

deficient for some more time pressure will build up. It will definitely affect the food targets for this year and will result in increased prices of commodities in the market.

The Government of Madhya Pradesh has already declared 16 districts as drought affected and seeking relief from the Centre.

So, Sir, I would like to request the Government through you that immediate remedial steps should be taken in this regard.

Demand to take steps to make groundwater free of contamination

SHRI RAJEEV SHUKLA (Maharashtra): Sir, besides a rapidly depleting ground water level, the country is facing another major problem on the waterfront. According to the statistics available with the Central Ground Water Board, groundwater contamination has spread over 200 districts in the country. The groundwater contaminants include salinity, iron, fluoride and arsenic.

The States affected are Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Orissa, Punjab, Rajasthan, U.P., Tamil Nadu, Tripura, West Bengal and Delhi, Groundwater is being used for drinking as well as agriculture purposes.

Salinity and iron make the taste of water and vegetables cooked in it unappealing. Long-term usage of water with fluoride can lead to tooth ache and crippled bones, while arsenic can cause cancer and skin pigmentation.

Government should initiate effective steps to free groundwater of these contaminants and also make available facilities for treating the patients affected by these contaminants. Thank you.

DR. PRABHA THAKUR (Rajasthan): Sir, I associate myself with this issue.

Demand to resolve the problems of striking employees of income tax department

SHRI PRAVEEN RASHTRAPAL (Gujarat): Sir, as an ex-employee of the Income Tax Department, I am very much concerned for their just and legitimate demands. I am informed that as the demands arising on account of the Sixth Pay Commission have not been, properly, looked into by the Finance Ministry, the Income Tax employees all over the country are likely to go on strike.

The employees have opposed the outsourcing of Income Tax return processing. The second issue is about revision of pay scales of Inspectors as recommended by the Pay Commission. The other two demands are regarding mobile charge and departmental examinations as per old course. These demands do not involve heavy financial burden and hence require urgent attention.

I, therefore, request the hon. Finance Minister to instruct the Revenue Secretary and concerned officers of the Central Board of Direct Taxes to look into the just grievances of the employees and accept their demands without any further delay.

The strike can be avoided if the required negotiations are held as early as possible. Thank you.

**Demand to make "Castle Hill" in Mussouri a museum
in memory of Maharaja Dulip Singh**

SARDAR TARLOCHAN SINGH (Haryana): Sir, I make a strong plea that the Government should honour the memory of our last Sovereign Maharaja Dulip Singh. We are aware that when the entire India was occupied by the British, Punjab, Kashmir and parts of Afghanistan remained independent where Maharaja Ranjit Singh ruled for 50 years. After his death in 1839, there were Anglo-Sikh wars and ultimately with conspiracies Punjab was annexed in 1849 and eleven years old Maharaja Dulip Singh was dethroned and taken away to Mussouri where Castle Hill Estate was acquired with Punjab funds to keep him away from Punjab. He was exiled to England in 1852.

After realising the crafty moves of the British, Dulip Singh revolted against them and left for India in 1886 but was arrested in Aden and his entry in India was banned. He went to France and Russia to get help for war against the British and also set up a parallel Govt. in Pondicherry. He couldn't achieve his objective and died in Paris in 22nd Oct, 1893.

The Indian community in U.K. has put up his statue and museum where he lived in England. I request that the Castle Hill, Mussouri which is now the property of the Survey of India but originally belonged to the Maharaja may be made a museum on his life by the Ministry of Culture in association with Maharaja Dulip Singh Memorial Society. This will provide an opportunity to the new generation to know our heroes and historical events during foreign rules.

SHRI B.S. GNANADESIKAN (Tamil Nadu): Sir, I associate myself with this issue.

**Demand to take effective steps for completion of various
road projects specially highways in Sikkim**

SHRI O.T. LEPCHA (Sikkim): Sir, Sikkim is a landlocked State and, as of now, there is no air or rail link to the State. National Highway 31A is the only lifeline which connects the State with the rest of the country. The people of Sikkim are solely dependent on this Highway for transportation of goods and other essential commodities, and it is used by the people of Sikkim to travel from Sikkim to different parts of the country and neighbouring countries. The National Highway 31A gets interrupted frequently because of weather related problems as the terrain is hilly. Besides this, the Highway is also disrupted by frequent bandhs and strikes held in the Darjeeling District of West Bengal bringing general life of the people of Sikkim to a standstill. Since yesterday, bandh has again been started in the Darjeeling District, and the National Highway is totally closed. The Government of Sikkim has been repeatedly asking for help and support to maintain and build durable and all weather road infrastructure in Sikkim for quite some time. Recently, the hon. Chief Minister of Sikkim has also written to the Government reiterating their demand for better road infrastructure in Sikkim,