

be greatly benefited as waitlisted passengers are three times more than the reserved passengers in all South-bound trains from Chennai. So, I urge the Government to speedily sanction this train. Thank you, Sir.

Need for alternative arrangements for transporting rice to ease impending food crisis in Mizoram

SHRI RONALD SAPA TLAU (Mizoram): Sir, I rise to state that my constituency Mizoram is on the brink of virtually facing a famine in two months as the only railway link from Assam to my State has been completely shut down. Since only 15 per cent of the total monthly rice demand of 1,23,310 MT is produced from the hilly State of Mizoram, the remaining 85 per cent comes from outside from the FCI through rail transportation. While I support the broad-gauge construction idea, it is very disturbing to know that there was no coordination between the Railway Ministry and the FCI whatsoever for an alternative arrangement to maintain this supply chain. If there was only a timely well-planned coordination strategy, this crisis could have been avoided.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI P. RAJEEVE): Please read from the text.

SHRI RONALD SAPA TLAU: Yes, Sir. The need of the Mizo people apparently did not occur in their calculation. With this, Railway service to be cut off for nearly two years, the people of Mizoram have no way of surviving with only 18,500 MT of rice locally grown. If there was only a timely well-planned coordination between the Railway Ministry and the FCI, this crisis could have been easily avoided.

Sir, the State Government had, all along, been trying its best to make alternative arrangements on its own, even met the concerned Ministers in Delhi, but only to find out its futility. The people of Mizoram are now insecure, worried, frustrated and feeling very alienated with the inhuman manner the Central Government is treating them. There is even a danger of unwanted atmosphere in the hill among the general public unless the Central immediately steps in to provide a viable alternative of transporting this rice supply. Hence, this very serious and pressing issue be resolved immediately by the FCI, by taking it up on a war-footing basis, to transport the required amount of rice through viable means to avoid escalation of crisis in Mizoram. Thank you, Sir.

Need to take immediate steps to fill vacant Government positions in the country

PROF. M.V. RAJEEV GOWDA (Karnataka): Sir, it is a matter of urgent national importance that key positions in the Government have been lying vacant for a while, but suitable replacements have not yet been found and no succession plan has been put in place. Importantly, the key positions, which are lying vacant and where the incumbents are to demit office soon, are from the security establishments, transparency and anti-corruption bodies.

7.00 P.M.

[Prof. M.V. Rajeev Gowda]

Even the much-talked-about Lok Pal has not been set up as the modalities are still being worked out despite the Lok Pal Act having been passed during the UPA term. The Central Information Commission, CIC, the apex transparency body under the Right to Information Act, has been headless since August 22. The Central Information Commission is working with seven Information Commissioners, even though the sanctioned strength is ten.

Even the Central Vigilance Commission has been headless since September end. The body is working with only one Vigilance Commissioner. The positions of two Special Director Generals in the CBI are also vacant. The Indo-Tibetan Border Police is also faced with similar problems.

The CBDT, a constituent of the Special Investigation Team on black money, comprises a Chairman and six members, but has five vacancies with only the Chairperson and just a Member (Revenue & Vigilance). Moreover, no interlocutors have been appointed for China and Pakistan, more than 10 public sector undertakings remain headless, Directors of Indian Institutes of Technology and Vice-Chancellors of Central Universities have not been appointed and several Joint Secretary positions in key Ministries have been left vacant.

I request the Government to take immediate steps to fill these vacant positions.

Thank you.

SHRI ANANDA BHASKAR RAPOLU (Andhra Pradesh): Sir, I associate myself with the Special Mention made by the hon. Member.

SHRI DEREK O' BRIEN (West Bengal): Sir, I associate myself with the Special Mention made by the hon. Member.

**Need to grant status of autonomy to North East Indira Gandhi Regional
Institute of Health and Medical Sciences (NEIGRIHMS) in Shillong**

SHRIMATI WANSUK SYIEM (Meghalaya): Thank you, Sir, It was with great expectations that the people of the North-East States welcomed the establishment of North East Indira Gandhi Regional Institute of Health And Medical Sciences, Shillong, by the Central Government modelled on the nation's premier healthcare institutions like AIIMS, New Delhi, PGIMER, Chandigarh, and JIPMER Puducherry. Similar healthcare institutions at the State capitals of Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Bihar and Odisha are similarly vested with autonomous powers. Unfortunately, the growth and expansion of NEIGRIHMS has been consistently stymied by the *ad hocism* on the part of the Ministry