

of the House to the following matter under rule 377.

Fruit and wheat crops have been completely damaged by the rains and hailstorms in Himachal Pradesh and the State Government is not in a position to pay compensation for the loss. There have been rain and hailstorms for 7 to 8 days in the State. I would, therefore, request the Government to grant Rs. 50 crores to the State Government for providing assistance to the people. A study team should also be sent there to visit every district of the Himachal Pradesh which should survey the loss amounting to billions of rupees and submit report to the Government

I request the Government to take up this matter on a priority basis.

[English]

(iv) Demand for adequate funds for expansion of Bhubaneswar airport as an International Airport

SHRIMATI JAYANTI PATNAIK (Cuttack): The Government of India have taken a decision to construct some International Airports in the country during the seventh Plan period. Bhubaneswar airport has been identified for development as an International airport under that programme, but funds have not been provided by the Centre for that purpose.

Orissa is richly endowed with tourist potential. Tourists from all over India and abroad come to Orissa to see its fascinating sea beaches, ancient archaeological monuments and the luxuriant forests, rich in wild life. A number of international travel writers who had visited the State in the recent past have opined that the tourist potential of Orissa is immense and could be well considered

as one of the best in the country. So, provision of adequate air journey facility is very necessary in order to attract the foreign tourists. This would become possible if Bhubaneswar airport is soon raised to the standard of International Airport. The State Government is financially not sound enough to bear the cost of the expansion programme. Once Bhubaneswar airport becomes the International Airport the flow of foreign tourists to Orissa will increase and thereby India will earn more foreign exchange. Thus the development of Bhubaneswar airport as an international airport is necessary not only in the interest of the State but also in the interest of the country.

As such, I request the Central Government to bear the entire cost of the construction and expansion of Bhubaneswar airport as an International airport.

(v) Need to take necessary measures to safeguard the interests of betel leaf growers in the country

SHRI CHINTAMANI JENA (Balasore): The betel, which is popularly known as "Pan" is cultivated as a distinctive crop in different States in the country. It provides livelihood to about 20 lakhs families in Orissa, West Bengal, Assam, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh. Its cultivation extends over an area of 40,000 hectares and the annual turnover from its sales is about Rs. 700 crores. The country earns good amount of foreign exchange from the export of Pan and it could be increased further.

The importance of Pan is the cultural life of India is known to everybody and for millions of Indians their daily routine remains incomplete, without chewing a Pan. But this traditional Pan cultivation has received a set back owing to economic losses suffered by the

cultivators. The main problems of betel leaves cultivation are diseases which affect the plantation, inadequate fertilization and poor storage and marketing facilities. So all these problems should be looked into immediately and the government should provide necessary assistance to the Pan growers to develop the cultivation.

Unless Central Government comes forward to help the betel growers, the betel production will further decline in the coming years. So, I request the Union Government to direct the National Botanical Research Institute and the Indian Council of Agricultural Research to solve the problem of disease. Some joint programmes should be launched by the NBRI and ICAR to control the disease by adopting modern scientific method.

(vi) Demand for early implementation of Rushikulya Command Area Development Scheme for the development of agriculture in Orissa

SHRI SOMNATH RATH (Aska): The problems of water management in our country arise mainly from the circumstances, that although the total annual precipitation is large enough to place the entire land surface under water to the depth of over one metre, it is not spread evenly, either in terms of space or time. This makes it necessary to conserve as much water as possible, during the brief monsoon season, so that it may be available for use during the long dry season, not only locally, but if possible also in arid areas located at a distance.

The 7th Plan document stresses the need for marking further massive investments in the major and minor irrigation sector, till its remaining untapped potential of 33.2 mh has been fully harnessed.

Some experts talk of cheaper, quicker and more efficient alternative in the form

of ground water. It involves no environmental problems, such as the submergence of good lands under storage and canals, and no evaporation of seepage losses which may take away more than 50 per cent of the water released from reservoirs before they reach the farmer's field. It also does not create the problem of water logging. It is a resource under farmer's control.

Ganjam district in Orissa is mainly an agricultural district. Water management for irrigation is essential. As such, the Rushikulya Command Area development scheme recommended and sent by Orissa Government to the Centre needs immediate implementation, for the growth of agriculture.

(vii) Need to lay railway line from Kumarghat to Agartala in Tripura for industrial development of the State

SHRI BAJU BAN RIYAN (Tripura East): Tripura has only 33 km. of railway line upto Pecharthal, and a project for another 10 km. upto Kumarghat was taken up, but it will take another three years to complete it. The need for extension of railways may not be exaggerated. In the absence of railway, the entire State remains marked as zero-industry State. It appears that the work for extension of railways upto Agartala could not be taken up, because it may cost heavily, and thus may not be viable. But the cost of transport other than that of railways is rising every day adversely, affecting whatever small scale industries are there in the State.

It may be mentioned here that Tripura Legislative Assembly has resolved unanimously to send an All Party MLAs delegation to Delhi, to press the demand to provide the required allocation in the 7th Plan, to extend the railway upto the State Capital, Agartala.

The people of Tripura observed a mass picketing in front of all Central