

Through the Finance Bill, 2002-03, a basic duty of 5% was levied on 156 life-saving equipments and devices, priced between Rs.1,000 and Rs. 1.5 lakhs. Typically, these are imported devices and equipments used in heart, neurological and nephrological disorders and peripheral vascular diseases; for example, cardiac stents and catheters, cath lab and CAPD equipment, used in dialysis. Further, some other crucial medical devices will now attract a CVD of 16%.

The excise notification says that for companies with a manufacturing plant under MODVAT the CVD would be only 4%. On the other hand, if the item is imported, the CVD would be 16%. Earlier, these devices and equipments were either exempted or levied duty at a very minimal rate, to enable access to the latest medical and surgical technologies.

Now, the total duty on some of them has gone up to, as high as, 51%, pushing up the prices of the products and the cost of related healthcare services. With increased costs limiting the size of the healthcare market, India may become less attractive for potential foreign investors.

I, therefore, appeal the Union Government to reconsider this and reduce the duty hike on life-saving medical equipments and devices like stent, catheter, etc., in the interest of the general healthcare in the country.

Need to set up a separate High Court for Tripura

SHRI MATILAL SARKAR (Tripura): Madam, the statement in reply to Starred Question No.101, that was due for answer on 22.7.2002, reveals that the number of cases pending with the Guwahati High Court, as of March, 2001, was 41,317. Out of this, 22,270 cases related to the State of Tripura. The figure itself proves that the Guwahati High Court and its Bench at Agartala are unable to cope with the increasing number of cases, in spite of their earnestness. The people of Tripura find it very difficult to go to Guwahati by road, as there is no railway in the State; and the bus journey is tedious, air journey being highly expensive, beyond the reach of the common people. Therefore, there is a pressing demand, from all corners, for a separate High Court for the State of Tripura.

So, I urge upon the Government to set up a separate High Court for Tripura, soon.

SHRI MANOJ BHATTACHARYA (West Bengal): Madam. I associate myself with this Special Mention..

SHRI SHANKAR ROY CHOWDHURY (West Bengal): Madam, I too associate myself with this Special Mention.

Need to restore and re-introduce the long distance Trains which were discontinued at onversion times

SHRI BACHANI LEKHRAJ (Gujarat): Madam, prior to conversion of metre gauge into broad gauge, three long distance trains, that is, Delhi-Ahmedabad Express, Delhi-Ahmedabad Janta Express and Ahmedabad-Agra fast passengers were running daily since so many years. These trains had so many halts between Delhi and Ahmedabad whereas other trains like Delhi-Ahmedabad Mail and Ashram Express were not halting.

After conversion, two new trains, that is, Probander-Delhi bi-weekly and Uttaranchal Express weekly trains run between Delhi and Ahmedabad but do not halt on which those three trains were halting. Rajdhani Train runs twice a week, except three halts in Rajasthan, there is no halt in the States of Gujarat, Haryana and Delhi through which these trains pass.

At the time of conversion, it was publicly promised by the then Chairman, Railway Board that rail facilities enjoyed by the public would not be decreased.

In spite of this assurance and repeated "demands by MPs, the Gujarat Government, the Railway Passengers Associations, business community, etc., the Railway is not heeding to restore these trains. To avoid public agitations and discontent, the Railway Minister is earnestly requested to restore and reintroduce at least one train, that is, Delhi-Ahmedabad Janta Express.

Electrification of eighty thousand villages in the Country

श्री बालकवि बैरागी (मध्य प्रदेश) : माननीय उपसभापति महोदया, मैं विशेष उल्लेख के द्वारा भारत के शेष 80 हजार गांवों के विद्युतीकरण के बारे में सरकार का ध्यान आकर्षित कर रहा हूँ। इस समय भारत के 80 हजार गांव विद्युत विहीन हैं, अंधेरे में डूबे हैं। आजादी के 55 वर्षों के बाद भी वे स्वयं को दोयसम श्रेणी का मानते हैं। ये गांव अधिकांशतः देश के दुर्गम उत्तरी हिस्से में हैं। सरकार के सूत्र बताते हैं कि 10वीं पंचवर्षीय योजना में विद्युत मंत्रालय ग्रिड एक्सटेंशन योजना के तहत 62,000 गांवों का अंधेरा मिटायेगा। तब भी 18 हजार गांव अंधेरे में डूबे रहेंगे। सरकार सोचती है कि गैर परंपरागत तकनीक का सहारा लेकर इन 18 हजार गांवों को सन् 2012 तक प्रकाशमान कर दिया जाए। दसवीं योजना में सरकार का लक्ष्य 41 हजार मेगावाट बिजली उत्पादन करने का है। मेरा सरकार से आग्रह है कि सरकार अपने लक्ष्य और प्रकाशीकरण कार्यक्रम का पुनरावलोकन करे। विद्युत उत्पादन और वितरण के धन संसाधन पर फिर से सोचे। वैश्वीकरण, उदारीकरण, निजीकरण जैसे उपादानों से समन्वय बैठाये। राष्ट्रीय