

Lok Sabha Debates

Further Discussion Regarding Problems Being Faced By The Jute ... on 1 December, 2004

15.26 hrs. DISCUSSION UNDER RULE 193 Problems being faced by Jute Industry - Contd.

Title: Further discussion regarding problems being faced by the jute industry, raised by Shri Basudeb Acharia on 18.8.2004. (Discussion concluded).

MADAM CHAIRMAN: Now, we take up further discussion regarding problems being faced by Jute Industry, raised by Shri Basu Deb Acharia on the 18th August 2004.

SHRI SANTASRI CHATTERJEE (SERAMPORE): Hon. Chairperson, I thank you very much for giving me this opportunity to place my views before this august House though the discussion is now belated. It is a long-pending discussion. The problems of jute industry do not pertain only to my State West Bengal but also the States of Bihar, Assam, Orissa; and in Andhra Pradesh also, many new jute mills are coming up. Some industrialists out of their own decisions are moving out from West Bengal to expand their industry or business in other States. This is welcome, but they are not paying the legitimate dues to the workmen. Workmen's rights are curtailed in all possible ways and they are taking advantage of the limitations or the weaknesses of the working class movement in those States only to make more and more profit, which in a capitalist society is the order of the day.

Madam, what I intend to draw your kind attention to is that from 29th of this month, in our State all the central trade unions working in the jute industry were to start a continuous strike with the legitimate demand for the implementation of the tripartite memorandum of settlement between the management and the unions. Through the good offices of the Government of West Bengal, the strike has been averted. Everybody will be happy that the workers did not feel it necessary to go on continuous strike since most of their demands were acceded to by the recalcitrant employers. It is due to the policy of the Left Front Government to uphold the rights of the workers as well as to protect the interest of the industry that the strike did not materialise.

You will be pained to learn that one of the partners of the National Democratic Alliance in West Bengal – I do not want to name that Party – has opposed this agreement. Our hon. Minister has helped us a lot. That Party, which has only one Member in this House, is not pleased with the agreement because the Left Front Government has helped the workers and the management to come to a negotiated settlement. On the 30th of this month, they had given another strike call which was foiled by the jute workers. That strike took place only in a limited way. Only two or three mills participated in it.

The question that faces us is, how would the jute industry survive. Hon. Minister knows full well that demand for jute goods is on the increase in the international market. I read in the newspapers that we have won the case that we were fighting in Brazil for protection of our jute goods to be sold there. So, there is a possibility of huge demand in the international markets. So also, the road industry would be utilising the jute bags for development of roads. This will also increase the employment opportunities. There is every possibility that this jute industry will not only survive but

will expand and capture the domestic and international markets.

Very recently, I had the opportunity of participating in a two-day conference to discuss about the Comprehensive Jute Policy. That conference was organised by the Jute manufacturer's Development Council, one of the organisations under our Textile Ministry. They organised this conference for the first time. I have been in the trade union field for the last forty years but this is the first time that the Government has taken up a plan to convene a meeting involving all sections of the sector. Agriculture, marketing, research, development, technical upgrading, Labour, environment all aspects have been taken into consideration. Representatives from all walks of life relating to this sector have contributed in this meeting.

On the 25th of last month, Shri Vaghela called a meeting of the Consultative Committee. Unfortunately, I was not able to be present here. I wrote to him a letter, I do not know whether he received it or not. I have requested him to go through the entire proceedings and to constitute a Study Team comprising of technical experts so that we could finalise the Comprehensive Jute Policy in the Consultative Committee and then place it before the House.

There is every possibility that this industry will survive. There is every possibility that this market will expand further. New products will come out of the textile goods. Earlier it was called the 'golden fibre'. Many more ancillary products could come which could create new opportunities. It will serve the interests of lakhs and lakhs of farmers. So, I would appeal through you to the Hon. Minister to organise further discussion, and formulate a comprehensive jute policy which can safeguard the interest of the industry, interest of the farmers, interest of the workers, and it will add an impetus to our economy.

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MADAM CHAIRMAN : Shri K.S. Rao - not present.

Shri Tarit Baran Topdar - not present.

SHRI ANWAR HUSSAIN (DHUBRI): Thank you, Madam Chairman, for giving me an opportunity to express my views on the burning problems of Jute growers and Jute industries. I would also like to thank Shri Basu Deb Acharia for taking up this issue for discussion. The geographic condition, topography and climate are very congenial for the growth of Jute in Assam. In India, about 12 million bales of Jute is produced, out of which, the share of Assam is about one million bales. We have about 53 per cent of the working class linked with this product.

We have two problems. Firstly, in Assam and North-East, there is not a single Jute industry. So, naturally from pre-Independence days, we have been supplying Jute to West Bengal for their industries. The main problem is with the Jute growers. In 2001-02, the support price for Jute was about Rs.785 to Rs.850.

But in Assam, jute growers had to sell their jute for Rs.350 to Rs.400 only. Actually, for producing a quintal of jute, jute growers have to spend Rs.350 to Rs.400. So, the jute growers of Assam never get the support price. This year also, though the support price was around Rs.900 in Assam, jute was sold at Rs.350 to Rs.500 only. This was fifty per cent of the support price. Now the Jute Corporation of India have got their centres and sub-centres. They do not arrive in the market at proper time. They do not arrive in the market in the months of June or July. They arrive only in the month of late September or October. As a result of that, the growers are compelled to sell their jute to brokers and middlemen. These brokers and middlemen have got connection with the Jute Corporation of India. They have got some understanding with them. The Jute Corporation of India does not arrive in the

market at a proper time, as a result, peasants are exploited.

Another point is that these sub-centres and centres, for procuring jute, are so insufficient in number and located at such places that peasants cannot reach those places. Taking this advantage, the brokers and middlemen exploit the farmers. I, therefore, request the Government of India to look into the matter and ensure that the Jute Corporation of India opens up centres and sub-centres for procuring jute, at proper places. In my constituency, there is a place called Mankachar. If anybody has got any geographical knowledge of Mankachar, he will say that it is the remotest place having no communication facility. The Jute Corporation of India has opened a sub-centre at this place and not at the district headquarters or other sub-divisional headquarters. So, this JCI should be compelled to open their centres at proper places and procure jute directly from the farmers and not from the brokers and middlemen.

Lastly, late Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed, the former President of India had laid the foundation stone of a jute mill at Barpeta in late seventies. That jute mill is yet to be established. So, I urge upon the Government to establish the jute mill at Barpeta and another at Dubhri in the best interests of the jute growers of Assam.

SHRI AJOY CHAKRABORTY (BASIRHAT): Thank you, Madam, for giving me this opportunity. We are discussing about the jute industry of our country. The conditions of jute industry are very bad.