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Title: Strike by jute workers in West Bengal.

SHRI HANNAN MOLLAH (ULUBERIA): I would like to draw the attention of the House to a serious problem.

About 2.5 lakh jute mill workers in West Bengal are on an indefinite strike for the last ten days. The jute mill owners are flouting all the agreements reached earlier. The workers are denied gratuity, wages and other benefits as per the agreement. A large number of casual workers are not getting jobs. As regards gratuity, PF and other benefits, the owners owe to the workers more than Rs.1,000 crore. But the attitude of the owners is very stiff and anti-working class. This situation can be exploited by the synthetic lobby if it is not settled early.

The Ministry of Textiles in the Central Government is the largest consumer of the jute products and it can influence the owners saying that without accepting the demands of the workers, the Government will not give them the orders, etc. So, I demand that the Government, the Ministry of Textiles take the matter seriously and try to settle the strike so that the workers get the benefit and that the jute industry, the jute workers and jute growers are also not put into jeopardy. I demand that the Government may take note of that. ...(*Interruptions*)

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Please listen to me. Shri Gurudas Dasgupta, Shri Santasri Chatterjee and Shri Rupchand Pal can associate with this issue. As a special case, I will request Shri Gurudas Dasgupta to speak for about two minutes only.

SHRI GURUDAS DASGUPTA (PANSKURA): Sir, you may ask why we are raising this in Parliament. The strike is in West Bengal and still, why are we raising it in Parliament? We are raising it because the Central Government is losing about Rs.100 crore because of the strike, due to non-payment of excise duty and sales tax. So, the Central Government is directly affected.

Secondly I have with me a letter written by the Secretary of the Ministry of Commerce to the Secretary of Ministry of Labour, asking them to intervene. I ask them, what is the problem? Kharif season has set in. We need 7 lakh bales of jute bags for packaging of food materials like wheat, rice and sugar. If the strike is not ended immediately on a reasonable settlement, the food production will be affected, food procurement will be affected, and food security of the country will also be affected.

There is a letter from the Secretary, Ministry of Commerce to the Secretary, Ministry of Labour in this regard. I demand that the Ministry of Labour should call a meeting of the trade unions and the management in Delhi and they should discipline them. My comrade has said that the jute traders are the most delinquent. They are eating the money of the Government, defaulting in the payment of PF, they are cheating the workers and they are now creating a situation where the food procurement in the country will be in jeopardy. This is a very serious situation. Kharif season has set in; so, kindly issue a direction to the Labour Ministry to call a meeting in Delhi, wherein the Ministry of Commerce may be present. [p7]It is because the Ministry of Commerce has a demand for the purchase of 7 lakh bales of jute products for jute packaging. If it is not settled, as my friend has said, the synthetic lobby will take advantage of.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: The names of S/Shri Santasri Chatterjee and Rupchand Pal may be associated.

...(*Interruptions*)

उपाध्यक्ष महोदय : अगर आपको एसोशिएट करना है, तो अपने नाम की स्लिप भेज दीजिए।

â€¦(अवधान)

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Now, I would request Shri S.K. Kharventhan to speak.

...(*Interruptions*)

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Please listen him. Please, let me listen what Shri Rupchand Pal is saying.

...(*Interruptions*)

SHRI RUPCHAND PAL (HOOGHLY): Sir, I associate with the demand for the Central Government's intervention in the situation of the jute strike which is causing havoc not only to the livelihood of more than 2.5 lakh of workers but also the Central Government's Packaging Order is sought to be diluted in such a manner that it will permanently damage the jute

industry, which will affect the economy of Eastern India itself. Not only it is a case of revenue loss to the Government of India, it is a severe loss in the current economic situation. When thousands and thousands of people are losing their jobs, it will be added, the jute workers are also going to be unemployed for a long time if the situation is allowed to continue. In this situation, urgent steps and intervention need to be taken by the Government of India....(*Interruptions*)

SHRI GURUDAS DASGUPTA : Sir, let the Parliamentary Affairs Minister respond....(*Interruptions*)

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: I cannot compel the Government to respond.

...(*Interruptions*)

उपाध्यक्ष महोदय : दास जी, आप पहले अपनी सीट पर जाएं।

â€¦(व्यवधान)

उपाध्यक्ष महोदय : आप उनको भी एवसाइट कर रहे हैं।

â€¦(व्यवधान)

THE MINISTER OF OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS AND MINISTER OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS (SHRI VAYALAR RAVI):
Sir, the Union Minister of Parliamentary Affairs definitely associate with the matter concerned with the workers which is also affecting the State's economy and the Central revenues. Definitely, I would convey this matter with all seriousness to the concerned Minister.