

SHRI SUJEET KUMAR (Odisha): Sir, I also associate myself with the Zero Hour mention made by the hon. Member.

SHRIMATI VANDANA CHAVAN (Maharashtra): Sir, I associate myself with the Zero Hour mention made by the hon. Member.

DR. SASMIT PATRA (Odisha): Sir, I also associate myself with the Zero Hour mention made by the hon. Member.

DR. AMAR PATNAIK (Odisha): Sir, I also associate myself with the Zero Hour mention made by the hon. Member.

SPECIAL MENTIONS

MR. CHAIRMAN: Hon. Members, I have received 35 requests. So, try to adjust the time. Otherwise, it will be difficult. We have about nine Special Mentions which I permitted. Please lay your Special Mentions.

Demand to resolve issues affecting retired bank employees

SHRI KANAKAMEDALA RAVINDRA KUMAR (Andhra Pradesh): Hon. Chairman, Sir, banking sector is an important component in the progress of the nation. Bank employees are the backbone of such an important sector. Pension Scheme for bank employees was introduced in the year 1993 w.e.f 01.01.1986. Bank retirees' pension has not been updated even for a single time in the past. But there has been substantial increase in prices of essential commodities including the cost of medical treatment, medicines, etc. The Government had given sympathetic thought to the concerns of the bank retirees and their demand. Finally, it had given direction to IBA/SBI Chairman to carry out updation of pension for bank retirees.

The family pensioners were receiving very meager amount as family pension, that is, they are receiving only 15 per cent of the last pay received by the pensioner. Considering this and to bring it at par with other sectors, the Government and IBA agreed to increase the family pension to 30 per cent without any ceiling. This proposal is pending with the Government for its approval and then implementation. The same was brought to the notice of the hon. Finance Minister, Shrimati Nirmala Sitharaman. She had agreed to have a relook at the issue.

There are about 2,000 surviving retirees and about 1,500 surviving spouses who retired before 1986. As they are not eligible for pension, *ex-gratia* payment is being given to them. This also needs revision considering the various ups and downs of the economy.

I, therefore, urge the Government to upgrade pension to bank employees, enhance family pension and, revise *ex-gratia* payment to spouses of pre-1986 retirees. Thank you.

Demand for steps/strategy to check entry of microplastic into the food chain

SHRI MD. NADIMUL HAQUE (West Bengal): Sir, research shows contamination of the Indian sea with microplastics and when microplastics enter the marine food web at low levels, they can move up the food chain as bigger species eat smaller ones.

According to the UN, up to 12 million tonnes of plastic are swept into oceans globally, high levels of microplastic are found in rivers and oceans. Various studies reported upto 600 particle microplastics per kilogram of salt, up to 660 microplastic fibers per kilogram of honey. Thus, leading microplastics entering the food chain too.

Research says microplastics are known endocrine disruptors and are implicated in numerous health challenges like diabetes, cancer, and obesity. These findings are yet another wake-up call. Motto, that is, prevention is better than cure surely helps reduce the inescapable problems in future.

It is a social responsibility for everyone to reduce the usage of plastics and thereby bring down the entry of microplastics into the food chain. However, the Government needs to address this issue immediately, set-up research centers, examine various studies, build an institution to monitor this issue in the future.

To begin with, the Government can promote individuals to reuse, refuse and recycle and seek alternatives and support programs, such as India clean up day, to stop plastic waste from entering our environment in the first place, ensuring it does not then become embedded in our precious oceans and landing in the food chain.

I urge the Government to provide insights into this issue and tackle this to find solutions.

SHRI ABIR RANJAN BISWAS (West Bengal): Sir, I associate myself with the matter raised by the hon. Member.