

growers. Such a step would save the farmers engaged in growing fruit-bearing trees. I would also request the Central Government to provide technical assistance and expertise to the farmers so that the pest and insect attacks could be ascertained and the trees could be saved. Thank you.

**Need to link Bagdogra Airport with more international flights for promoting tourism**

SHRI PRASANTA CHATTERJEE (West Bengal): Sir, there is a long-pending demand to improve and further augment both the foreign and domestic passenger facilities at the Bagdogra Airport by linking it with more international flights. The Bagdogra Airport is not only the Gateway of North Bengal, it is also the gateway of the North-Eastern Region like the North-East Bihar and Sikkim. The three independent States Bhutan, Nepal and Bangladesh, are closely connected with this part of our country. This part is very important so far as the international tourist map is concerned.

The rich potential of the area like the rich natural flora, wildlife sanctuaries, tea gardens, rich cultural heritage, great tribal traditions, the most beautiful Kanchanjunga Mount are all located in this region. From the high Sikkim Himalaya to the Bodh Gaya in Bihar, this region is famous for attracting religious pilgrims and tourists.

The Government of West Bengal, the Government of Sikkim and many other organisations are demanding that the Bagdogra Airport should be linked with international flights and to begin with international flights from Nepal, Bhutan and Bangladesh should be allowed to land at the Bagdogra Airport. If it is done, it would help to boost the economy of our country by augmenting foreign tourist facilities. I would request the Government of India and the Department of Civil Aviation and Tourism to pay immediate attention to this matter. Thank you.

SHRIMATI CHANDRA KALA PANDEY (West Bengal): Sir, I would like to associate myself with this issue.