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Title: Need to review the proposed decision to dilute Jute Packaging Material Act, 1987.

PROF. SAUGATA ROY (DUMDUM): Mr. Deputy-Speaker, Sir, I may be permitted to raise a matter of urgent public importance during 'Zero Hour' in the House today.

I draw the attention of the House to certain policy decisions being taken by the Ministry of Textiles that would be detrimental for the survival of the jute industry. As you are aware, the markets for jute industry is protected under the Jute Packaging Materials Act, 1987 whereby there is an annual review for reserving percentage of jute packaging material to be used for packing of food grains and sugar.

Under the provisions of the JPMA Act, the Standing Advisory Committee is constituted to recommend the reservation percentage every year. For the year 2014-15, the SAC meeting was held on 3rd July, 2014 wherein the Indian Jute Mill Association represented that full capacity and raw material is available to cater to 100 per cent requirements for packaging of food grains and sugar. However, contrary to facts and figures presented by the IJMA, the SAC took a decision to recommend 90 per cent for food grains and 20 per cent for sugar.

Subsequent to the SAC recommendation, the Ministry of Textiles has received comments from the Min of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution, the Ministry of Chemical and Fertilizer, the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Finance as well as a decision taken by Group of Officers at the Cabinet Secretariat on 16.10.2014 held to discuss the 'Crisis in Jute Sector', suggesting removal of sugar packaging from the ambit of JPMA and the need for reduction in reservation percentage for food grains in the current year phasing out over the next two to three years. Any such decision taken by the Central Government would be a death knell for the jute industry and affect three lakh jute workers. Many of them are in my constituency.

The West Bengal Chief Minister has written to the Minister of Textiles earlier this month requesting him not to go ahead with the proposed reduction of reservation of jute packaging and to draw up along with States like West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh, Assam, etc. an appropriate plan for diversification of the jute industry. The Centre should heed to this. Thank you.

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SHRI ADHIR RANJAN CHOWDHURY (BAHARAMPUR): Sir, I may be permitted to associate with the matter raised by Prof. Saugata Roy.

HON. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: Please send the slip.