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Title: Regarding International Labour Day.

DR. RATNA DE (HOOGHLY): Sir, one may tend to forget many important dates, but not the International Labour Day. This is one day when even Parliament takes leave. This is of very great importance because labourer is a person who helps the nation to build; who takes the nation on the path of growth, prosperity and development. But what is the plight of the labourers in the country today? It is, to say the least, despicable.

The labour force is endowed with greatness. But Governments tend to underestimate the might of the labourers. Labourers of different types face multifarious problems. To quote a few – the pending cases of disbursement of Employment Provident Fund, non-payment of claims of labourers etc.

Sir, allow me to briefly trace the history of International Labour Day. In 1886, on 1st May, there was a strike at Hay Market in USA for mandatory working hours of labours. After a series of agitations, in 1891, on 1st May, a Resolution was adopted to declare 1st May as the Labour Day. More than 88 countries have adopted this Resolution. India adopted 1st May as Labour Day in 1923 in Madras.

I would like to place a few quote on labour. Leonardo da Vinci said: "God Sells us all things at the price of labour". Sophocles said: "Without labour nothing prospers". Such is the importance of the labour. But we find labourers and their causes are neglected. They face problems galore in their daily life. They are deprived of basic necessities like water, health and schooling. They are fatigued due to overwork most of the times. They face mental and physical problems due to over exploitation and hence, motivation is required to improve their physique and mental health.

I would like to highlight that the Chief Minister of West Bengal, Kumari Mamata Banerjee has extended scholarships to the siblings of labourers so that they get good education and prosper. Industry and labour is interlinked.

In West Bengal, 61 unorganised sectors have been selected. The Chief Minister and the Government is going to pay Rs. 10,000 to the labourers to take care of their illness.

The Central Government should give importance to the unorganised sector so that the labourers can live with dignity and they are economically in a better position to lead a simple life.

I would like to state the data available in the Labour Ministry. In response to the Starred Question No. 350, dated 30th April, 2012, the Labour Minister has stated that the claims pending as on 31st March, 2012 is 5.70 lakh cases and pending ratio in relation to the workload is 4.50 per cent. This is in regard to the 'pendency of claims'. Would the hon. Minister explain the reasons for such large percentage of pending ratio and large number of cases in relation to workload?

Beedi workers and women labourers work in despicable and sub-human conditions. Child labour is another sin being committed by us. We find migrant workers in metropolitan cities being taken for a ride by the contractors by paying them paltry sums.

Now, the time has come to set right the wrong being meted out to the labourers of our country. Conducive and healthy atmosphere should exist in the working place, be it a factory or a farm land. The relationship between the management and the unions; and the management and the workers should be cordial. This is quintessential for the good and orderly relations in the industrial, agricultural and social sector.

MR. CHAIRMAN : *m02 Shri P.L. Punia is allowed to associate with the matter raised by Dr. Ratna De.

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Title: Need to take steps for release of seven Indian sailors taken hostage by Somalian Pirates.

SHRI MANISH TEWARI (LUDHIANA): Mr. Chairman, Sir, I rise to draw your attention to the continuing plight of seven

Indian crew members of the MT Asphalt Venture who are being held hostage in Somalia for over 28 months now. Information which is available with the family members suggests that there is a particular clan which is holding these seven crew members hostage in a place called Harfooda near Harardheere in Somalia.

Apparently, a large number of the clansmen of the clan which is holding these seven Indians hostage, were arrested by the Indian Navy during the anti-piracy operations in March, 2011. Now, the problem is that whatever little communication the family members had with these seven hostages suggests that they are in a critical condition. Some of them are extremely ill and others are possibly also becoming rapidly untraceable. The family members of these seven hostages, who come from different parts of the country, including from your home State, Kerala, have been running from pillar to post to try and get the Government of India to intervene.

I know that Somalia is a State which has ungovernable spaces. But that does not mean that we abdicate our responsibility; that the Government of India abandon seven Indians to their fate in Somalia.

I would like to request the Government, through you, that they should immediately energise all the back channels that they have in order to establish communication with this clan which is holding these seven Indians hostage so that they can be brought back. It is because as time is elapsing their condition is getting critical. Maybe a time may come very soon where the intervention may just be a little too late. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: *m02 Shri P.L. Punia and *m03 Shri Neeraj Shekhar are allowed to associate with the matter raised by Shri Manish Tewari.