

(b) whether this upgrading of the Signallers and their Inspectors in accordance with the above announcement has been implemented and completed on North Eastern Railway;

(c) whether it is a fact that certain persons who have opted for pensions and are on the verge of retirement within a few months have still not been upgraded, nor they have been confirmed in the new grades; and

(d) whether in view of the fact that the delay would affect the fixation of the amounts of their pensions, Government propose to issue instructions for immediate upgrading and confirmation of all these Signallers and Inspectors with effect from 1st April, 1956?

The Deputy Minister of Railways (Shri Shahnawaz Khan): (a) The orders issued in March '57 have generally been implemented and nearly a half have been paid the arrears.

(b) Upgrading in respect of scales of Rs. 100—185 & 150—225 has been completed. Only the selection for filling up posts in the scale Rs. 200—300, orders regarding which were issued in October 1957, is outstanding.

(c) Yes, in a few cases.

(d) The necessary instructions already exist. Those who retire in the meantime will get the full benefits of upgrading and confirmation for pension.

Pamban Channel

- *1683. { Shri Supakar:
- { Shri Thanu Pillai:
- { Shri Thanalingam Nadar:
- { Shri Sankarapandian:
- { Shri K. S. Ramaswamy:
- { Shri N. R. Munisamy:

Will the Minister of Transport and Communications be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have considered the feasibility of deepening the Pamban Channel as alternative to Sethusamudram Project;

(b) whether any suggestion or scheme has been received by Government in this connection;

(c) if so, whether the gist of the scheme will be placed on the Table; and

(d) whether any action has been taken in the matter?

The Minister of State in the Ministry of Transport and Communications (Shri Raj Bahadur): (a) to (d). In the past, before the Sethusamudram project was taken up for consideration by Government the feasibility of deepening the Pamban Channel was examined. The existing channel is suitable for vessels up to 11 ft. draft only. On account of the rocky nature of the bottom of the channel and the shallow water in the approach from the Gulf of Mannar, it was considered that the channel could not be deepened for the use of larger and deeper draft vessels without great difficulty and heavy expense. The proposal was not, therefore, pursued further.

Targets for Food Production

*1684. **Shri Sanganna:** Will the Minister of Food and Agriculture be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Prime Minister has suggested to all State Chief Ministers to fix targets of food production for the State, District, Thana, Village and the family; and

(b) if so, what is the reaction of the State Governments to it?

The Minister of Food and Agriculture (Shri A. P. Jain): (a) Yes. While emphasising the importance of increasing agricultural production, in his letter to Chief Ministers, Prime Minister mentioned that preparation should be made from now onwards for the next Rabi Crop and detailed targets should be laid down for this purpose, not only for the State but ultimately for each family of an agriculturist.