

Move to phase out M.E.P. of Coir and Coir products and its impact on the Coir workers

SHRI A VIJAYA RAGHAVAN (Kerala) : Mr. Chairman, I want to raise an issue closely related to five lakh workers who are working in the coir industry, most of whom are women. Recently, the Central Government has given directions to the Coir Board to reduce the rate of existing minimum export price of coir and coir products. Sir, the minimum export price for coir and coir products was fixed on the basis of the wages given to the workers, price of raw materials and other expenses, to guarantee a reasonable price to small manufacturers, and to stop exploitation. Ever since this MEP was implemented in 1972, the income from the export of coir has increased from a mere Rs. 13 crores to Rs. 300 crores.

[THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI ADMK SMRODKAR) in the Chair]

Now, Sir, because of this decision of the Government reducing the minimum export price from the rate of 1997 to 1995, the main beneficiaries are foreign capitalists and foreign businessmen, and our country will be compelled to forfeit a considerable amount of foreign exchange that we are earning from the export of coir products. Then, Sir, another decision has been taken by the Central Government on the basis of a recommendation from the National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER). Now, the Coir Board has taken a decision to phase out the minimum export price of coir products. The impact of this would be very much there. Sir, I do not know what would be the mechanism for purchase of coir and coir products after this decision. If this recommendation is implemented, it will very much adversely affect the rural poor, it is a traditional industry giving employment to lakhs and lakhs of people in a country where unemployment is increasing. This Government is taking such a decision which is very much against the interests of the workers. Thirdly, Sir, the Government has further recommended removal of all embellishments, like powerlooms, matting and geo-textiles from the purview of MEP. That means you are going to kill this industry as a result of which poverty there will be in the houses of these poor workers. Sir, what is the need of such a decision? Such a decision has been taken by the Coir Board, only because the Central Government is insisting on the Coir Board taking such a decision. Sir, 98% of the export is from Kerala, but majority of the members of the Coir Board

are from outside Kerala and using that majority, the Government is killing the industry. This is a very serious attack on the workers. Therefore, through you, Sir, I would like to request this Government to take a decision to purchase the goods, and the MEP should be of the 1997 level. There should not be any reduction in the MEP of the coir products.

Further, if you take any decision in this regard, there should be a proper consultation with the State Government. The Central Government did not consult the State Government. Sir, I would like to request the Government, through you, that the MEP of the coir products should be of the 1997 level. If you are making any further changes in respect of this industry, there should be a proper consultation with the Government of Kerala, and that should be ensured.

Thank you, *Si...(interruptions)...*

SHRI JIBON ROY (West Bengal): They are sleeping over coir and some other small industries. If these decisions are taken, the State will be affected. Therefore, the Government should be judicious. Whatever decision is taken, that should be made in consultation with the State Government, whichever Government is there. Therefore, Sir, through you, I draw the attention of the Government to act on the issue.

Prevention of Rashtriya Ispat Nigam Limited (RINL) from being referred to B.I.F.R.

SHRI SOLIPETA RAMACHANDR REDDY (Andhra Pradesh): Sir, I want to draw the attention of the Government to a serious issue of the Vishakhapatnam Steel Plant, which is the pride of Andhra, is on the verge of being referred to the BIFR.

The Rashtriya Ispat Nigam Limited, known as the Vishakhapatnam Steel Plant, is a giant P.S.U. and is said to be the best in the country in terms of techno-economic performance, labour productivity, energy consumption etc. High capital base, however, is blocking its financial progress. It took 21 years to fully commission this Plant, and a large quantum of funds had to be borrowed at a high rate of interest to complete the project. Thus, the project cost increased from Rs.3,897 crores to a staggering amount of Rs.8,539 crores. It is learnt that a detailed plan within the turn-around strategy, is now pending for approval of the Cabinet. The major components include: