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Title: Need to restore Central Government contribution in savings and security schemes for Cooperative Weavers in Tamil Nadu.

*SHRI P. LINGAM (TENKASI): Mr. Chairman, Sir, I would like to bring to the notice of this august House the plight of lakhs and lakhs of handloom weavers who are carrying on with their occupation with a long tradition. These traditional handloom weavers do not have adequate social security in the absence of their daily earning. Due to globalization, these handloom weavers are being marginalized further. In the 1970s, in order to extend benefit to handloom weavers, they were brought under the umbrella of cooperative societies so that individual weavers can be helped to save from their earning and get a matching contribution as an incentive from the Government of India and also from the respective State Governments.

Hence, in 1975, the Savings and Security Scheme meant for handloom weavers all over the country was introduced to benefit the handloom weavers with savings and incentives from both the Central and State Governments with matching contribution so that a social security cover is provided to them. This was intended to help uplift the poor handloom weavers both socially and economically. Eight per cent of their daily wages from the cooperative societies were set apart as savings of individual weavers. An amount equivalent to four per cent of their daily wages was to be contributed both by the Central and State Governments. In the name of cutting expenditure, the Centre has stopped making its contribution of four per cent from 2007. In Tamil Nadu alone, this amount comes to about Rs. Five crore per year. I would like to point out that the plight of handloom weavers in Tamil Nadu has gone from bad to worse because of the non-contribution by the Centre to this Savings and Security Scheme. While presenting the last Budget, the

* English translation of the speech originally delivered in Tamil

Government of Tamil Nadu had announced that it would come forward to pay the sum equivalent to the Centre's contribution from its coffers to benefit the handloom weavers. I do not know why the Centre is ignoring the poor handloom weavers. This only shows the step-motherly attitude of the Centre when they are extending so much to so many other industrial activities. This only shows the anti-labour mindset of the Government.

The handloom weavers have been worst hit in the last five years because of the non-contribution from the Centre. Considering the fact that more than 76,000 handloom weavers in the cooperative societies would be benefited and also considering the fact that this amount of Rs. Five crore is very meagre as compared to 2 ½ lakh crore annual budget, the Centre must come forward to release immediately the unpaid amount with interest.