

**Title:** Request the Government to take steps to protect the match industry, particularly the cottage and hand-made match industry.

SHRI VAIKO (SIVAKASI): Mr. Deputy-Speaker, Sir, I want to draw the attention of the Government, through you, to a very serious problem affecting the lives of nearly eight lakh families in the southern districts of Tamil Nadu, particularly in my constituency. The match industry, particularly the cottage and handmade match industry, is in peril due to two factors. One is the threat due to the proposed import of matches as per the agreement with WTO. The danger started from the day when the Congress Government made an agreement under GATT. If the matches are imported, then the whole industry, particularly these eight lakh families, will be left in the lurch. These are rain-fed areas and there is no other means of livelihood for them. Therefore, all the political parties have launched agitation against the proposed import of matches from abroad. I have made a representation to the hon. Prime Minister and also to the Finance Minister and the Commerce Minister to find out ways and means to stop the danger and protect the interests of eight lakh families whose livelihood depends particularly on this cottage and handmade match industry.

The second danger is due to the mechanisation of the match industry. This mechanisation was done before the Vajpayee Government came to power. Surreptitiously, some of the big companies are bringing machinery which will totally destroy the match industry. The law is very clear to protect particularly the cottage and handmade industries.

Now, the protection given to these industries will be diluted. Therefore, I support the agitation of all the political parties particularly in the southern districts, in my constituency, to protect the match industry and I would urge upon the Government of India to stop further import of machinery and also to stop the companies which are using the machinery which have been surreptitiously brought into this country.

Sir, this is a very serious problem. Already the High Power Committee constituted by the Government of Tamil Nadu has also recommended that further mechanisation should not be allowed.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Shri Vaiko, this is Zero Hour. You are not to make a speech.

SHRI VAIKO : Sir, this is a very burning problem in my constituency, particularly in the southern districts of Tamil Nadu.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: What do you want the Central Government to do?

SHRI VAIKO : Therefore, I would request the Government of India to take all possible steps to protect the match industry, particularly the hand-made match industry. Thank you.