

timat claim for establishing the proposed Railway Coach Factory in Kerala.

(iv) REPORTED CLOSURE OF CENTRAL GROUND WATER BOARD OFFICE AT COIMBATORE.

SHRI ERA MOHAN (Coimbatore): I rise to make a statement under Rule 377 on the closure of the present Central Ground Water Board Office at Coimbatore with immediate effect and the consequent hardship faced by the citizens of Coimbatore District.

A multi-disciplinary ground water resources evaluation project was taken up by the Central Ground Water Board, Government of India, with the assistance of Swedish International Development Authority in parts of Coimbatore and Palghat districts of Tamil Nadu and Kerala States where ground water is one of the primary resources for irrigation. The project was started in 1975 with Coimbatore as Headquarters and it is due to be closed completely by 31st March, 1980. The project has made significant achievement in prospecting and evaluating ground water resources of hard rocks which incidentally covers two-thirds of our country. Many of the bore wells drilled by the project have helped to save drinking water problems in some of the villages where there is acute scarcity of water. The Secretary to Government of India, Department of Agriculture, who visited the project in October, 1979 was of the view that a permanent regional office of the Central Ground Water Board can be located at Coimbatore to carry out the follow up work of the project findings for an overall ground water development of the region. Vice-Chancellor, Tamil Nadu Agricultural University has also welcomed the suggestion and offered to make available the necessary accommodation for the regional office within the University Campus. Chief Hydrologist,

Central Ground Water Board has fully endorsed this view and had sent the proposal in this regard to the Chairman, Central Ground Water Board on 14th December 1979. It appears now that the proposal is awaiting final sanction.

In the meantime, the officers and staff are being transferred from the project to far-off places and all the scientific equipment and the drilling rig donated by the Swedish Government are being shifted from Coimbatore with a view to close down the office at Coimbatore. Once it is closed there is no chance of locating any office of Central Ground Water Board at Coimbatore. Hereafter people of this region who depend mainly on ground water for irrigation and drinking water needs will not have any office nearby to seek guidance and advice to solve their ground water development problems. This would be a great set back and the findings of the project will not receive adequate follow up work. Moreover, the officers and staff number more than 200 who are settled at Coimbatore have to move upto far off places resulting great hardship and much expenditure to the Government.

Hence immediate action is needed to cancel the order of transfer to all the officers and staff who have received transfer orders but not yet moved out of Coimbatore and to start the permanent regional office at Coimbatore immediately.

(v) REPORTED STRIKE BY THE EMPLOYEES OF FOUR NEWS AGENCIES

SHRI EDUARDO FALEIRO (Mormugao): Mr. Deputy-Speaker, Sir, news agencies all over India failed to send their reports yesterday as employees of the country's four news agencies—UNI, PTI, Samachar and Samachar Bharati—began a 24-hour strike in protest against their exclusion from the Palekar Tribunal's wage proposals. The strike also affected