

Seventeenth Loksabha

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Title: Need to promote traditional art and craft in Assam.

**SHRI ABDUL KHALEQUE (BARPETA):** Thank you, hon. Speaker, Sir.

Traditional art and craft have always been given a special importance in our country since ages. Sarthebari, a small town in the district of Barpeta in Assam and a part of my constituency, is the home to bell metal industry -- the second largest handicraft after bamboo in the State.

Bell metal, also known as '*kanh*' in Assamese, is used for making many things for regular use and for religious purposes as well. Sarthebari holds a unique place in the production of '*kanh*' utensils. In Assam, utensils of '*kanh*' are used for many religious purposes. The most unusual utensils, Bata and Ban Bati, are used to give offerings and are also used for *pooja*. They are also used to show respect to the honoured guests and dignitaries. Being close to the socio-religious town of Barpeta, there is much importance attached to it. But the handicrafts of Sarthebari have not received the kind of attention and support that it deserves.

In this age of competition and modern industry, these traditional handicrafts are being pushed behind every other thing. The people who are involved in this traditional business, are highly skilled and talented. But they are devoid of return which is due to them. Over the years, the industry has not received the much-needed attention. Thus, it has not seen any development at all. It is high time

that the Government announce a special package to develop and promote the handicrafts of Sarthebari. Unless it is done, this handicraft industry will find it difficult to breathe for a long time.

Hon. Speaker, Sir, as a representative of the people of the Barpeta constituency, I urge upon the hon. Minister of Textiles, through you, to direct the Development Commissioner (Handicrafts) to take necessary action for support and development. This will also add to the overall economic development of the area. Thank you, Sir. Jai Hind.