

Delhi—that all these factories will be closed down. The point is that the labour is not a beggar. And in India nobody could succeed by beating the labour. We will fight for the Life Insurance Corporation till the last drop of our blood. We will fight for the public sector till the last. But the point is that industry doesn't mean labour 'alone. Out of these eight factories, three factories fall in my own constituency where I reside. You can give some compensation to the labour. But what happens to the rehabilitation of that area? It is not a matter of labour alone. You cannot take indiscriminate decisions without consulting the Parliament, without consulting the people. It is not the labour alone. It is the people, it is the country, it is the economy as a whole. The public sector accounts for 80% of the economy even today. Even today more than 60% of the labour is in the public sector. Yes, you are free to close it down. But what is the alternative?

How will you rehabilitate the people in those areas? My area falls in the Asansol-Durgapur industrial belt. You are going to close down 70 coal industries: you are going to close down the MAMC; you are going to close down the BOGL. That means, the entire area will be deindustrialised. What is the alternative? Since no alternative is there, I request the Government with folded hands, that it should discuss this issue in Parliament because it is not the issue of labour alone; it is a political issue. At the same time, I would request the Government, through you, Sir, that it should stand by the commitment it had made.

Why was a statement made in America that within three days of their coming to power, they would get the IRA Bill passed? Is America the guardian of our Parliament? They went to New York and made a statement that within three days of their coming to power, they would get the IRA Bill passed, as if parliament is the servant of America. Is Parliament the servant of the American Government? Whatever you want to do, you do, but the sanctity of parliament has to be maintained. You should not override the authority of Parliament. The other issues are political ones, and they should be settled at the political level.

Survival of Jute Industry, Jute Farmers and Jute Workers

SHRI SANTOSH BAGRODIA (Rajasthan): Mr. Chairman, Sir, I beg to bring to your kind attention a newspaper report published in The Telegraph dated 18th October 1999 under the heading, 'Poor demand takes its toll on jute industry.' This House is aware that Parliament enacted a law namely, the Jute Packaging Materials (Compulsory use in Packaging Commodities) Act providing for compulsory use of natural fibre jute packaging material in the supply and distribution of four commodities, namely, cement, urea, foodgrains and sugar, to the extent determined by the Ministry of Textiles, from time to time, in accordance with the guidelines provided under section

4(2) of the aforesaid Act. It will be well to remember that this law was made to protect—I would like to underline, Sir, that this law was made to protect—the jute sector consisting of over four million jute farmers, a quarter million of direct industrial organised workforce, another half a million in ancillary and other related sectors. Totally, an estimated six million families. If we were to count five persons per family it amounts to 30 million population of our country, which depend on their livelihood, partly or wholly, on jute-related economic activities. It was, therefore, an important piece of social legislation, which received full support from all sections from both Houses of Parliament. I am sorry to say that this important piece of social legislation has not been enforced, wherever it was intended to be enforced as per the Act of Parliament. Firstly, the legal procedures took their toll in terms of challenging the validity of the Act and under the pretext of such a challenge before the Supreme Court of India, the Central Government took the view that since the matter was *sub-judice*, no action need to be taken against the defaulters, even though the Supreme Court had refused to grant any stay of the notifications issued by the Government under the Act. There was, obviously, a conspiracy among the vested interests to see that the law of the land is not enforced, as long as possible. The jute sector suffered setbacks after set backs, but to no avail.

The shocking part of the story lies in the fact that even after the Supreme Court of India upheld the Act, the defaults went up rather than down, as the Ministry of Textiles took no pains whatever to enforce its own orders. Not satisfied with such contempt of law of the land and for their own statutory orders being blatantly flouted, the Ministry of Textiles chose to give a medal of honour to the known defaulters of the law by either granting them total exemption or drastically reducing the percentage of compulsory packing in jute bags, by issuing an order dated 15th December, 1998 under the said Act of Parliament of 1987. This was clearly violative of their own legislation. The jute industry or the components of the jute sector obtained a stay order against the said notification dated 15th December, 1998, until the disposal of

the Writ Petition, but there are no reports of any efforts by the Ministry of Textiles to implement the earlier valid orders issued under the Act. While the stay order had remained in force, the present Government, in its own peculiar style, having scant regard for the law of the land, even when it was only a caretaker Government, issued yet another notification under the said Act, dated 1st July, 1999 and here again, the said notification has been alleged to clearly violative of the Act and its various provisions. I am told that the new notification dated 1st July, 1999 has also been challenged and the prayer for a stay order may be considered by the Calcutta High Court sometime during November, after it reopens.

As if such disregard and contempt for the Government's own statutory orders under an Act of Parliament were not enough, our hon. Government decided to reduce the import duty on jute goods from Bangladesh from 25% to 14%, knowing fully well that the import of jute goods from Bangladesh were heavily subsidised; they were being sold at a price lower than their actual cost of production and such imports, in fact, attracted anti-dumping and countervailing provisions under the Customs Tariff Act of 1975. They have turned a blind eye to all these considerations so that we can build better relations with our neighbours which is, certainly, a very desirable proposition, but, surely, not at the cost of self-destruction. As if the import of sugar at heavily subsidised prices was not enough, last year and early this year, to harm the Indian sugar industry, it seems our present political masters are determined to destroy the good old jute sector now. It does not seem to matter whether the 1987 Act of Parliament is being flagrantly violated. It does not matter whether the import of jute goods from Bangladesh attract the anti-dumping and countervailing provisions in the Custom Tariff Act of 1975. It does not matter whether the beneficial provisions of WTO are not being used to save our own domestic industries. The Ministry of Textiles does not seem to be bothered. The hon. Prime Minister himself assured the jute sector that due justice shall be done and the legal provisions would be enforced to protect their legitimate interests. The hon. Prime Minister had repeated this assurance during a recent election speech in Calcutta, but it seems to me that the hon. Prime Minister is blissfully oblivious of what is happening under his umbrella. The hon. Prime Minister may not be a party ' to such action; but maybe, he is being misled or misguided by certain vested interests, including his own colleagues in the Government. I hope, by my raising these vital issues concerning Eastern India, on the floor of this august House, corrective measures would be taken and soon enough, before it is too late.

Mr. Chairman, Sir, I find that during the last ten or fifteen years, what is happening is that the Textile Ministry consists of jute and textiles. Jute is a very small portion of this Ministry. The Textiles Ministers are never, never bothered about jute. They just do not understand what is the importance of the jute industry. They concentrate all their resources on the cotton industry only. So, I strongly recommend, I strongly request you, "Please do not destroy this golden fibre of the country, which is environmentally very important for the country." We will need it after ten years. I would like to warn the Government, if you do not take care, you will not be able to create jobs for the 30 million population. You can never sustain that if you destroy this industry. Therefore, please have a special ministry. Have an MOS, only for the jute industry, who can look after the interests of this industry, and not

absolutely and always to be looked after by the Textile Ministry, which is least bothered about this industry.

Sir, with these words, I thank you very much.

SHRIMATI SARLA MAHESHWARI (West Bengal): I associate myself.

SHRI JIBON ROY (West Bengal): I too associate myself.

Impact of Destruction of Coconut Cultivation

SHRI S. RAMACHANDRAN PILLAI (Kerala): Mr. Chairman, Sir, I would like to bring to the notice of this august House the sad plight of the coconut cultivators in Kerala. Sir, if the present trend is allowed to continue, the entire coconut cultivation in Kerala will face a total extinction. I am sure, the House is well aware of the importance of coconut cultivation in Kerala. Almost the entire population in Kerala is, in one way or the other, intimately connected with coconut cultivation. Many industries are based on coconut cultivation.

Now, half of the coconut cultivation is affected by the root wilt disease. A new type of caterpillar is coming and attacking the entire coconut cultivation in Kerala. The Government of Kerala is doing all that is possible, within its limits. That is not sufficient to meet the present situation. The Central Government should come forward in intensifying the efforts on research and also in giving financial assistance to the peasants who are affected by the pests. Thank you.

SHRI M.J. VARKEY MATTATHIL (Kerala): Sir, I associate myself with what has been said by my friend, Shri Pillai. Thank you.

श्री राघवजी (मध्य प्रदेश) : सभापति महोदय, मेरा व्यवस्था का प्रश्न है।

श्री सभापति: किस बात पर है?

श्री राघवजी : सभापति जी, मैंने दिनांक 22 अक्तूबर 99 को एक विशेष उल्लेख का नोटिस दिया था जो मेरी दृष्टि से लोक महत्व का विषय था। आप उसे स्वीकार नहीं करें मुझे कोई शिकायत नहीं है। लेकिन पांच दिन हो गये आज दिन तक न तो मुझे यह सूचना मिली है कि यह स्थागित हो गया है और न यह सूचना मिली है कि वह अस्वीकार हुआ है। पहले ऐसी सूचना मिलती रही है। लेकिन आज तक मुझे पता नहीं है। मैं रोज आ कर देखता हूँ लेकिन मेरा नाम होता नहीं है। मुझे कम से कम यह मालूम तो पड़ना चाहिये कि अस्वीकार हुआ है। पहले ऐसा होता रहा है। ऐसी परिपाटी है लेकिन इस बार यह परिपाटी नहीं अपनाई गई। इसका मुझे खेद है।

श्री सभापति: अस्वीकार नहीं होता है, समय की बात होती है।

SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE (West Bengal): Sir, as the Minister of Parliamentary Affairs is also here, I would like to make a submission for the