

Secondly, I would like to know that in the original question it was asked that what is the number of bidi workers in every State on 31.3.1987. The hon Minister had given the figures upto 1986 and not upto 31 March 1987. I would like to know the reasons for not giving figures of Bidi workers upto 31 March 1987 and also about their provident fund.

Thirdly, Shri Dal Chander who himself is a renowned trader and employer in the field of bidis, has said that Uttar Pradesh and West - Bengal top the list of those States where the number of Child Labour is high. According to the figures submitted by the Government, about 4.5 lakh workers are engaged in the manufacturing of bidis but in Andhra Pradesh where total number of bidi workers is 2.5 lakh, about 180014 workers are getting the benefit of provident fund or are in the category of getting benefit. In Bihar, the number of workers is 3,50,000 and out of them only 2651 workers are covered. In Karnataka, the number of workers is 3 lakh and out of them 2,83,540 workers are getting benefit of provident fund scheme. But in West Bengal and Uttar Pradesh where the number of bidi workers is 4.5 lakh, not a single worker is covered under provident fund scheme. Will the hon Minister issue directions for conducting analysis and survey of this situation.

As my colleagues Dr Rajhans and Shri Rawat has stated that in the trade of bidi, actually middleman exploits the situation who rejects good quality bidi by terming as of bad quality but charges bidi industrialist the price fixed for good quality. In this way the middleman resorts to underhand dealings. May I know whether the hon. Minister will take step to this aspect examined so that the poor workers get the benefit of their labour?

18.01 hrs.

PAPERS LAID ON THE TABLE—Contd.

[English]

#### Notification under Customs Act 1962

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI JANARDHANA POOJARY): I beg to lay on the Table a copy each of the following Notifications (Hindi and English versions) under section 159 of the Customs Act, 1962:-

- (1) Notification No. 292/87-Customs published in Gazette of India dated the 12th August, 1987 together with an explanatory memorandum seeking to grant partial exemption to iron on non-alloy steel hot rolled coils of carbon content less than 0.6 per cent and equate the rate of basic customs duty on HR coils and coils for re-rolling at the rate of 15 per cent *ad valorem* plus Rs. 1100/- per metric tonne.
- (2) Notification No. 293/87-Customs published in Gazette of India dated the 12th August, 1987 together with an explanatory memorandum seeking to delete the entry for coils for re-rolling from Notification No. 86/86-Customs dated the 17th February, 1986.

[Placed in Library. See No. LT-4600/87]

18.02 hrs.

HALF-AN-HOUR DISCUSSION

[English]

**Beedi Workers**

SHRI AJIT KUMAR SAHA (Vishnupur):

[Shri Ajit Kumar Saha]

The Beedi and Cigar Act is an old Act. There are loopholes in this Act. Taking advantage of these loopholes, the employers are depriving the beedi workers of all facilities. The Minister said that 32 lakh workers are engaged in this industry. But this figure is not correct. More than 50 lakh persons are engaged in this industry. If you take their families also, crores of people are depending on this industry.

I had brought a Bill relating to the welfare of Beedi workers. It was discussed for four days. At that time, the Minister assured us that he would bring a comprehensive Bill to protect the interest of the beedi workers. But I do not know when this comprehensive Bill will come. He said that he had a talk with the union leaders and a tripartite meeting was also held. What were the points he discussed with them? When is he going to bring a comprehensive Bill on this subject?

In the last session, this Act was amended. But by making a few amendments we cannot protect the interest of the beedi workers because they are unorganised. In West Bengal, we have some organised labour unions. On the demand of the union, we compelled the employers to give them some facilities. But throughout India, these workers are deprived of any leave, provident fund, gratuity and things like that. They can be asked to go away any moment. There is no protection in that regard. These workers are mainly suffering from TB due to unhygienic conditions in which they have to work.

I want to know when the Government is going to bring forward a comprehensive Bill.

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF LABOUR (SHRI P.A. SANGMA): Sir, the discussion actually should have confined to the application of the Provident Fund Act because the question was on that, and I must admit that

I do not have all the details about the welfare activities because the question relates only to the application of the Provident Fund Act, whether it is applied or not and if it is applied, to what extent it has been successful. But I must react to some of the points raised.

Dr. Rajhans said that there is no improvement in the conditions of the beedi workers. But I beg to differ from the Doctor. There are some improvements in the condition of beedi workers. The welfare activities under the Beedi Workers Welfare Fund are working quite well in a number of States. I should say that particularly the States in the South - Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and even Kerala - have been doing very well. Lot of work has been done... (Interruptions).

DR G. S. RAJHANS: But hardly anything has been done in Bihar.

SHRI P. A. SANGMA: Well, that is why I am saying that in some States it has been done. I am sorry that in the Eastern region it has not done very well. In the South it has done very well because it is primarily the responsibility and the initiative of the State Governments which will bring some change. So, a lot depends on how much initiative the State Governments take. From our side we try to give as much help as possible.

An hon Member spoke about education. For example, in the financial year 1986-87, from all Welfare Funds we spent about Rs 90 lakhs for free education of the children of beedi workers, and I am happy to say that today because of the free education that we have given, there are a number of doctors and engineers who have come up from among the children of the beedi workers. I was very happy to meet some of them. They are a very satisfying team. Therefore, it is not correct to say that nothing has been done for them. Well, we have not done enough. The desired goal that we would like to achieve, has not been achieved. But something has been done

and I am sure that if the State Governments take more initiative, we can do a lot.

Doctor, you also talked about the implementation of the Minimum Wages Act. What I can do is only to write to them and to remind them. You have also reminded me that my letters will not do anything because you knew that I was going to reply to you like that. I have been repeatedly reminding the State Governments. This, in fact, is in the priority list of my Ministry. Implementation of Minimum Wages Act is number one on the priority list because I believe that if this single Act, the Minimum Wages Act, is implemented sincerely and effectively, many problems of the unorganised labour will be solved. Therefore, we are giving so much importance to that... *(Interruptions)*

DR DATTA SAMANT: What about the Congress Governments?

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: He is telling about all State Governments in general.

SHRI P.A. SANGMA: Dr., I am not a person who draws distinctions I am saying that whichever government has done good, they have done good, and the names of the State that I have given, are all Opposition States Why don't you understand my approach? ... *(Interruptions)*. No, Doctor, you are not interested in development.... *(Interruptions)*.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: No. Mr. Minister, you carry on Don't yield

SHRI P.A. SANGMA: Doctor, if I have to answer to you,.... *(Interruptions)*.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: You are not supposed to do that

SHRI P.A. SANGMA: You will feel shy to sit in front of me whenever I am in the House. I do not want to disclose about you in the House or on the floor of the House. Please mind that. I am a Labour Minister. I know the activities of all the trade union leaders. I know who are good and who are

bad trade union leaders. Why you are talking about good governments and bad governments? There are also good trade union leaders and bad trade union leaders.... *(Interruptions)*.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Why are you unnecessarily interfering? Don't divert the things when they are going on. If it is going this way, don't divert it in the other way.... *(Interruptions)*

DR. DATTA SAMANT: It is shocking that crores of people are below the poverty line. What are we discussing in this House?

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: What you are discussing, others are just discussing. Mr. Minister, you carry on.

DR. DATTA SAMANT: Who prevented the Congress Government?

*(Interruptions)*

SHRI D. B. PATIL: I am on a point of order.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: What is the point of order?

SHRI D. B. PATIL: The Minister has challenged Dr Datta Samant..

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: There is no point of order. Please carry on.

SHRI D. B. PATIL: Dr. Datta Samant has been challenged. Minister may disclose it.

DR. DATTA SAMANT: You may disclose it.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: I am telling that Dr. Datta Samant has no right to put supplementary when the Minister is replying.

There is no point of order.

SHRI P.A. SANGMA: For the information of the House, Dr. Datta Samant was the employee of the Labour Ministry of the Government of India. He also had some thing to do with the Labour Ministry. And so he was a part of the Labour Ministry at one part of time. That is all.

Other hon. members have also talked about health. We are taking a number of steps on health.

*(Interruptions)*

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order please. I am not allowing.

SHRI P. A. SANGMA: You were in E.S.I Hospital, I know.

*(Interruptions)*

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Do not divert the attention of the hon. Ministers.

*(Interruptions)*

SHRI P. A. SANGMA: You were a doctor in E.S.I. hospital. You cannot deny that.

DR. DATTA SAMANT: I have not worked in the hospital.

SHRI P.A. SANGMA: Not now.

DR. DATTA SAMANT: I have not been working in the E.S.I. hospital

I was never an employee of the Government. I never worked any where in the E.S.I. hospital.

SHRI P. A. SANGMA: Do not get nervous now.

DR. DATTA SAMANT: I had every good private practice. I left this.

SHRI P. A. SANGMA: O.K. All right.

*(Interruptions)*

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: I do not want personal things to go on in the House.

*(Interruptions)*

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order please.

SHRI P. A. SANGMA: We have a number of special schemes in a number of hospitals under the Welfare Fund Scheme. We are also trying to expand our activity as far as health programme is concerned.

As the House will remember I have also made an announcement that we have to increase the excise rate on beedi and at the moment the position of workers was not found good. With increase in excise, we hope to get a substantial amount under the Welfare Fund and we hope to increase our activities.

Now as far as identity of the beedi workers is concerned, Dr Rajhans has said this is a very important point, I have been making it repeatedly - until and unless we know who are beedi workers, it is very difficult to extend any help to them. So, we are giving priority to the process of identified We are issuing identity cards. The House will remember, in the last Session, we passed amendment to the Act in response to the request of Shri Saha when we were discussing his Bill and in that amendment I had brought in a provision that if any employer fails to identify and issue an identity card to his worker, he will be punished. It has been made a cognisable, punishable offence. Therefore, we have taken steps to solve the problem.

Housing - Shri Rawat has raised very important question. At the moment we have two scheme.

1. We call it 'build your own house' scheme.

If any individual beedi worker wants to build a house, we give part as loan and part as subsidy. They can build their house.

2. Another scheme is taking off very well.

I must thank the respective State Governments. That scheme is housing for the economically weaker sections of the people. This scheme is really taking off very well. I must say that States like Maharashtra have done very well. There is a place called Sholapur. We have launched about 4000 houses. Construction is very much in progress. Like that Gujarat has taken this scheme. I can assure the House that our priority is now to the unorganised sector. Now within the unorganised sector we have identified certain sectors like child labour, women labour, construction workers and beedi workers where we

propose to give special attention to them and that is why we are very keen that even in the implementation of social security schemes like Provident Fund, which today we have discussed, we are very keen that we should extend this Social Security Scheme to more and more people in the unorganised sector.

I thank the hon members for having given me this opportunity.

18.15 hrs.

*The Lok Sabha then adjourned till  
Eleven of the Clock on Thursday,  
August 13, 1987/Sravana 22, 1909  
(Saka).*

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