's economic importance and substantial deposits, the Government of Tamil Nadu formed a committee to conduct a study and the committee recommended establishing the Namakkal District Central Cooperative Bank. Acting on this recommendation, the bank was duly established and registered under the Tamil Nadu Cooperative Society Act, 1983. The bank commenced operations on 13th March, 2024. In this regard, an application for a banking license has been submitted through NABARD to the RBI for the District Central Cooperative Bank in Namakkal District. I request the Ministry of Finance to look into the matter for granting a banking license to the District Central Cooperative Bank of Namakkal District in Tamil Nadu.

(Several hon'ble Members associated.)

12. Demand to approve Thanjavur – Pudukkottai – Madurai railway line

SHRI M. MOHAMED ABDULLA: Since 1925, the Thanjavur–Pudukkottai–Madurai railway-line has been a long-cherished project for people from all walks of life. Thanjavur is also known as Southern Capital of Hindu Religion. It is home to the UNESCO site called the 1000-year-old Granite Big Temple, and has many other important heritage sites and tourist attractions, surrounded by key Navagraha temples. Pudukkottai is one of the important central districts in Tamil Nadu, with significant commercial connections to Thanjavur and Madurai. But, the Thanjavur– Pudukkottai–Madurai Railway line is a 100-year-old dream railway line for Tamil Nadu people still in papers. It will benefit more than 5 districts in Tamil Nadu, including Thanjavur, Sivagangai, Pudukkottai, Trichy, and Tiruvarur. Also, it will provide direct and the shortest rail connectivity from North to Southern areas. Hence, I humbly request the hon. Minister of Railways to immediately look into this issue with utmost priority and take necessary steps to approve the same.

(Several hon'ble Members associated.)

13. Demand to stop cultivation of paddy in Punjab

***SHRI SANT BALBIR SINGH:** Punjab, which fed the people of the country during the Green Revolution period and filled the country's granary is currently paying a heavy price. The excessive use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides in Punjab has turned the prosperous state into a cancer zone. Farmers of Punjab are stuck in crop cycle of wheat and paddy. The Government adopted the Minimum Support Price (MSP) policy to meet the Central grain storage requirements on the farmers of Punjab since 1973. Now every year the area under paddy is increasing in Punjab. Due to this, the pressure on the underground water is also increasing. During paddy cultivation, where the vast water storage is being affected, handling of the paddy stubble afterwards also remains a major

* Spoke in Punjabi.

challenge every year. Every year, precious lives are lost due to accidents due to this smoke from stubble burning. Therefore, the paddy crop is not suitable according to the climatic conditions of Punjab. Pond-irrigation is required for the paddy crop, which has led to dangerous groundwater depletion in more than three-fourth blocks in Punjab. Now in Punjab, there is no life without submersible motors for irrigation of crops. These tools have become the cause of debt for the farmers. I urge the Government to take suitable measures to stop the cultivation of paddy in Punjab.

14. Demand for establishing a single window clearance system for doctors looking to start hospital

DR. AJEET MADHAVRAO GOPCHADE: It has been reported that all health insurance claims will now be processed through a single window called the National Health Claims Exchange (NHCX), which will be utilized by hospitals and insurance companies. The National Single Window System (NSWS) is a digital platform designed to assist in identifying and applying for approvals based on specific business requirements. Many State Governments are currently offering a Single Window Clearance System, which grants clearances within a specified timeframe to attract investments. Additionally, the Central Drugs Control Organization has recently implemented a Single Window Clearance System, which is a positive development. I strongly urge the Central Government, in collaboration with State Governments, to explore the possibility of establishing a uniform Single Window Clearance System for doctors looking to start hospitals. Thank you very much.

(Dr. Sasmit Patra, Dr. Bhim Singh, Shri Amar Pal Maurya and Dr. Anil Sukhdeorao Bonde associated.)

15. Demand to increase the number of General Class Coaches in Trains

DR. BHIM SINGH: Every day lakhs of people reach their destination by taking the help of trains. The Government has been increasing the number of A.C. coaches, but the increase in the number of general class coaches has been negligible. In such a situation, travelling in these coaches becomes very troublesome. Especially the migrant labourers of Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Jharkhand face a lot of problems due to this. I urge upon the Government to increase the number of general coaches in trains, so that the poor citizens of the society can also take better advantage of smooth rail travel.

(Dr. Anil Sukhdeorao Bonde, Shri Amar Pal Maurya, Dr. Sasmit Patra and Dr. John Brittas associated.)

16. Withdrawal of 18 percent GST on Kendu leaf for the welfare of Tribal Communities in Odisha

DR. SASMIT PATRA: Kendu leaf is the financial backbone of about 10 lakhs Kendu leaf Pluckers, binders and seasonal workers of Odisha, mostly tribal women. Tribal people collect the leaves as part of their right defined under law. They have the right to procure and sell these products. Imposition of 18 per cent GST on Kendu leaves is adversely affecting the Kendu leaves trade. This, in turn, affects the livelihoods of Kendu leaves Pluckers, binders and seasonal workers and implementation of social security and welfare measures for them. It is urged upon Government of India to fully withdraw the imposition of GST on Kendu leaves for the greater interest of the tribals in Odisha.

(Shri A. A. Rahim, Dr. V. Sivadasan, Dr. Kanimozhi NVN Somu, Dr. John Brittas, and Dr. Fauzia Khan associated.)

17. Concern over recent hike in Mobile tariff plans

SHRI A. A. RAHIM: The recent hike in mobile tariff plans by various service providers, leading to an increase of 15 to 25 per cent in mobile phone bills, has caused significant financial strain on citizens, particularly those from economically weaker sections. Nowadays, Mobile is not a luxury, it has become a necessity and a very important tool of communication, education, and small business. I request the Government to take possible steps to review the tariff hikes and explore subsidies for low income users. Also, introduce regulatory measures to ensure that any future tariff changes are gradual and considerate of the public's capacity to absorb such costs.

(Several hon'ble Members associated.)

18. Demand for Legislation on Population Control in India

SHRI NARESH BANSAL: Population explosion is the biggest threat to democracy and social, economic development and it is the root cause of most problems. Citizens have the right to clean air, clean drinking water, health and shelter, livelihood, education and these cannot be ensured without population control. Efforts for population control should be achieved, but it must also be kept in mind that a situation of demographic imbalance should not arise anywhere. I urge the Government to study the population control laws and policies of the developed countries of the world and suggest measures for population control in India and make laws.

(Dr. Sasmit Patra associated.)

19. Demand to introduce Tejas Coaches in Howrah and Sealdah Rajdhani Express Trains

SHRI SAMIK BHATTACHARYA: Howrah - New Delhi Rajdhani Express is the oldest Rajdhani Express in the country, to ease down the pressure on this train, Sealdah Rajdhani Express was started in the year 2000. Initially both these trains could be distinguished by their modern LHB coaches while other trains were having ICF coaches. But the difference between the ordinary express trains and these Rajdhani Trains have dwindled in recent years owing to modernization efforts undertaken by the Indian Railways. Indian Railways have of late introduced more modern Tejas coaches in several Rajdhani Express trains Accordingly, I request the Ministry of Railways, Government of India to consider introduction of modern Tejas coaches in Howrah and Sealdah Rajdhani Express trains.

20. Repatriation of Smuggled Stolen Indian antiquities from Foreign Countries

SHRI SUKHENDU SEKHAR RAY: As per reports published in indianculture.gov.in and various national dailies, it appears that many Indian antiquities stolen from different temples and museums across the country were smuggled out from time to time are found to be stored in various museums and private galleries/auction centers in foreign countries. However, some of those antiquities started being repatriated to India since past few decades due to bilateral investigations and diplomatic initiatives taken by India and the concerned countries. But, it is not known as to where the repatriated antiquities are presently stored in India. I would request the Government to inform about the exact number of antiquities recovered

from foreign countries, their places of origin and present places of storage. I would also urge upon the Government to return the recovered antiquities originated from Chandraketugarh and other archaeological sites of West Bengal to the State Archaeological Museum or Indian Museum in Kolkata.

(Several hon'ble Members associated.)

P. C. MODY,
Secretary-General.

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