

CALLING ATTENTION TO A MATTER OF  
URGENT PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

13.01 hrs.

**Situation arising out of the prolonged  
strike by the Jute Workers In West  
Bengal**

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA (Bankura):  
Sir, I call the attention of the Minister of  
Textiles to the following matter of urgent  
public importance and request that he may  
make a statement thereon:-

" The situation arising out of the  
prolonged strike by the Jute Work-  
ers in West Bengal and the steps  
taken by the Government to re-  
solve the issue involved." (*Inter-  
ruptions*)

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Strike is  
over (*Interruptions*)

MR. SPEAKER: Let us give that  
happy news. (*Interruptions*)

[*Translation*]

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE  
MINISTRY OF TEXTILES (SHRI ASHOK  
GEHLOT): Mr. Speaker, Sir, if Achariaji had  
brought his Calling Attention Motion earlier,  
this strike would have been called off much  
before.

13.02 hrs.

[SHRI SHARAD DIGHE *in the Chair*]

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE  
MINISTRY OF TEXTILES (SHRI ASHOK  
GEHLOT): The workers of the Jute industry  
in West Bengal were on strike with effect  
from 28 th January, 1992 in support of their  
charter of demands.

The tripartite settlement for the jute  
industry in West Bengal expired on 25.2.1991.  
The Trade Unions submitted a fresh charter  
of demands, which included, inter-alia, a  
new wage agreement. In order to avert the  
strike in the jute industry. I had requested  
Chief Minister, West Bengal on 30.12.91 to  
advise the State Labour Department to initi-  
ate a dialogue and to work out a mutually  
agreed wage settlement for the jute industry  
to the satisfaction of all concerned.

Several rounds of tripartite and bipartite  
meetings were held between the represen-  
tatives of Indian Jute Mills Association (IJMA),  
National Jute Manufactures Corporation  
(NJMC) and the Federation of Unions under  
the auspices of the Department of Labour of  
the Government of West Bengal. However,  
IJMA took the stand that any increase in  
wages should be linked to productivity which  
the Federation of Unions were not prepared  
to consider. Thus, no settlement could be  
arrived at due to which workers of the Jute  
industry in West Bengal went on strike from  
28th January, 1992.

However, 5 mills of NJMC (which is a  
Government of India Undertaking), New  
Central Jute Mills Co. Ltd., (which is a work-  
ers' cooperative) and Bharat Jute Mill (which  
is managed by the Government of West  
Bengal) were exempted from the purview of  
the strike. Subsequently, Delta Jute Mill and  
the Nadia Jute Mills reopened following  
bipartite agreement between their manage-  
ments and workers. IJMA had disassociated  
themselves from the tripartite discussions  
following the reopening of Delta Jute Mill, but  
were persuaded to resume negotiations to  
resolve the strike in the jute industry in West  
Bengal.

The State Government is the appropri-  
ate authority under the Industrial Disputes  
Act for the settlement of industrial disputes  
including strikes. I once again requested  
Chief Minister, West Bengal on 4.2.1992

and 20.2.92 to intervene and bring about a settlement to resolve the strike in the jute industry in West Bengal. Subsequently, Chairman, IJMA had met the Chief Minister, West Bengal and Chief Minister, West Bengal asked the Chief Secretary to talk to both the sides and work out settlement. Senior officials of the Ministry of Textiles were in constant touch with the State Government to keep abreast of the development in the negotiations between the mill management and the Federation of Unions to resolve this crisis in the jute industry in West Bengal.

A week ago, Minister of State for Labour Shri P.A. Sangama and myself had reviewed the situation arising out of the strike in the jute industry in West Bengal. After the meeting we issued a joint appeal calling upon the IJMA to be considerate towards the labour and adopt a magnanimous outlook. Simultaneously, we also appealed to the concerned Trade Unions to adopt a pragmatic view having regard to the long term interests of the jute industry so as to ensure its viability.

As a result of discussions, a new wage agreement has been signed on 17th March, 1992 between the State Government, Federation of Unions and the IJMA. With this jute industry is expected to return to normalcy in West Bengal.

[Translation]

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA: Mr. Chairman, Sir, the statement made by the hon. Minister regarding the strike is ridiculous. I congratulate the West Bengal, particularly the Chief Minister of West Bengal, Shri Jyoti Basu who took initiative to call off the strike. The jute workers and the jute industry are an important industry of West Bengal. There was a time when two and a half lakh workers were employed by the jute industries but now the number of workers has declined to one lakh forty thousand. Ironically the profits

earned by the jute mill owners each year is steadily increasing but the number of workers is decreasing every year. It is something surprising. Every time the jute workers wanted a hike in their wages.

[English]

During the last twenty two years, for four or five times, they had to resort to strike.

[Translation]

If they do not resort to strike, their wages are not raised.

[English]

There was an agreement - tripartite agreement - in the year 1984 and that was expired in 1990. Since 1990, all the trade Unions, they are trying to have another agreement.

[Translation]

The organisation of the owners, I.J.M.A. has refused to enter into any agreement. As such the workers had no other option but to resort to strike resulting in country's loss of a total of Rs. 425 crore. In monetary terms, the strike entails a daily production loss of 6,000 tonnes of jute valued at Rs. 6 crores - - Rs.1.21 crores on export sales; Rs 3.57 crores on domestic sales and Rs. 15.21 lakhs of revenue to the Government. The workers in the meanwhile, are losing Rs. 1.51 crores as wages every day. This is a national loss.

[Translation]

We met then not once but several times. We even met the Minister of Textiles.

[English]

We talked to the Labour Minister. He is

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a very efficient Labour Minister, who is now the Chairman of a Tripartite Committee. The Committee has been formed with the Trade Unions to abolish or to remove our Public sector undertakings. We met the Prime Minister also and he assured us that he would immediately intervene. But after meeting the Ministers, having discussed the urgent matters, nothing was done by the Central Government. The reply of the Central Government was that the Central Government has nothing to intervene in the matter. But the Central Government - Union Government - they have the right to attack the industry by enacting a legislation. By allowing synthetic granules they are destroying one of the vital and important industries of West Bengal. Not only 1.4 lakh workers now in the jute industry are affected, but 40 lakh jute growers whose life and death are related with this industry are also affected.

An assurance was given by the first Prime Minister Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru - when Bengal was partitioned, when jute mills were in West Bengal and jute growing areas went to the erstwhile East Bengal - to the peasants of West Bengal to grow jute become self - sufficient. West Bengal became self - sufficient by growing jute. Now what price are they getting? After allowing synthetic granule, the Central Government took a decision to destroy the jute industry. But subsequently they enacted a legislation for the mandatory use of jute packages. Industrialists are flouting the legislation. They are not implementing this.

I have seen this when I was the Chairman of the Committee of Public Undertakings. I visited a number of public sector undertakings. I visited cement industry and fertilizer industry. I have seen that they are using synthetic bags; they are not using jute bags. They are flouting the mandatory use of jute bags.

Why the jute workers had to go on strike? Why for every agreement they have to go on strike? Why the Central Government which is responsible even to intervene and take initiative, so that the wage agreement is settled, is not doing anything? There are a number of problems. Why there is crisis in jute industry? Why the national market is being captured by a small country like Bangladesh? Why diversification is not allowed? There was jute modernisation fund. But even this jute modernisation fund is not being utilised for the modernisation of the old and worn-out machinery. The jute industry is the oldest industry of our country. The worn-out machinery are to be replaced.

May I know from the Minister, in order to save the vital and most important industry of West Bengal and to protect the livelihood of not only 1.4 lakh workers, but also 40 lakh jute growers, whether the Government proposes to have a comprehensive plan for the modernisation of this industry?

[Translation]

What does the Government propose to do in order to save them from this critical condition? The Government has certain Mills, N.J.M.C. Under it.

[English]

NJMC's five or six mills were abandoned by the erstwhile owners and all the six mills were taken over by the Government of India and then subsequently nationalised.

There are about 32000 or 33000 workers in NJMC. But the NJMC management has prepared a viability report. I would like to know whether it is a fact that the Government is contemplating to sell out one or two of its mills by not making it viable and by not investing money to make it viable, not offering any package to make all mills viable and not allowing these mills to diversify.

I know one of the subsidiaries of NJMC, The Modern Jute Mill, was closed for four years. After our efforts, this Mill was re-opened. There is a possibility, there is a scope for diversification; but money is not being invested and diversification is not allowed.

These are the crises in the jute industry. May I know from the hon. Minister as to whether the Government have any proposal to save this industry by modernising it, by diversifying it? What are the concrete proposals of the Government?

SHRI ANIL BASU (Arambagh): Sir, it is good that the jute workers' strike ended through an amicable settlement by the intervention of the Chief Minister of West Bengal.

The question arises as to why this jute industry, which is the oldest industry of our country and which is also the main source of export earning industry, is suffering so much. That is the question. The main reason behind this is the jute mill owners themselves are siphoning off the funds the profits from the jute industry. They are setting up other industries in other parts of the country and they are not investing the profits for the development of the jute industry itself. That is the main reason why the jute industry is suffering so much.

This time the workers had to resort to strike; and after prolonged strike, they are able to get some of their demands met, though most of the demands are not met by the jute mill owners.

Here is a Department - we know the Government has a Department - the Labour Department. Regarding the jute industry what role this Department is playing, is a question. We can see that in jute mills, when a jute mill worker, who after 35 or 40 years of working in a jute mill, is thrown out of job, when he retires, when he is retrenched, he

gets tuberculosis in his lungs. There is a provision of Provident Fund. But, the jute mill owners are not contributing it to the Provident Fund account of the jute mill workers. Sir, you would be surprised to hear that more than Rs. 100 crores which is the share of the workers in the Provident Fund are also not paid by the jute mill owners. Here is the Labour Minister, we think that he is an energetic person, but regarding the jute industry, he is keeping silent. He is not taking any action.

So many accidents are occurring in the jute mills, but ESI benefits are not provided to the workers, though they are demanding it for decades. But, other industries are getting the benefit. The jute industry workers are denied the ESI benefits. The Labour Ministry, here are not taking any action against the jute mill owners. The problem is that from the raw jute collection to the finished products, everywhere, there is a problem. There is an organisation of our Government, a public sector undertaking, The Jute Corporation of India (JCI), which is supposed to procure jute from the market and which is supposed to intervene in the market when the price falls so that the agriculturists, the cultivators can get the minimum support price. But what is happening? JCI is not functioning properly. They have become the brokers of the jute traders. Instead of supporting the cultivators, instead of supporting the peasants, they have become brokers of the traders. Jute growers not only in West Bengal but also in Bihar, Assam and Tripura are suffering.

MR. CHAIRMAN: (Shri Sharad Dighe): Ask a clarificatory question.

SHRI ANIL BASU: There are 12 lakh jute growers in our country. I would like to ask the hon. Textile Minister what action does he propose to see that JCI works in a proper manner. Is he going to consider to nationalise the raw jute purchase? Instead

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of traders, would he give the responsibility to the panchayats in West Bengal, which are functioning at the grassroot level. They can function as agents of JCI like LIC agents. Through them, they can procure the jute which is required for the NJMC mills. Is he ready to consider restructuring of the JCI and the role of the JCI for procurement of raw jute in a big way?

Side by side, when you are going to procure the raw jute, you have to develop the infrastructure required for it. You have to construct godowns in the rural areas and also in the mill areas. Without constructing godowns, you cannot keep jute because jute is produced in specific months of a year. During those months, you have to collect the whole jute for production throughout the year. You have to keep it in the godowns. If you do not construct the godown you will not be able to purchase and supply it to the NJMC mills.

What is surprising is that there are five mills under NJMC. There is a complaint that instead of restructuring NJMC, the Textile Ministry is going to sell away all the mills. Their assets are worth about Rs. 300 crore, but you are going to give it to the private jute millowners at a very low price, at a throw-away price. The Textile Ministry, in the name of privatisation, is running behind the jute barons. And they are deciding to sell the five mills to the jute barons at a price of Rs. 20 crore which have got assets of Rs. 300 crore. Can you imagine?

Another problem which the jute industry is facing today is because of the synthetic bags. The mandatory provision was there. But cement industry, fertiliser industry and even the public sector industries are flouting this mandatory purchase of jute bags and they are going for HDPE bags. So, the

mandatory provision for jute bags should be there for the public sector units.

Regarding other problems, one of the major demands of the striking workers - it is also the demand of the entire population of West Bengal - and other jute-growing States is that the jute industry should be nationalised. In the interest of the nation, in the interest of the jute growers, in the interest of the workers of the country the whole industry has to be nationalised. It is an export oriented industry. It has a very bright future. Do not allow this industry to be destroyed in the hands of the private jute millowners who are destroying the whole industry for their own interests.

With these words, I think the Textile Minister and the Labour Minister will intervene together to see that the provident fund is provided to the workers, the ESI benefit is also provided to the workers, the NJMC mills are not sold out to the private jute millowners, JCI is restructured and the whole jute industry, including purchase of jute is nationalised in the interest of the nation. With these words, I thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Now Shri Hannan Mollah. You are required to put a clarificatory question and not make a long speech.

SHRI HANNAN MOLLAH (Uluberia): Sir, I join with my colleagues on the points they have raised and so, I am not repeating those points. I support all the points they have made and also the demands. As I am directly related to the movement of jute workers, I would like to just ask certain specific questions.

Firstly, even though the strike has concluded and settled, many of their demands have not been met with which are related to the Central Government. I want to know from both the textile and Labour Ministers categorically as to what the Central Govern-

ment will do regarding the problems of the nationalised jute mill workers and their agreement. Will the wage increase and other benefits which have been reached in the agreement be implemented in the case of 30,000 workers who are working in five or six mills of the NJMC, as those mills were not on strike? And NJMC is run by the Government. This is one of the questions which the Central Government has to answer categorically.

My second point is regarding the provident fund. The State Government cannot amend the PF Act. We have heard that Rs. 100 crores have been siphoned off by the management. So this management is very clever and it is anti-national. We are very bitter about the anti-national activities of the jute management and now the Government is allowing them to run away without depositing the workers contribution. Will the Government amend the PF Act and make it stringent so that the jute management will be forced to deposit the workers contribution and owner's contribution to the provident fund and workers are not deprived of their provident fund. This is another question to which I want a categorical reply as this is a Central Government scheme.

Thirdly, the ESI Act should be amended by the Central Government as it cannot be amended by the State Government. The ESI benefit is available to workers earning upto Rs. 1600/- per month. The workers have demanded that the limit of Rs. 1600 per month should be raised to Rs. 3000 per month. So, I want to know from the hon. Labour Minister whether he is going to bring in amendments in the ESI Act extending the limit upto Rs. 3000 per month in this session itself. These are not clarified in the strike but some demands had been made. There are general points which I need clarification but there are specific points also which I would like to make.

A point was made about synthetic raw materials. Will the Government make the provision stringent and put a total ban on the import of the synthetic raw materials, in violation of the compulsory package Act many people using synthetic bags instead of jute bags, what steps will you take to check this?

My next point is about modernisation. I know that many mills are giving less emoluments to the workers because they cannot give equal wage at the present juncture. With the recommendation of the BIFR, they are giving less wages for making them viable. The sick mills which are suffering and which are under the BIFR should get the Jute Development Fund. I know that two of the mills in my constituency the Prem Chand Jute Mill and Kanoria Jute Mills. But you are helping those who are running away with the money. Will the Government give loan from the Jute Development Fund to the weak units or industries and try to make them viable units? This point has also to be discussed.

My next point is about diversification. Newsprint may be produced from jute waste and so many other things can also be produced. The Government should set up their own research and development units and they should make the owner or force the owner to utilise such things because the owners will not do it by themselves. This point has also to be decided, as that has not been finalised in the agreement.

There is a demand that one branch of the BIFR should be opened at Calcutta. This was one of the 43 points made in the strike. Is the Central Government going to accept this demand or not?

The DGS&D should purchase greater amount of jute goods from the jute mills and continue regular flow of orders on a monthly quota basis. I would like to know whether the

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Government will implement this point or not.

So Sir, ESI Act and the PF Act should be amended. There should be compulsory purchase of raw jute by the JCI. Finally, I want to know whether the Central Government is going to accept those demands or not.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Sudarsan Raychaudhuri, most of the points are covered.

SHRI SUDARSAN RAYCHAUDHURI (Serampore): Yes, So what can I do? Some points need reiteration since the problems are perennial. It has been stated in the statement that with the new wage agreement which had been signed yesterday, the jute industry is expected to return to normalcy in West Bengal, not to speak of the entire country. I am afraid that the Government has some other meaning of normalcy because the jute industry has been suffering from some perennial problems on which my friends have already spoken here. It seems that the mill owners have been left to do whatever they wish. They have formed a cartel of their own and their feudal fiefdom. I would like to know from the hon. Minister what precise steps he is considering to pay the gratuity and other dues amounting to the tune of Rs. 228 crores to the workers. What exactly are the penal provisions that are being contemplated by the Government against the recalcitrant mill owners who refuse to pay the provident fund, gratuity and bonus which are due to the worker? What is the role of the Government regarding synthetic HDP granules which are being imported involving an annual forex outgo of about Rs. 80 crore. After the devaluation, this cost has also been pushed up. I want to know whether it will be stopped altogether. I also want to know whether this Govern-

ment's compulsory packaging order that cement and fertilizer should necessarily be packed in jute bags will be implemented more rigorously. I ask this because this order is being flouted and it is implemented more in breach than in practice. I also want to know whether more and more public sector industries will be brought under the purview of this compulsory packaging order so that apart from cement and fertilizer, goods of other industries may also be packed in jute bags alone.

Lastly, I want to ask about the workers' participation in management. The major ailment of the jute mills in the country is the irresponsible attitude and lack of professionalism in the management. I want to know whether workers will now be allowed to participate in the management of the jute mills and whether the Government will come up with a suitable legislation on this.

SHRI SUDHIR GIRI (Contai): Sir, the jute workers' strike started on 28th January 1992. It came to an end on 17th March with a happy note, with the intervention of the hon. Chief Minister of West Bengal. Sir, due to the strike, several crores of rupees have been lost because we could not export gunny bags. One hon. Member from Maharashtra observed in the House yesterday that because of the shortage of gunny bags, their sugar industry is coming to a close.

At one stage, the IJMA - Indian Jute Mills Association - came to an understanding with the State Government and the labour unions that it will settle the matter. Subsequently, they retracted. At that stage, I would like to know from the hon. Minister as to why the IJMA did not pay heed to the instructions of the State Government and why the Central Government did not intervene to persuade the IJMA to come to terms with the Labour unions and the State Government of West Bengal.



[Translation]

SHRI ASHOK GEHLOT: Mr. Chairman, Sir, I would like to thank the hon. Members for moving Calling Attention. If they had done this earlier, perhaps the strike would have been called off even before. As has been said by hon. Members that they congratulate the Chief Minister who intervened and called off the strike. They asked as to why did the Central Government not intervene into this matter. They wanted the Central Government to intervene. The hon. Members are aware of the fact that as per the Industrial Disputes Act, 1947, this subject is a State subject. We do not want anybody to unnecessarily intervene into it... (*Interruptions*)

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA: Is there any way out?

SHRI ASHOK GEHLOT: We have written twice or thrice about it to the Chief Minister..... (*Interruptions*)

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA: The strike went on for forty days and in this period did you visit Calcutta even once?

SHRI ASHOK GEHLOT: I did not go there deliberately.

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA: You could have at least met the Chief Minister.

SHRI ASHOK GEHLOT: We were holding talks. The officers were constantly in touch with us. The Jute Commission of West Bengal is here. Our effort was to call off the ongoing strike at the earliest. I had written to the Chief Minister even before the strike had started.... (*Interruptions*)..

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA: If I had not raised it here, it would have never been highlighted in the House.

SHRI ASHOK GEHLOT: The hon. Chief Minister has already got the strike called off... (*Interruptions*) The Ministry has expressed its concern over it and requested the hon. Chief Minister to contact the Labour Department of the State to find out ways to prevent the outbreak of strike. They made efforts in this connection and conducted two or three meetings in this regard. Despite this, they had to serve notice and subsequently the strike was called off. In response to the apprehensions expressed by hon. Members I would like to point out that the Jute Packaging Act was brought forward to save the jute industry. The then Prime Minister Shri Rajiv Gandhi at that time observed that the jute industry was gradually becoming weaker and it was to be strengthened. This Act was not formulated with this idea in mind. On the contrary, I understand that the Jute Modernisation Fund was to the tune of Rs. 150 crore and Rs. 100 crore were earmarked for the Jute Development Fund. In it the use of gunny bags was made compulsory. In the case of food articles, sugar and urea fertilizers, hundred percent use of gunny bags is in force and as far as cement is concerned, it is 70 per cent. The hon. Members are aware of the fact that this matter is subjudice. Many people have moved courts and have got stay orders. As such we are not in a position to take much action in this regard. Our endeavour will be to implement this Act and leave no stone unturned to strengthen the jute industries.

So far as the hon. Members are concerned they have pointed out that the Jute Modernisation Fund scheme had not been implemented in totality. I would like to say that there were around twenty two application forms and Rs. 88.5 crore were sanctioned to them. Our endeavour will be to attract more and more applications. Unless this is modernised, the jute industries cannot be strengthened. The production cannot be raised and the quality cannot be improved. As such we are making every possible effort



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in this direction. We can make endeavours to keep maximum money. As far as giving assistance to sick mills is concerned, sanction can be accorded within the rules. It is not regulated by the Ministry alone. The Ministry takes decision after seeing all the packages through the medium of the financial institutions of I.F.C.I. Through the medium of this fund we would like to take it towards modernisation. Similarly, a provision of Rs. 100 crores has been made for the Jute Development Fund. It is our endeavour to make it flexible. At present, we are not able to fully utilise the money earmarked item-wise. The matter has been taken up by the Cabinet. We want diversification on a massive scale and it is our endeavour to formulate a policy at the earliest so that through research and development or through diversification, a situation is created where in the dependence on the Mandatory Act on Jute packaging is gradually reduced. There should be more market for jute and many fiscal concessions have been given with this objective in mind. The import duty on machinery has been reduced. Further, the hon. Minister of Finance has made a provision in the current Budget, under which excise duty on hank yarn has been lifted. We would also like to have more Research and Development work in this field. For your kind information, I would like to mention here that a National Centre for Jute Development has been established with its headquarters at Calcutta. There is a branch office in NOIDA, where research and other related work will be undertaken. It is our endeavour to accelerate the diversification process.

You have expressed apprehensions about N.J.M.C. I am sad that despite my repeated assertions, the hon. Member is not satisfied with the answer. It seems to me it is a deliberate and politically motivated act. I have reiterated this time and again. In the last session also in response to a question,

I had said that the Government has no plans to privatise the N.J.M.C. mills and there is no such proposal before the Government in this regard. Neither the figures that you are giving. (*Interruptions*) You have mentioned Rs. 300 crores or Rs. 30 crores and you have produced these figures both before the House and within and outside Calcutta as well. I request you to kindly place the facts before the House. We have no plans to privatise any Government property.

SHRI ANIL BASU: Nothing has been said about the officials.

SHRI ASHOK GEHLOT: I am coming to that also. No plan or programme has been formulated to hand over these mills to the private sector. We collected information about the particular official, whose name was referred to. He had just provided some information.

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA: But is there any programme to make it financially viable? There should be one or else it will face internal death.

SHRI ASHOK GEHLOT: In this, you yourself can give suggestions regarding workers participation in management. The New Central Jute Mill at Calcutta has set forth an example before the country. The mill, which is in the co-operative sector and it is the first mill in the country solely managed by workers. I would even add that the mill, which was running in losses, is making profits today. Therefore I would request you to chalk out a programme to make the rest of the N.J.M.C. mills also viable by handing them over to workers.

SHRI ANIL BASU: How is workers' participation possible?

SHRI ASHOK GEHLOT: Workers' participation is a minor thing compared to our desire to hand over the mills to the workers.

It must not be something new for you as Calcutta has become the trend-setter in this direction, People of Uttar Pradesh or Gujarat may not take to the idea, as fish to water, but the people of West Bengal have seen for themselves the manner in which a loss-making unit is making profits. Lessons from this novel experiment should be kept in mind, while taking further steps in this direction. I would not like to discuss the re-structuring plan in isolation, because Shri Sangma is making efforts to make other public undertakings including N.T.C. into viable units. You must be aware of the immense losses incurred by these units. Instead of the requisite labour strength of 19000, we have a 31,000 strong labour force. You can understand for yourself the reason for this loss and moreover, the machinery is obsolete. Further, you know very well that losses are taking place, due to various reasons. I believe that when these loss-making units were taken over by the Government, the aim was to protect the interest of the workers and even today the Government is confronted with the problem of protecting the interests of the workers and at the same time, making these units viable. We want to make these mills viable, without harming the interests of the workers.

SHRI HANNAN MOLLAH: The agreement should be implemented.

SHRI ASHOK GEHLOT: I will elaborate on each point. So, the strike in the N.J.M.C. mills has been kept out of its purview and this matter is pending before the Ministry of textiles. We have already started taking action as per the procedures and norms laid down by the Central Government. The Ministry of Finance is holding consultations with the representatives of Public enterprises in this regard and it is our endeavour to take necessary action in this direction at the earliest. Although, you had made a plea in this regard, there is no question of treating this issue in isolation and we would like a deci-

sion to be taken as per the norms laid down by the Central Government and we shall spare no efforts to implement it.

So far as the question of P.F. is concerned, Shri Sangma is present in the House. He is very much seized of the matter and there cannot be two opinions that the figures in this regard are worrisome. I think there was a question for Shri Sangma today and I believe that 56 mills are defaulters and so far as P.F. is concerned, 39 mills are defaulters. The P.F. due is Rs. 83.7 crores and the E.S.I. due is Rs. 34.66 crores. It is indeed a matter of concern. I believe that Shri Sangma is taking necessary action.

You have expressed doubts about J.C.I. Your help is solicited in this regard. I am saying this because J.C.I.'s interests are uppermost in your mind as well. Earlier also, on many occasions it has been mentioned in the House that J.C.I. doesn't enter the market, whole-heartedly that it doesn't establish links with the growers.

SHRI ANIL BASU: Don't they have funds?

SHRI ASHOK GEHLOT: They don't have funds. N.J.M.C. has to pay a due of Rs. 100 crores to J.C.I. I had submitted earlier also.

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA: This is a different issue....

SHRI ASHOK GEHLOT: No, for you it may be a different issue, but not for us... We don't treat them separately.

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA: They have some points, some programmes.-

SHRI ASHOK GEHLOT: I would like to submit that there is no question of winding up the J.C.I. It is an important organisation. The objectives behind the establishment of the

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J.C.I. are relevant to this date. (*Interruptions*)

SHRI ANIL BASU: The J.C.I. doesn't get loans from the Banks, nor does the Government make any budgetary provisions. Under the circumstances, how can it function?

SHRI ASHOK GEHLOT: Please take your seat I will tell you. The J.C.I. is not able to function properly and achieve its desired objective, because of lack of funds and to explain the reason behind it, I would like to cite an example. I had made a request to you also last time and during my visit to Calcutta, I requested the hon. Chief Minister to intervene in the matter. He fully agreed with me and issued the necessary directions to the Labour Ministry in my presence. Goods worth Rs. 10 crores belonging to J.C.I.'s jute mills have been lying at Nadia and Bajaj for the past three four years. The situation came to such a pass that those goods worth Rs. 10 crores would have perished. We made repeated pleas, in this regard, because the High Court too had given a verdict in our favour and it is for the State Government to intervene in the matter and see to it that the goods don't perish. I believe that the mills at Nadia and Calcutta have re-opened. Now, this problem too should be resolved immediately. With reference to your suggestion that the Panchayats and the local people should take up the agency of J.C.I., I would like to say that a large network is in existence, which is working in this direction and we propose to strengthen it further. I think the remaining points are almost complete.

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA: Whatever Shri Sangma spoke about the E.S.I. and P.F... (*Interruptions*)...

[*English*]

The Act should be made more stringent.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The House stands adjourned for lunch to reassemble at 2.50 P.M.

13.52 hrs.

*The Lok Sabha then adjourned for lunch till fifty minutes past Fourteen of the Clock.*

*The Lok Sabha reassembled after lunch at fifty three minutes past Fourteen of the clock.*

[SHRI SHARAD DIGHE *in the Chair*]

#### MATTERS UNDER RULE 377

14.53 hrs.

- (i) **Need to set up oil refinery at Shahpura, Jabalpur, Madhya Pradesh.**

[*Translation*]

KUMARI VIMLA VERMA (Seoni): Mr. Chairman, sir, there is a proposal to set up an oil refinery in Central India during the Eighth Five Year Plan. A gas filling plant has been set up near Shahpura in Jabalpur district of Madhya Pradesh for which the gas is being transported by trucks and trains. Drilling has been started in the hope of getting oil at Jabera in Jabalpur district. So, there can be no other place more suitable than this for setting up an oil refinery in Central India.

If this refinery is set up at Shahpura the expenditure on setting up of a filling plant could be avoided. The expenditure on transportation of gas for the filling plant would also be saved. The above savings could be utilised for transportation of crude oil to the refinery. Oil could be brought for the refinery