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Title: Shri P K Shreemathi Teacher made a submission regarding welfare schemes for Handloom weavers.

SHRIMATI P.K. SHREEMATHI TEACHER (KANNUR): Hon. Speaker, Madam, the handloom industry is one of the traditional industries of Kerala, but today the handloom textile sector is in doldrums because of various factors forcing weavers to shift to other jobs to earn a living. Kerala's handloom industry faces many severe problems, such as financial problem, irregular payment of dues of the products supplied, lack of rebate assistance to weaving accessories and charging of high interest rates by financial institutions are some of them.

Madam Speaker, Kannur handlooms are world famous. It has historical importance. Home furnishing products from my constituency, Kannur, was exported even during British rule to Commonwealth countries. Till 2004, due to import duty concessions under Multi Fibre Agreement, good quantity was produced in handlooms. The high quality products were used to decorate the White House and the Buckingham Palace and other palaces also. Considering the outstanding export performance, Kannur was recognized by the Ministry of Commerce with Town of Export Excellence status in 2004. More than one lakh people were employed in handloom weaving, powerloom weaving, dyeing, stitching and packing areas. Foreign buyers reduced purchase of handlooms from 2005 leading to more production from power looms.

HON. SPEAKER: Please conclude now. You need not read out the two pages.

SHRIMATI P.K. SHREEMATHI TEACHER : Madam, please give me two minutes. This is very important. Our hon. Textile Minister is also present here. But the Global economic recession caused serious setback to the textile industry with orders coming down by 50 per cent. More than 50,000 people have left their jobs due to lower work availability. Hon. Textile Minister has agreed to visit Kannur. ...(*Interruptions*)

Hence, I would like to request the hon. Finance Minister and also the hon. Textile Minister to introduce welfare measures to strengthen the weavers in the State by providing financial assistance for house construction, providing pension and expansion of facilities for dyeing and designing, modernisation of old looms, skill upgradation of weavers etc. ...(*Interruptions*)

Madam, now the weavers are switching to powerloom from handloom and the hon. Minister of Textiles has now introduced the Comprehensive Integrated Scheme for Powerloom Sector Development for the welfare of powerloom weavers. ...(*Interruptions*)

HON. SPEAKER: The hon. Minister is responding to your problem.

SHRIMATI P.K. SHREEMATHI TEACHER : Madam, just one minute. At this juncture, I would like to draw your attention to the fact that the yarn used for powerloom production – cone yarn attracts five per cent VAT against zero per cent for hank yarn during the VAT regime.

Now that the GST is being implemented from 1<sup>st</sup> July, 2017, I would like to request the hon. Minister for Textiles to make recommendations to the GST Council and the hon. Minister of Finance to bring the tax on cone yarn to zero per cent which will benefit millions of weavers in the country.

Thank you.

HON. SPEAKER: Dr. A. Sampath, Shri Mullappally Ramachandran, Shri P.K. Biju, Shri M.B. Rajesh, Adv. Joice George, Shri Md. Badaruddoza Khan are permitted to associate with the issue raised by Shrimati P.K. Shreemathi Teacher.

THE MINISTER OF TEXTILES (SHRIMATI SMRITI ZUBIN IRANI): Hon. Speaker, thank you very much for your kindness so that I could respond to the hon. Member. On two to three points I will direct my hon. colleague's attention to and the rest I will send in writing to her.

We have, in the Government of India, ensured that old looms by weavers can be replaced by new looms wherein Government of India will pay 90 per cent cost to the weavers so that the loom can be renewed. Also, we have started an app called *e-dhaga* wherein weavers sitting at home can actually give the order for the yarn and follow and track the entire process till the delivery of the yarn. My request to the hon. Member is that on the 4<sup>th</sup> of January we started a special helpline, the first in the history of India, especially for weavers called *Bunkar Mitra* helpline. The number is functional seven days a week from 10 am to 6 pm, including in regional languages. The number is 181002089988. You can request weavers in your constituency to call this number. I will also personally visit Kannur and try and help to the best of my ability.