

sion as Chairman and Convenor, and the Chief Engineers of Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka as its members. Giving concurrence to the terms of reference of this Committee, the Kerala Government nominated its representative in July, 1978, and this Committee has been enabled to function by the Kerala Government for assessing the surplus waters available from these west-flowing rivers.

In addition to this, the Planning Commission constituted another committee in February, 1978. Besides the representatives of the Governments of Tamil Nadu and Karnataka, the Kerala Government nominated its representatives on this Committee also and concurred in its functioning for assessing the resources of rivers flowing into the Arabian sea and their utilisation.

Now, like a bolt from the blue, the Irrigation Minister of Kerala, on the floor of the Legislative Assembly, has stated that not even a single drop of water would be given to the State of Tamil Nadu from the surplus waters of west-flowing rivers. In view of this statement, the people living in the drought-afflicted parts of Tamil Nadu have become panicky and they are apprehensive of finding no end to their misery.

I demand that the Government of India should expedite the work of these two Technical Committees and also simultaneously take steps for declaring river waters as national assets and bring them under either the Concurrent List or Union List of the Constitution of India.

(XV) EXEMPTION FROM LEVY OF EXCISE DUTY ON BRANDED BEEDI PRODUCED BY KERALA DINESH BEEDI SOCIETY.

SHRI M. RAMANNA RAI (Kasaragod): Towards the end of 1968 Kerala Government implemented the provisions of Beedi and Cigar workers Act, 1966 (Central Act). In protest, the prominent Beedi companies closed their factories in Cannanore district

of Kerala. As a result more than 12,000 workers became jobless and were thrown out of employment. The only alternative to the workers was starvation and death. At this juncture, the Trade Union Movement of Kerala rose above party politics and with the cooperation of the State Government, it was decided to start workers industrial cooperative society. Accordingly 20 primary cooperative societies and one Central Society were organised and 12,000 workers were initially given work. The beedi manufactured by the societies was sold in the market under the brand name 'Kerala Dinesh Beedi'. Initial obstacles were overcome within three or four years and it earned good reputation throughout India. It is the only cooperative society of this kind in the whole of the country, providing employment to about 25,000 beedi workers. Not only that, the society also gives the highest wages in the country besides giving all other statutory benefits.

The policy of the Central Government of levying excise duty on the branded beedi adversely affected the stability of the society. The society cannot devise means like other big beedi companies for escaping from payment of excise duty. At the same time, the society could not prevent the spurious beedis being sold in the market in the name of 'Kerala Dinesh Beedi' for want of appropriate statutory provisions. The Directors of Kerala Dinesh Beedi Society and the MPs from Kerala jointly appealed to the Government to find a proper solution and save the society and 25,000 workers. But in the latest Budget of the Central Government also, the levy of excise duty on the branded beedi continues.

If this state of affairs and the policy of the Government continue for some more time, "Kerala Dinesh Beedi Society" will not be able to function as an ideal institution of service to the workers. If the society fails, 25,000 workers' families will have to face starvation and hardship. The only way out is to exempt the societies like

[Shri M. Ramanna Rai]

"Kerala Dinesh Beedi Society" from the payment of excise duty on the branded beedi produced by them.

Hence the Government of India is earnestly requested to come forward to save 25,000 beedi workers' families and beedi workers' industrial co-operative societies by exempting from levy of excise duty branded beedi produced by Kerala Dinesh Beedi Society.

(xvi) TRAFFIC DIFFICULTIES DUE TO CLOSURE OF LEVEL CROSSING IN THE EAST AND WEST OF CHEAPRA KACHERI STATION.

श्री. सत्यबोध सिंह (छपरा): उपाध्यक्ष महोदय, मैं नियम 377 के अधीन अवि-लम्बनीय लोक महत्व के निम्नलिखित विषय की ओर सदन का ध्यान आकर्षित कर रहा हूँ:-

पूर्वाञ्चल रेलवे में बंगाली से लखनऊ तक छोटी लाइन को बड़ी लाइन में बदलने के क्रम में छपरा कचहरी स्टेशन के पूरब और पश्चिम दोनों फाटक को सड़क पुल (ओवर ब्रिज) दिए बिना बन्द कर देने से रेलवे लाइन के उत्तर-दक्षिण दो भागों में विभक्त छपरा शहर के नागरिकों का आवागमन अवरुद्ध हो गया है तथा प्रभुनाथनगर, खैरा, मरहौरा, तरैया, बमनरि, इसबापूर, गौराबाजार, जगदम कालेज, राजपूतस्कूल, दीहबाब, टोंडी आदि स्थानों पर जाने वाली सड़क बन्द हो गयी है जिससे सम्पूर्ण सारन जिला अप्रत्याशित भीषण संकट का सामना कर रहा है। माननीय रेल मंत्री जी से विनम्र अनुरोध है कि सड़क पुल (ओवर ब्रिज) जब तक नहीं बने तब तक दोनों रेल फाटक को बन्द नहीं होने दें और सम्बद्ध रेल अधिकारियों को कृपया शीघ्र आदेश देकर सर्वसाधारण के इस कष्ट का निवारण करें।

12-44 hrs.

MOTION RE: INCREASE IN THE PRICES OF PETROLEUM PRODUCTS IN JUNE, 1980

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Now, we will take up Item No. 23 of the List of Business.

Prof. Madhu Dandavate.

PROF. MADHU DANDAVATE (Rajapur): I beg to move:

"That this House do consider the statement made by the Minister of Petroleum, Chemicals and Fertilizers in the House on the 10th June, 1980 regarding increase in the prices of petroleum products in June 1980 due to increase in the price of imported crude oil and petroleum products by the OPEC countries."

Mr. Deputy-Speaker, Sir, before I made my observations on the Statement made by the hon. Minister of Petroleum, Chemicals and Fertilizers, at the very outset, let me point out that this House has certain conventions and those conventions were completely and totally violated in the case of rise in the prices of petroleum products.

Just on the eve of the meeting of the Parliament session, the rise in prices of petroleum products was already announced and, on the 10th June, the hon. Minister was kind enough to make a statement on the floor of the House. I would not say that this involves a privilege. But there is a certain propriety that ought to have been observed in the House and the propriety demanded that when we were already meeting within two days of the announcement of rise in prices of petroleum products, the Minister for Petroleum, Chemicals and Fertilisers could have shown a little more patience to come before the House and make the announcement of the rise in prices of petroleum products. There is also the convention and the practice of the House that whenever such statement is coming up, the notification should be laid on the Table of the House. Unfortunately, these conventions were violated.

Within a few days of the announcement of the rise in prices of petroleum products, the Budget was presented to the House. The hon. Minister may argue that, strictly according to the