

Title: Request the Government to postpone the introduction of the "Tobacco Products (Prohibition of Advertisement and Regulation) Bill, 2000.

SHRI T. GOVINDAN (KASARGOD): Sir, I thank you for the opportunity given to me.

Today, during the 'Zero Hour,' I would like to draw the attention of the Government to the problems being faced by the bidi workers and the bidi industry.

Lakhs of bidi workers and their cooperatives and private management are in very serious anxiety over the Central Government's attempt to ban smoking at public places.

The Dinesh Bidi Works in Kerala is one of the biggest management Societies in bidi industry. 25000 rollers and 700 employees are working in this Society on factory basis completely avoiding child labour and home-based putting out system. This Society could guarantee better wages and living conditions to the workers. The Society itself is owned and managed by workers and they are enjoying better modern facilities.

In the current Budget Session, the Government intend to introduce the "Tobacco Productions (Prohibition of Advertisement and Regulation) Bill, 2000. Last year, the Kerala High Court had pronounced a verdict to ban smoking in public places. It provoked the bidi workers and their family and they agitated in front of the High Court itself.

Now-a-days, employment opportunities are reducing and factories are closing in different sectors. So, banning of smoking in public places will throw thousands of bidi workers jobless. Now, Kerala is suffering from the low prices of agricultural products and subsequent unemployment.

In the circumstances, I request the Government to postpone the introduction of the "Tobacco Products (Prohibition of Advertisement and Regulation) Bill, 2000.