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Title: Need to make mandatory 100% reservation in packaging norms for foodgrains and sugar in Jute bags for the year 2015-16.

**SHIRIMATI PRATIMA MONDAL (JAYANAGAR):** As we are well aware, next to cotton, jute is the most important natural fibre and has the second highest production among all natural fibres of the world. The environment aspect, biodegradability of jute and importance of the jute industry in Eastern and North Eastern India seek 100% mandatory packaging norms under the JPM Act.

From November 2012 mandating reservation norms for packaging of foodgrains in jute bags continued upto 90%. Similarly in November 2012 itself mandatory norms for packaging of sugar in jute bags was reduced to 40% from 100%. The jute industry received a further set back when the mandatory reservation norms for sugar was reduced to 20% in February, 2013 and this has continued for the last two years. Jute industry has had a very difficult year in 2014-15 when production fell from a high of 16 lakh metric tonnes in 2012-13 to 12.5 lakh metric tonnes. High price of raw jute and perception that demand for raw jute may outstrip availability has led to surge in raw jute price across the states of West Bengal, Assam, Bihar, etc. On the export front jute industry has failed to capture new market and protect old markets because of the 75% cash subsidy that is being sanctioned by the Bangladesh Government for export of finished jute goods from Bangladesh. More important is the fact that since 01.04.2007 India does not have any export incentive policy. Livelihood of 3-5 lakh workers in the organised jute industry and 40 lakh farmers growing jute for the jute industry which is primarily located in Eastern and North Eastern India, restoration of 100% mandatory packaging norms for both sugar and foodgrains will send the right signals to the jute industry as well as manufacturing sector.

To protect the jute industry which is one of the oldest manufacturing industries of India and pivotal to the survival of the manufacturing sector in West Bengal, I would like to request the Government to kindly ensure 100% mandatory reservation for packaging norms for foodgrains and sugar in jute bags for the year 2015-16.