Provision for adequate budgetary allocation for the welfare of beedi workers in the country, and ensuring appropriate wages as well as compulsory pension for all the beedi workers aged 60 years and above, across the country

SHRI D. M. KATHIR ANAND (VELLORE): Hon. Chairperson Madam, there are about one crore beedi workers in the country out of which more than 50 per cent is women. In my Vellore Parliamentary Constituency, there are thousands of beedi workers who demand increase in their wages and pension like those across the country.

Post GST rollout in 2017, the Beedi Workers Welfare Fund was established under the Beedi Cigar Workers' Welfare Act, 1976, but now, that is not into existence. The proceeds of the fund were used to finance the beedi workers? health, education, social security etc. The Government plans to build a database through the e-Shram portal to assess the coverage for the beedi workers, and non-coal mine and cine workers who are in the informal sector. About 48 lakh beedi workers have registered on this portal. The Union Government funding is inadequate and cannot safeguard the life of all the beedi workers in the country. The Union Government should explore alternative avenues like budgetary allocations, innovative funding mechanisms and public-private partnerships to strengthen support for workers, and fostering long-term sustainability and resilience in the industry. Increase in the wages of all the beedi workers and provision of pension to them after 60 years should be made mandatory.

The beedi workers suffer a lot due to the constant exposure to tobacco dust. They experience burning sensation in the throat and also suffer from cough, asthma, bronchitis, etc. Even, women are facing irregular menstrual periods too.

Therefore, I urge the Union Government to provide adequate budgetary allocation for the welfare of beedi workers in the country, and ensure appropriate wages as well as compulsory pension for all the beedi workers aged 60 years and above, across the country. Thank you.