

[Shri Ambeth Rajan]

If all the land belonging to railway is made free from encroachment and kept vacant, it can be utilised for various welfare activities as well as revenue generating activities. More hospitals for railway employees, commercial buildings, amenities to passengers, more food courts, additional browsing centres, more schools under PPP mode in rural areas, etc., can be established in the land belonging to railways. This will be an enhanced source of revenue for railways and also service, reduce the revenue burden on railways and save railways from facing embarrassment whenever rail fares are hiked. Moreover, there will not be any need for railways to increase fares.

Therefore, I urge upon the Government to properly utilize the railway land and generate more revenue. "

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (DR. E. M. SUDARSANA NATCHIAPPAN): Shri Derek O'Brien.

**Concern over denial of pension to disabled soldiers
on frivolous grounds by the Government**

SHRI DEREK O'BRIEN (West Bengal): Sir, I normally lay it, but I want to read this.

Sir, it is a cause for alarm that 90 per cent of the Ministry of Defence cases pending in courts are against pension claims of its own disabled soldiers. The Ministry has been denying pension claims of soldiers on shallow pretexts like the disability occurred in peaceful conditions and not in an active war zone. Military Boards have also been rejecting diseases such as neurosis and schizophrenia for being 'constitutional' in nature and not aggravated by service conditions. In contrast, pension claims for such diseases are routinely allowed by medical boards of the Central Armed Police Forces under the Home Ministry. Even though the Supreme Court has rendered a series of judgments in favour of the soldiers' claims, the Ministry of Defence has continued to file appeals against claims at all stages. While the Income Tax Department does not go to the Supreme Court unless the amount involved is more than ₹ 25 lakhs, the Ministry of Defence has often gone there for paltry sums like even a few thousand rupees. Most soldiers cannot afford the costs of protracted litigation and are forced to abandon their claims. It is shameful that taxpayers' money is being used to field top lawyers and pay exorbitant legal fees in an attempt to deny our brave soldiers their rightful dues. I strongly urge the Government to ensure that bureaucratic hurdles in the release of pensions are removed at the earliest. The Ministry must cease filing frivolous appeals and grant our soldiers the respect they deserve. Thank you, Sir.

SHRI TARUN VIJAY: Sir, I associate myself with the Special Mention made by Shri Derek O'Brien.

SHRIMATI VIJILA SATHYANANTH: Sir, I also associate myself with the Special Mention made by Shri Derek O'Brien.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (DR. E. M. SUDARSANA NATCHIAPPAN): Now, Shri Kiranmay Nanda. He is not present. The House stands adjourned to meet on Monday, the 11th August, 2014 at 11.00 a.m.

The House then adjourned at twenty-three minutes past six of the clock till eleven of the clock on Monday, the 11th August, 2014.