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14.18 hrs.

MATTERS UNDER RULE 377

Title: Need to take appropriate measures for promoting of salt industry in Tamil Nadu.

SHRI DHANUSKODI R. ATHITHAN (TIRUNELVELI): Sir, salt manufacturing is one of the important industries in Thoothukudi district of Tamil Nadu. Approximately 15,000 acres of land is used for salt span venture. Directly and indirectly, nearly 50,000 workers are engaged in salt production. This industry is now facing a threat of closure.

Now, the bore-wells in the salt span area have gone to the depth of 150-200 feet and electricity consumption has increased three to four times with abnormal tariff hike. Due to the over production of salt, the salt producers were forced to sell salt at Rs. 250 per tonne while the sand has been sold at Rs. 450 per tonne. Further, the salt manufacturers are unnecessarily booked in adulteration cases. The fact is that salt cannot be adulterated with any other commodity because it is cheaper than sand. The sodium chloride content below 90 per cent only constitutes low grade salt and is not to be treated as adulterated salt.

I request the Central and the State Governments to come forward to safeguard the salt industry in Tamil Nadu, particularly in Thoothukudi district. I request the Government to give free electricity to the salt manufacturing units as it is given to the farmers. The Government should give a direction to the officials not to book any adulteration case on the salt manufacturers or merchants. Railway wagon facility may be arranged on priority basis for the salt movement at subsidised fare. Export subsidy may also be announced to encourage salt export as done by other countries. The Government should give all facilities to the salt workers and their families including medical, educational and housing benefits as are provided to the *beedi* workers by the Central Government, to save this labour oriented industry from sickness.