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Title : Problems being faced by the lakhs of Beedi workers throughout the country.

SHRI P. KARUNAKARAN (KASARGOD): Sir, I would like to draw the attention of the Government with regard to some issues of the beedi workers in Kerala as well as in other States.

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*Not Recorded.

Sir, though the Beedi & Cigar Act was passed in 1958 in this House, it was not implemented throughout the country, especially in the States where the beedi industry dominates. In the absence of such an Act, the beedi workers may not be able to get the benefits, either minimum wages or other benefits, that they have to get.

The other issue of the beedi industry is that excise duty is imposed on the total production of beedi. As a result, the Co-operative Societies and the Government firms are really in difficulty because they have to file their accounts in time. At the same time, the private traders are not filing such accounts to the Government. The Unions have already requested the Government to impose excise duty on tobacco instead of the total beedi produce.

Another burning issue is this. The children of the beedi workers were getting the scholarship for the last so many years. From 2004 they are not getting the scholarship. It is very pity to say that Rs. 1,80,000 crores are pending.

About 16,000 students are not getting these scholarships. As a result of that, the Government has to take these scholarship money from the Bidi Workers Welfare Fund. So, I would request the Government to take immediate action on this issue.

SHRI RAMDAS ATHAWALE (PANDHARPUR): Sir, my name may also be associated on this issue.

SHRIMATI V. RADHIKA SELVI (TIRUCHENDUR): Sir, I also want to associate with what Mr. Karunakaran has said

MR. SPEAKER: All right, you may send your names.

Now, Dr. Arun Kumar Sarma − Not present.

Hon. Members, there are so many businesses to be transacted. On the farmers' issue you demanded a discussion, but it seems nobody has any interest to participate. We are still going on with the Zero Hour.

Now, Shri Ramjilal Suman.