

justification of such a Parapheri given to Hindustan Salt Ltd. in this area which cause untold miseries to thousands of manufacturers of salt—most of them work on co-operative basis. It should be noted that the Hindustan Salt hardly produces salt of about 8 to 10 percent of the total salt production in this area. The aid given by the State Government is just meagre—not even 2 per cent of the total loss, incurred by labourers while, for the last several years, a special cess is being collected on salt from this area which remained almost unspent so far.

It is, therefore, urged on the Central Government that at once a sum of Rs. 50 lakhs be set apart to help the labourers to rehabilitate—both in terms of their settlement and also for their production. Immediately this monopoly of having parapheri be given up and small agarias and cooperative manufacturers be allowed to produce salt in the parapheri areas. And thirdly roads be built up with a view to provide a road connection and also 10 to 15 tubewells be constructed to provide drinking water in the entire area. This needs immediate action from Minister of Industry at the Centre; Salt Commissioner at Jaipur and the Government of Gujarat which looks after the immediate relief work.

(v) NEED FOR CONSTRUCTION OF A BROAD GAUGE RAILWAY LINE FROM ERNAKULAM TO ALLEPPEY (KERALA)

SHRI V. M. SUDHEERAN (Alleppey): Sir, with your permission, under rule 377, I would like to invite the kind attention of this august House to the demand of the people of Kerala regarding the construction of a broad-gauge railway line from Ernakulam to Alleppey. We strongly feel that justice is not being done to the State in this matter.

Even though the proposal to construct a new broad-gauge railway line between Ernakulam and Alleppey has been under the consideration of the Railway Ministry and the Planning Commission since 1976, it is a matter

of deep regret to the people of Kerala that no final decision has been taken in this regard so far, because it grievously affects the industrial belt of Kerala, which is one of the most backward areas of the State.

The investment involved is extremely small, compared to the magnitude of the Railways Works Budget, it is only about Rs. 4.5 crores, and that is also spread over a period of three years, which is the time required for the construction of this line. The return from expected traffic is about 18.4 per cent, not taking into account the large volume of traffic expected from the new industries which are being set up in the region between Ernakulam and Alleppey subsequent to the preparation of this project report by the Southern Railways. If such additional traffic is also taken into account, the return will be about 21 per cent.

The Government of Kerala is in correspondence with the Planning Commission on the subject and it has also given all the clarifications. The people of Kerala are greatly disappointed that this new line was not included in the railway budget for 1978-79, in spite of the good return expected from that line. And in the light of the priority consideration given by the Government of India to employment oriented projects, I should like to emphasize the fact that with the early completion of the Ernakulam-Alleppey line and the early coming into existence in the public sector three industries, Alleppey would be offering jobs for 3,000 people, involving an investment of about Rs. 20 crores. Now the land for the setting up of the State sector industries has been acquired and collaboration agreements are being entered into, involving preliminary expenditure of considerable magnitude for the early setting up of these key industries. All this is being done in the firm hope that the Alleppey-Ernakulam railway line will become a reality in the immediate future, without which the functioning of these heavy

[Shri V. M. Sudheevan]

industries in this area will become extremely difficult. Even for the construction of the factory buildings for these heavy industries and the setting up of the plant and machinery the existence of this railway line for transporting heavy building materials and plant and machinery will be necessary. There are so many other major industries coming up in the Alleppey-Ernakulam belt, which also are expected to provide a large number of jobs for the educated unemployed youths of Kerala.

In spite of the repeated representation from the people as well as the State Government and the MPs from Kerala, the Railway Ministry has not conceded the demand for this railway line so far. They have shifted the burden of decision to the Planning Commission, which seems to be wilfully dilly-dallying with the matter. I know that many railway projects costing much more and which will be less profitable have been sanctioned, though this project has been kept shelved. That is why I am left left people of with no option but to resort to some step from November 29th, 1978 to press the demand for the immediate sanction of the line and for making adequate provision in the coming year.

I hope the House will appreciate the spirit behind my statement. I would urge upon the hon. Prime Minister and the Railway Minister to intervene in this matter so that this long-standing demand of all sections of people in Kerala can be met.

THE MINISTER OF RAILWAYS (PROF. MADHU DANDAVATE): Before the hon. Member made the statement in the House, all the MPs. from Kerala, irrespective of their political affiliations, had met me. I have brought to their notice the fact that already the Railway Ministry is seized of the matter.

You may recall that on the 21st instant I had replied to a Starred Question. There were no Supplementaries

on this question but the answer was any way placed on the Table of the House. I have made it clear that we are aware of the feelings of the people of Kerala on this subject, and we are giving earnest consideration to this project in consultation with the Planning Commission. I have already told them that we have made considerable progress as far as this line is concerned.

It is true that this 50 k.m. line would cost Rs. 4.88 crores, but because the Kerala Government has assured us free land and free sleepers, it will come to only Rs. 4.55 crores. The return is also fairly good. Also, it will help the development of the area in the south, and from all points of view it is really a favourable proposition.

We are earnestly taking up the matter with the Planning Commission and we have made some progress. The matter has been discussed with the General Managers and we have already formulated our works plans for the coming year. Now we have only to persuade the Planning Commission. We are sure that if we follow the method of persuasion and not direct action it will be possible to go ahead. Let the matter be left to us. We will persuade the Planning Commission. (*Interruptions*)

Therefore, let me make it clear that we have already made some progress. I am happy to tell you that in the recent meeting of the General Managers addressed by the Prime Minister he also wanted the railways to give very sympathetic consideration to this proposition. We will take up the matter and I would request the hon. Member not to resort to any direct action.

MR. SPEAKER: He did not say, you are imagining. At my request, he has not said it.

12.5 hrs.

*The Lok Sabha adjourned for Lunch till Fourteen of the Clock.*