

[18 August, 2000]

RAJYA SABHA

of India to constitute a committee under the chairmanship of a senior official of the Central Water Commission.

The Vamsadhara project Stage-II will provide irrigation to 1.48 lakh acres in the backward district of Srikakulam which covers 20.30 lakh acres. I request the Government to constitute a committee to make a model study on backwater aspects.

There is another project which is expected to irrigate 24,636 acres in the backward areas of Vijayanagaram district. It is delayed due to disputes between Andhra Pradesh and Orissa. I request the Government to direct the Central Water Commission to convene a meeting of the two States and give clearance to it from inter-State angle.

The Velegunda project, which is to draw 40 TMC flood water from Srikakulam reservoir in Krishna river, would irrigate 4.38 acres in the drought-prone areas of Prakasam district. The Government has refused clearance to this project due to environmental reasons. The Central Water Commission may be directed to reconsider it.

Considering the importance of the Godavari Delta and the need to protect the farmers, the State Government has come out with a proposal for protecting the river banks with rough stone pitches, revetment, protecting fertile lands from erosion, reconstruction of medium and minor outfall sluices, etc. The estimated cost is around Rs.50 crores.

Our hon. Chief Minister, Mr.Chandrababu Naidu, has been writing to the hon. Minister of Water Resources for speedy clearance of these projects which will enable Andhra Pradesh to march on the road of progress and prosperity. I, therefore, request the Government to kindly sanction these projects and also to provide the necessary funds for implementing these projects at the earliest. Thank you.

#### **Safety of Air Travel**

SHRI R.P. GOENKA (Rajasthan): Sir, I am grateful to you for giving me an opportunity to speak on "Safety of Air Travel".

A major air disaster was averted with the chance detection of a six-foot long crack on the left wing of an Indian Airlines Airbus 300, bound for Delhi from Calcutta, on Saturday morning, the 12<sup>th</sup> August, 2000. This aircraft had arrived from Delhi on 11<sup>th</sup> evening, and had been thoroughly checked by the engineers on night duty and cleared for take-off. It was only by chance that the engineers at the departure noticed the crack when the luggage had been loaded on flight IC 264 and the passengers were about to board the aircraft. Apparently, there is a dereliction of duty and negligence on the part of the staff to leave a visible crack on the wing of the aircraft unchecked, or, perhaps, the old age of the aircraft. This is not an isolated incident. On many other earlier occasions also, similar negligence on the part of the staff had been noticed. The recent accidents which have taken place have been, to a large extent, caused by ill-maintained aircraft and inadequate and improper maintenance of the facilities at the airport. These incidents have created apprehensions among the travelling public about the safety of Indian Airlines aircraft. It is also for this reason that in spite of inconvenience, passengers prefer to travel by other airlines. I want to know from the Minister of Civil Aviation the steps taken for improving the system to ensure complete safety of aircraft and replacing the aircraft, and the penal action taken against the defaulting staff.

#### **Request for Grants for Flood-Affected People of Assam**

SHRI DRUPAD BORGOHAIN (Assam): Sir, Assam is reeling under heavy floods in the current year as well. Twenty-two lakh people have been affected in 17 districts of the State. Twenty-six persons lost their lives. Lakhs of cattle are in distress as fodder is lacking under such a situation. Highways, railways and most of the village roads are damaged. Many embankments are breached and it has created a hell for the people living nearby the rivers.

It is strange that under such a situation, none from the Union Government has visited the State and assessed the damage. Flood is a recurring phenomenon in Assam. To solve the flood problem in Assam permanently, Parliament had passed an Act to harness Brahmaputra and Borak. The Brahmaputra Board was formed. It submitted blueprints of three projects, namely, Dihang, Subansiri and Tipaimukh, but the Union Government is still not okaying the projects. Hence, there is a recurring