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Title: Need to permit export of coir fibre.

SHRI K. SUGUMAR (POLLACHI): Hon. Speaker Madam, out of 1,200 mechanized coir units functioning all over Tamil Nadu, 500 are based in Pollachi. Most of the units contribute high volume of coir fiber for export to China and other countries. They utilize unwanted thrown-away quality of brown husk as raw material for extraction of coir fiber.

During the last one year, 20,000 tonnes of coir fiber was exported from Tamil Nadu, and it indirectly provided job opportunities for two lakh workers, especially, women. All means of coir extraction in Tamil Nadu is operative due to the fact that there is demand of coir fiber from China and other countries. But, the neighbouring State Kerala is not purchasing brown coir fiber all along.

A ban on coir fiber export, as is being insisted by Kerala, will be a blow to the workers mainly working in Pollachi coir fiber industries, and it will also cripple the new export units in this trade. There is also a good procurement of raw materials in the offing. So, the issue of supplying inadequate white fiber to Kerala will be settled soon. Hence, the call by Kerala for a total ban on export of coir fiber is unwarranted.

Earlier, Kerala used to get around 400 tonnes of white fiber from Pollachi. But, of late, it is getting only 100 tonnes, which is inadequate as the need is around one lakh tonnes of white fiber per year. This is generally a misunderstanding that due to the exports by Tamil Nadu coir units, the supply of coir fibre to Kerala has come down. Tamil Nadu is exporting mainly brown fibre to other countries and not white. Due to the fall in the price of coconut, shortage occurred for green husk resulting in low production of white fibre. This is a temporary phenomenon. This will be rectified in the month of January when coconut bumper crop starts.

Tamil Nadu fibre producers export brown fibre at a very low rate just to provide job opportunities and also to keep the factories run continuously. Producing white fibre or selling it to Kerala is a more profitable business for the coir producers. Only the price fall in coconut resulted low profit or nil profit for coir producers in Tamil Nadu.

Tamil Nadu is playing a significant role in the export of coir fibre. Out of Rs. 550 crore worth of export from the country, Rs. 130 crore alone is from the state of Tamil Nadu. Moreover, with respect to coir pitch, last year, the export amounted to Rs.85 crore, while this year the target is Rs. 120 crore.

Around 150 new industries have come up in the state. Many of them have invested around Rs. 50 lakhs on their export-oriented units.

A ban on the export of coir fibre will affect lakhs of employees working in these units. The problem faced by Kerala is only temporary and, hence, it is requested that the Government at the Centre should act on war -footing to continue the present status of free export of coir fibre from India/Tamil Nadu. Any agitation in Kerala against the export of coir fibre from Tamil Nadu is unwarranted and politically motivated.