

statement granting substantial help not only from the Prime Minister's relief fund but also from the Centre. I may submit further that, in 1974, the previous Government granted Rs. 1 lakh from the Prime Minister's relief fund, apart from other reliefs. I want to know whether the Government is coming forward with substantial aid as the previous Government did in the past.

(iv) **SERIOUS SITUATION ARISING OUT OF THE LARGE RETRENCHMENT, CLOSURES, ILLEGAL LOCKOUTS, LAY OFFS IN JUTE MILLS IN VARIOUS STATES.**

**SHRI DINEN BHATTACHARYA** (Serampore) : Sir, Mr. Somnath Chatterjee and myself would like to draw the attention of the Government under Rule 377 to a serious situation which has arisen out of the large-scale retrenchment, closures, illegal lockouts, lay-offs etc. in over 15 jute mills in West Bengal alone, affecting 60,000 workers. Apart from that, in Kanpur the JK Jute Mills is also resorted to lock-out resulting in unemployment of more than 5,000 workers. Further, more jute mills are now threatening the workers as well as the Government there that they will have to close down the mills on the flimsious plea of paucity of raw jute.

On the 3rd July the Hon. Minister of Commerce visited Calcutta and there he made a categorical declaration that there will be no block closures as stipulated by the jute-mill owners unless and until it is proved that there is real shortage of raw jute. He also advised the Government to form a Committee there in West Bengal. This Committee has been formed and in its first meeting, at which the IJMA was also represented, the Indian Jute Mills Association could not substantiate its point of view that there was real shortage of raw jute. It has always been the practice of the jute-mill owners and the IJMA to adopt such tactics just when the season starts for the new jute crops to come into the market so that the price comes down...

**MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER** : Please conclude now.

**SHRI DINEN BHATTACHARYA** : This is a question affecting lakhs and lakhs of workers and the whole economy of the eastern part of the country. There is sabotage going on...

**MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER** : But you must be conscious of the time also.

**SHRI DINEN BHATTACHARYA** : I would request you kindly to think about the situation and appreciate our point of view. Already, two deputations have met the Prime Minister from the Janata party as well as from the Congress Party. The situation is deteriorating fast. These are the tactics being adopted by the jute-mill owners for the last 60 to 70 years to bring down the prices of raw jute so that they may cheat the peasants who grow raw jute into selling their goods at reduced prices. Although there has been a clear policy declaration by the Commerce Minister as well as by the West Bengal Government that there will be no block closures, these sharks, the jute-mill owners, are in a clandestine way taking recourse to block closures by sealing the looms and processing machines etc. In this way a large number of workers are being laid off daily. So, I would request the Government to take a serious view of this. This is not a question affecting West Bengal alone : Bihar is affected, Orissa is affected, Assam is affected, Andhra Pradesh is affected and Kanpur and Uttar Pradesh are also affected. All the poor peasants who grow jute are affected and the whole economy is a stake.

The Hon. Minister Mr. Biju Patnaik comes from Orissa, and his State is also affected. So, he must take up the matter with the Government and make a statement and see that concrete steps are taken. When there is a Committee, why should they get jute on their own and....

**MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER** : You include now : no more additions. (5:5).

**SHRI SOMNATH CHATTERJEE** : A handful of mill-owners are holding the country to ransom...

**MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER** : I am sorry, Mr. Somnath Chatterjee, I am not going to allow anybody else except those who have been permitted to raise matters under Rule 377. There is no question of anybody else speaking on it.