

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Hon. Members, discussion on the working of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has concluded. Reply by the hon. Minister will be tomorrow after Zero Hour. Now, Special Mentions. I request the Members to lay their Special Mentions on the Table of the House.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Right, Sir.

SPECIAL MENTIONS

Request to bring transparency in decisions taken by Expert Committee to select floats in Republic Day Parade

SHRI SHANTARAM LAXMAN NAIK (Goa): Sir, despite the fact that Goa is a world famous international tourist destination, Goa floats have not been included in the Republic Day Parade for the last consecutive years.

Undoubtedly, the procedure and the process lack vision and transparency; otherwise, the manner in which the State of Goa has been humiliated, in the last two years, has no justification.

Last year, three designs were short-listed, from the State of Goa, by the Expert Committee, appointed by the State Government, in the month of August, 2008. All the three designs were sent to New Delhi for scrutiny and finalisation by the Special Expert Committee, appointed by the Ministry of Defence.

The hand-drawn sketch design of an applicant, presenting and depicting the SHIGMO festival of Goa was approved by this Committee in its first meeting.

The Expert Committee verified the theme and advised the changes in the 2nd meeting, held in September, 2008. Changes were made and approved by the Expert Committee, and the music theme was being finalised for the next meeting. Music, based on Goan folk culture, was presented to the Expert Committee in the fourth meeting. A tableau of Plaster of Paris was made, based on the design approved, for the fifth meeting. The applicant was advised to make a few dimensional changes, which were also complied with. However, Goa's tableau was not included.

The Selection Committee needs to be more responsible and convincing when they deal with the State, like, Goa that commands international acclaim.

Concern over mistreatment of Women Boxers at National Institute of Sports in Patiala

SHRI RAJEEV SHUKLA (Maharashtra): Sir, I propose to draw the attention of the House to the shocking mistreatment given to our female boxers by the management at National Institute of Sport, Patiala. Ironically, only last week, I had asked the Government about plans and incentives proposed for the female sportspersons. The news of 2006 World Boxing

Championship bronze medalist, Renu Gora, serving tea and cleaning dishes for visiting officials and media persons at NIS Patiala is disturbing. She is not the only one; another upcoming female boxer was also reported to have served as a maid and waiter in a major newspaper last week.

More than a case of gender bias against female boxers, this is also a sorry tale of how female sportspersons fail to find any encouragement from the authorities. These women have joined NIS for becoming a coach because they cannot make their ends meet through a regular and dignified employment. If we, as a nation, fail to provide a dignified living to even our illustrious female sportspersons, it paints an unfortunate picture of the future of female sportspersons in India. The incident at NIS should be earnestly probed and action should be taken so that no such case ever happens again.

Demand to declare Bihar a drought hit State

SHRI TARIQ ANWAR (Maharashtra): Sir, the people of Bihar are facing floods on the one side and drought on the other side every year. The entire Bihar State is reeling under drought-like situation in the absence of rain this year. Possibility of famine-like situation was high in the State, as ponds and canals were dry and the farmers had to face a tough time for irrigation. The sowing of seeds is not still done. It will result in acute shortage of food in the State. Official sources had reported that water had not been released from Vansagar and Rihind dams on Sone river, following which the canals linked with it were devoid of water. Only 11.02 mm of rain was recorded in June and the State experienced just 53.5 mm rainfall as against the normal level of 357.25 mm in July. Due to this, crop of Kharief has already lost and there is every chance that in this condition Rabi is also going to be affected.

In view of the above facts, there is an urgent need to send a Central Team to Bihar for assessing the situation. Collection of all types of loans related to agriculture should be cancelled with immediate effect to give relief to the farmers of the State. The Union Government should issue special directives to the Government of Bihar as the State Government is not taking it seriously and no initiative has been taken by the State Government up till now.

I will urge the Government to declare Bihar as a drought-hit State.

Demand to take suitable steps to check the Illegal mining being carried out in Orissa

SHRI RAMA CHANDRA KHUNTIA (Orissa): Sir, I want to draw the attention of this House and the Government to the illegal mining which has become an easy source of income in our country. This is regarding Manganese mining in Joda area which has been going on for the last many years without any approval from the Central Government or clearance from the Forest Department. It is said that the Orissa State Government has agreed only to give lease to one company. But this company had declared itself closed from 1999; and there is also a case pending in the court. This company, without getting any lease has illegally given the power