

number of practitioners runs into the millions. Tangible steps may be taken by the Union Government to designate Saridharma and Sarnadharma as separate religious codes on the specific proposal from the Government of West Bengal. I urge the Union Government to initiate the process to recognize both Saridharam and Sarnadharam as unique religious codes. Thank you.

Demand to release funds for National Health Mission for West Bengal

SHRI PRAKASH CHIK BARAIK (West Bengal): Sir, funds under the National Health Mission have become a point of concern in West Bengal. The State Government has allocated a significant amount of Rs. 1,300 crores in the current fiscal year, while the Centre's contribution remains at Rs. 280 crores. The Union is reportedly yet to release around Rs. 826.72 crores earmarked for constructing Suswasthya Kenras, health and wellness centres, across Bengal.

The Union Government cited non-compliance with specific colour-branding guidelines for health and wellness centres. In West Bengal, Government hospitals provide free tests, treatments and medication, and the Swasthya Sathi Health Insurance Scheme covers 2.5 crore families, benefiting 45 lakh individuals. The number of medical colleges has significantly increased from 10 in 2011 to 33.

With around 11,000 centres benefiting three lakh people daily in Bengal, it is crucial for the Central Government to reassess the position, eliminate colour-branding requirements, and promptly release essential funds for the National Health Mission.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member, Dr. John Brittas (Kerala), associated himself with the Special Mention made by the hon. Member, Shri Prakash Chik Baraik.

Concern over employment opportunities in Neyveli Lignite Corporation

SHRI N. CHANDRASEGHARAN (Tamil Nadu): Neyveli Lignite Corporation is a well-known Navratna Enterprise that has made significant contributions to the energy sector, particularly in lignite production and thermal and renewable energy generation. The company operates in Neyveli, Tamil Nadu, and owes its existence to the generous individuals who had provided their land for the development of the mines. Over 25,000 families have contributed through land acquisition, while only 1,827 persons have received employment within NLCIL.

However, recent recruitment practices, such as the selection of graduate engineers, have raised concerns about equitable representation. Only a few

candidates from Tamil Nadu were shortlisted despite the State's excellence in engineering education. This discrepancy fails to appreciate the significant contributions made by local communities. Furthermore, NLCIL's expansion into other States raises questions about the allocation of employment opportunities. Given the sacrifices made by the people of Tamil Nadu, it is critical to ensure their fair share in the benefits generated by the company. Therefore, I urge the government to review the recent graduate engineer selection process to ensure transparency and inclusion of eligible candidates from Tamil Nadu. They also call for the implementation of a reservation policy that allocates 90 per cent of vacancies across all categories within NLCIL to qualified candidates from Tamil Nadu. Ensuring equitable employment opportunities for the youth of Tamil Nadu within NLCIL is not only a matter of economic justice but also a recognition of the sacrifices made by their communities. I urge the Government to look into the matter.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member, Dr. John Brittas (Kerala), associated himself with the Special Mention made by the hon. Member, Shri N. Chandrasegharan.

Demand for boosting rail connectivity in Kalahandi, Balangir, Koraput (KBK) region

SHRI SUJEET KUMAR (Odisha): Sir, through you, I seek to raise an important matter of boosting rail connectivity in the KBK (Kalahandi, Balangir, Koraput) region, which comprises of 7 out of 10 aspirational districts of Odisha and requires substantial boost in railway connectivity since people of the region frequently travel in western Odisha for economic, educational and medical purposes. At present, people face numerous problems due to low connectivity and erratic timings which take toll on passengers and create inconvenience in travel affecting their prospects. To cite an example, Kalahandi district has only 08317/08318 Sambalpur - Junagarh Road - Sambalpur Passenger Special Train to connect Kalahandi with Sambalpur, which takes nearly 8 hours to reach, whereas buses cover this distance in just 4-5 hours. There is also a need to extend this train to Jharsuguda Road. Similarly, 08503/08504 Bhawanipatna-Visakhapatnam - Bhawanipatna Passenger Special should be converted to Express Train and extended to Junagarh Road, and 12893/12894 Bhubaneswar-Balangir-Bhubaneswar Superfast be extended to Rayagada *via* Kesinga. This will avoid inconvenience for frequent travellers who have to plan well in advance for accommodating the time lost in travel, and also for patients with medical emergency. Sir, in view of these compelling factors, I request the Government to consider the aforementioned demands for significantly boosting railway connectivity in