

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Sir, we also associate ourselves with the issue raised by the hon. Member.

**Plight of firecracker factory workers**

SHRI TIRUCHI SIVA (Tamil Nadu): Sir, the Supreme Court order of October, 2018 to manufacture and fire only green crackers has resulted in the closure of 1075 cracker factories across the country, out of which, 840 factories are in Sivakasi in Tamil Nadu which is the hub of firecracker factories. Sir, first of all, green crackers have got no significant formulation. It is said that green crackers have only 30 per cent lesser pollutants than the traditional fire crackers. Sir, the closure of these factories has a cascading effect on the economy of Tamil Nadu. It has also brought around 8 lakh workers on the streets, who were dependent on these factories for their livelihood. Sir, they are suffering a lot. Sir, the argument that firecrackers are the cause of pollution cannot hold because despite the ban on firecrackers Delhi was not free from pollution on Deepawali day last year. Moreover, pollution is mainly due to industrial pollution, thermal units, vehicular pollution and burning of crop stubbles. So, Sir, only for one day, the livelihood of 8 lakh workers is at stake. Sir, I urge the Government to consider the plight of these workers and also the firecracker factories which generates large scale employment in Tamil Nadu and also earn a lot of foreign exchange. The Government in a very serious consideration should exempt the firecracker factories from Rule 3(b) of the Environment Protection Act, 1986. This is very serious. About 8 lakh people are on the streets and the factories are closed. Sir, the economy is in trouble. I again urge the Government to exempt these factories from Rule 3(b) of the Environment Protection Act, 1986. Thank you very much, Sir.

SHRI T. K. RANGARAJAN (Tamil Nadu): Sir, I associate myself with the issue raised by the hon. Member.

SHRI A. NAVEENATHAKRISHNAN (Tamil Nadu): Sir, I also associate myself with the issue raised by the hon. Member.

SHRI SURESH GOPI (Nominated): Sir, I also associate myself with the issue raised by the hon. Member.

SHRI K. SOMAPRASAD (Kerala): Sir, I also associate myself with the issue raised by the hon. Member.

SHRI K. K. RAGESH (Kerala): Sir, I also associate myself with the issue raised by the hon. Member.

SHRI PRATAP KESHARI DEB (Odisha): Sir, I also associate myself with the issue raised by the hon. Member.

MS. DOLA SEN (West Bengal): Sir, I also associate myself with the issue raised by the hon. Member.

SHRI A.K. SELVARAJ (Tamil Nadu): Sir, I also associate myself with the issue raised by the hon. Member.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: We also associate ourselves with the issue raised by the hon. Member.

MR. CHAIRMAN: You must know that associating is one thing and taking care of the pollution is another important thing. So, both the things have to be kept in mind.

**Deteriorating condition of contract labourers of B.S.N.L.**

SHRI MD. NADIMUL HAQUE (West Bengal): Hon. Chairman, Sir, thousands of contract workers working at BSNL in different telephone circles across the country are in distress. Sir, they are facing acute hardship due to non-payment or irregular payment of wages. They have to face loss of livelihood because of certain decisions made by the management of Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited. Sir, in the Kolkata Circle alone, 4,500 workers have not been paid wages for the last three months. In West Bengal Circle, 1500 workers are suffering because they are not being paid the wages for the last five months. Sir, these workers have not been paid and ostensibly the reason is lack of funds. Sir, even if the wages are paid, they are not disbursed in a time-bound manner and often the wages are even less than the minimum wage limit.

Sir, the management is now planning to retrench the contract workers to curb the expenses of the organisation. This has led to the dual problem of job insecurity as well as of non-payment of wages. Such kind of treatment meted out to the workers is both disheartening and demoralising because it will have a cascading effect not only on them but also on their family members. There is no doubt that BSNL is facing a cash crunch and should cut down on expenditure but, Sir, this exercise of retrenchment should not be extended to the contract labourers.

Sir, on the intervention of the Trinamool Congress, the wages were brought up to date in the year 2015 and 2017. Similarly, today, I request the Government to bring the wages up to date immediately for these workers. On the one hand, the Prime Minister is talking about Digital India and we are all going towards Digital India, and, on the other