

adverse effect it had on the livelihood of lakhs of tribals traditionally engaged in plucking Kendu leaves. Kendu leaf, known as the green gold of Odisha, is a minor forest produce that essentially acts as the financial backbone for the leaf pluckers (90 per cent belonging to tribal communities), binders and seasonal workers. The 28 per cent GST levied on *bidi* (finished products made from Kendu leaves) creates a double taxation burden on the pluckers and workers, as the traders who get the tenders, in turn, pay them less for the leaves due to high taxes. This, in spirit, goes against the Forest Rights Act, 2006, and the PESA Act, 1996, as it impacts the livelihood and social welfare of the already marginalized tribals.

Being the third largest State producing Kendu leaves in India, Kendu leaf is an important non-wood forest product for Odisha. To protect the interests of workers, Odisha Government announced a special package in 2020, which included Rs. 1,000 for each plucker and Rs. 1,500 for each seasonal worker and binder. They were also covered under the Biju Swasthya Kalyan Yojana health scheme. Odisha also became the first State to provide bonuses to Kendu leave pluckers.

Given its importance for Odisha and its people, Sir, through you, I urge the Government to withdraw the GST on the collection of Kendu leaves.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI KARTIKEYA SHARMA): The following hon. Members associated themselves with the Special Mention made by the hon. Member, Dr. Amar Patnaik: Shri P. Wilson (Tamil Nadu), Dr. Sasmit Patra (Odisha), Shri Sujeet Kumar (Odisha), Dr. Kanimozhi NVN Somu (Tamil Nadu), Dr. John Brittas (Kerala), Shri M. Mohamed Abdulla (Tamil Nadu), Shri M. Shanmugam (Tamil Nadu), Shri Sandosh Kumar P (Kerala), Shri Abir Ranjan Biswas (West Benga) and Dr. Fauzia Khan (Maharashtra).

Demand to withdraw increased toll charges at all Toll Gates and close all the toll gates which are collecting tolls for more than ten years in Tamil Nadu

SHRI R. GIRIRAJAN (Tamil Nadu): Sir, it is unfortunate that toll charges at toll gates are being hiked on a regular basis. It affects badly the transportation of raw materials across the State and will lead to escalation in prices of essential commodities, particularly food items. In addition to the price set by the oil companies for petrol and diesel, the Union Government collects Rs.5 and Rs.2 per litre on sale of petrol and diesel as infrastructure development fee. In 2021-22 alone, 3,08,49,000 MT of petrol and 7,66,59,000 MT of diesel have been sold all over the country and Rs.2,70,000 crore was collected as infrastructure development fund. Even after collecting Rs.20

lakh crores of road infrastructure development fees in the past 10 years, the high toll charge is unjustifiable.

The law says that only 40 per cent of the fee should be collected after the deadline for road construction. But full toll charges are being collected at many toll gates which are more than 10 years old. The toll hike for commercial vehicles like bus, lorry, goods vehicle, call taxi, tourist vehicles, etc., is borne by the people only. The steep increase of toll collected will automatically increase the retail price and ultimately passed on to the public. This is the root cause for the escalation of prices beyond the reach of the common people.

Therefore, I urge the Government to withdraw increased toll charges at all toll gates and close all the toll gates which are collecting tolls for more than 10 years in Tamil Nadu.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI KARTIKEYA SHARMA): The following hon. Members associated themselves with the Special Mention made by the hon. Member, Shri R. Girirajan: Shri A.A. Rahim (Kerala), Dr. Sasmit Patra (Odisha), Dr. Amar Patnaik (Odisha), Dr. Kanimozhi NVN Somu (Tamil Nadu), Shri M. Shanmugam (Tamil Nadu), Dr. John Brittas (Kerala), Shri Sandosh Kumar P. (Kerala), Shri M. Mohamed Abdulla (Tamil Nadu), Dr. V. Sivadasan (Kerala) and Dr. Fauzia Khan (Maharashtra).

Demand to develop Uttarakhand as Sports Hub

श्री नरेश बंसल (उत्तराखंड) : महोदय, देवभूमी उत्तराखंड सीमांत क्षेत्र होने के साथ ही इसमें हिमालय, चारधाम, जीवनदायिनी नदियां व वन हैं। उत्तराखंड के निवासी बहुप्रतिभा के धनी हैं व उत्तराखंड ने संस्कृति, साहित्य, ज्ञान, विज्ञान, वीरता और खेल में पूरे देश को बहुत सारे रत्न दिए हैं। यहां से लगभग हर घर से एक जन भारतीय सेना में शामिल होकर देश के लिए सर्वोच्च बलिदान दे रहे हैं व अन्य सरकारी, गैर सरकारी पदों पर सेवाएं दे रहे हैं। आदरणीय प्रधान सेवक नरेन्द्र मोदी जी का उत्तराखंड प्रेम जग जाहिर है और मोदी सरकार में उत्तराखंड का सर्वांगीण विकास हो रहा है। वर्तमान में खेल की दिशा में अंतरराष्ट्रीय स्तर पर सम्मान बढ़ाया है, किन्तु यहां राष्ट्रीय व अंतरराष्ट्रीय स्तर की खेल सुविधाओं का अभाव है, जबकि उत्तराखंड के खिलाड़ियों ने हर तरह की राष्ट्रीय-अंतरराष्ट्रीय खेल प्रतियोगिताओं में प्रतिभाग लेकर पदक जीते हैं एवं राज्य का नाम स्थापित किया है। मैं कहना चाहता हूँ कि उत्तराखंड को खेलों का हब बनाया जाए, क्योंकि यहां साहसिक क्रीड़ा, जिसने बछेंद्री पाल जैसी अंतरराष्ट्रीय स्तर की महिला पर्वतारोही को दिया है।

इसके अतिरिक्त उत्तराखंड के लोगों का हिम क्रीड़ा, जल क्रीड़ा, कुश्ती, बॉक्सिंग, बास्केटबॉल, क्रिकेट व निशानेबाजी में योगदान रहा है। तमाम ऐसे दर्जनों लोग हैं, जिन्होंने राष्ट्र