

Fourteenth Loksabha

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Participants : [Yerrannaidu Shri Kinjarapu](#), [Chowdhury Shri Adhir Ranjan](#), [Babu Rao Shri Mediyam](#), [Choudhury Shri ABU Hasem Khan](#), [Ramdoss Dr. Anbumani](#), [Karunakaran Shri P.](#), [Acharia Shri Basudeb](#), [Ramdoss Dr. Anbumani](#)

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Title: Shri K. Yerrannaidu called the attention of the Minister of Health and Family Welfare to the problems being faced by Beedi workers in the country, particularly in Andhra Pradesh and Kerala and steps taken by the Government in this regard.

SHRI KINJARAPU YERRANNAIDU (SRIKAKULAM): Sir, I call the attention of the Minister of Health and Family Welfare to the following matter of urgent public importance and request that he may make a statement thereon :

“The problems being faced by Beedi workers in the country, particularly in Andhra Pradesh and Kerala and steps taken by the Government in this regard.”

MR. SPEAKER : I think the statement has been circulated.

... (*Interruptions*)

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA (BANKURA): Sir, our notice was not only pertaining to Kerala and Andhra Pradesh but the entire country. ... (*Interruptions*)

SHRI BRAJA KISHORE TRIPATHY (PURI): Sir, the problems concerns the Ministry of Labour also.

MR. SPEAKER : He has sent it to the Minister of Health and Family Welfare.

... (*Interruptions*)

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA : Sir, the Minister of Labour and Employment should also be present. ... (*Interruptions*)

MR. SPEAKER : If you go on interrupting like this, then there is no point. You get rid of the Chair first.

SHRI KINJARAPU YERRANNAIDU : Sir, the Minister of Labour and Employment is also here. He should also take note of this.

MR. SPEAKER : Your very valuable observations are noted.

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF LABOUR AND EMPLOYMENT (SHRI OSCAR FERNANDES): Yes, sir.

MR. SPEAKER : I think the reply of the hon. Minister can be taken to be laid on the Table of the House, instead of him reading it. I think all of you have got it.

THE MINISTER OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (DR. ANBUMANI RAMADOSS): Sir, the bidi industry has voiced its concern on the 'The Cigarettes and other Tobacco Products (Packaging and Labelling) Rules, 2006' notified recently providing for printing of specified warnings of skull and cross bones and pictorial warnings reflecting the ill-effects of tobacco consumption. According to them the requirement of printing of pictorial warnings on the packages of bidis are not required as smoking of bidi is less harmful as compared to other forms of tobacco and such requirement is adversely affecting the bidi industry resulting lakhs of bidi workers jobless.

I may clarify that at present around 45 per cent of total consumption in the country is in the form of bidi, with cigarette and oral tobacco accounting for around 15 per cent and 40 per cent respectively. Bidi is most often consumed by the poorer and less educated section of society including the children. Further, I may also clarify that there is no evidence to indicate that consumption of any form of tobacco is less harmful. The comparative product assay study as reported in the compilation of Research on Tobacco in India published jointly by the World Bank and the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research concluded that bidi contains higher concentrations of nicotine than conventional cigarettes and it is logical to presume that bidi smokers are at risk of becoming nicotine dependent. Although bidis tend to be smaller than conventional cigarettes, they can be every bit as deadly and addictive as conventional cigarettes. Moreover, bidis tend to be smoked more intensively with more frequent puffs, thus resulting in higher actual nicotine intake and cardiovascular effect than cigarettes, as well as 2-3 times greater tar inhalation. In cohort studies, bidi smoking has been shown to result in high excess mortality and high risk for diseases that are caused by cigarettes

* Laid on the Table and also placed in Library. See No. LT 5574/2006

smoking. Bidi smoking has been associated with a threefold risk of oral cancer and studies have also shown bidi smoking to be an important cause for cardiovascular disease. There are further studies to indicate that children who work for hours sitting cross-legged making bidis often suffer from backaches and knee problems and over the long term, many develop chronic bronchitis, asthma and even T.B.

Considering these facts and also that around 50 per cent of cancer deaths are attributable to tobacco consumption, the legislation enacted in 2003, aimed mainly to discourage the consumption of tobacco products, did not make any distinction amongst various tobacco products. This Act has been formulated on the basis of the recommendations of the Department-related Parliamentary Committee on HRD which specifically recommended that besides written warning, some symbol like skull and cross bones and such other pictorial depiction may also be given specially for the convenience of illiterate or semi-literate consumers. The Committee had extensive consultations with various tobacco Industry / Associations before finalizing their recommendations. We are also one of the parties to WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) which aims to

reduce the tobacco consumption globally by which we are to carry out number of measures including depiction of pictorial health warnings on tobacco products.

It has been projected that the Rules notified recently will have adverse impact on employment. I must clarify that there are studies to indicate that various positive public health measures such as the present one do not have any immediate economic impact on the industry, due to the addictive nature of the tobacco product and the time taken for demand reduction. On the other hand, such positive public health measures go a long way in improving the overall health and economy of the nation. Further, these Rules are yet to come into force and, therefore, it is premature to conclude that the impact of such pictorial warnings would result in closure of bidi manufacturing units and render the workers jobless.

SHRI KINJARAPU YERRANNAIDU : The Government of India has issued a notification on 5.7.2006 directing the manufacturers to depict skull, bones etc. on the bidi from 1st February, 2007. The industry owners are preparing to close all the bidi industry. About three crores of people are depending on this industry throughout the country, especially ten lakh of bidi workers working in Andhra Pradesh. Most of them are belonging to poorer sections, women belonging to S.C., S.T., Minorities and other backward classes. By this notification, if the industry is closed all will be unemployed. On the one side the Government is providing employment by the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme and on the other side by giving such notifications we are driving them towards unemployment.

In this scenario, on behalf of the people of Andhra Pradesh I want to mention it here. Already the Assembly of Andhra Pradesh has passed a unanimous Resolution and informed the Government of India to withdraw the notification issued on 5.7.2006. That is why, I am humbly requesting the Government of India to please withdraw the notification in the interest of the bidi workers. Otherwise they would be put to irreparable loss. They will lose the employment.

Recently, the hon. Minister of State for Health and Family Welfare has also given a statement saying that the notification will be put in abeyance and after alternative employment is provided then only this would be taken into operation. Even the hon. Minister of Labour and Employment has also given an assurance to the people of Andhra Pradesh, particularly the bidi workers that he would examine and do the needful.

In this scenario, in the interest of the bidi workers, it is better to withdraw the notification given by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. Otherwise, ten lakh people will lose employment. Without giving any alternative employment, you have suddenly issued the notification. The legislation was passed in the year 2003. But you have given the notification recently. Why have they not given it earlier? They wanted to provide alternative employment and they had to take steps for protecting the workers. That is why the previous government has delayed the issuance of the notification. ... (*Interruptions*)

MR. SPEAKER : Please put your question.

SHRI KINJARAPU YERRANNAIDU : In this scenario, you have to respect the sentiments of the people of Andhra Pradesh. The Andhra Pradesh Legislative Assembly passed a unanimous Resolution. It means the eight crore people of Andhra Pradesh are interested in the withdrawal of this notification. The Government of India should withdraw the notification with immediate effect. Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER : Dr. Babu Rao Mediyam just to seek a clarification only.

DR. BABU RAO MEDIYAM (BHADRACHALAM): Thank you, Sir. The bidi industry as such is promoting the habit of smoking bidi. The habit of smoking bidi is a poor man's luxury nowadays. ... (*Interruptions*) In this connection, I want to put the question first not to the Minister of Health and Family Welfare but to the Minister of Labour and Employment.

There are about 42 lakh people depending on this industry. The bidi industry gets its inputs from the forests, the green *tendu* leaf is collected by the tribal women from the forests. That is the first stage of this bidi industry. The second stage is the farmers who grow tobacco. In the third phase it comes to the making of the bidi. In making the bidi also, there are so many procedures. There is no doubt that it is very injurious to health.

Would the Government propose to give some identity cards to the bidi workers? It should be only one card that should be given. They are being ignored. There are laws from 1966 or 1970. These laws are not being implemented. I want to know from the hon. Minister of Labour whether they would issue any identity cards to these workers.

The second part of my question is to the hon. Minister of Health and Family Welfare. In his written reply it is stated that bidi only is contributing to oral cancer much than the cigarette. The Government is getting six rupees per thousand bidis as excise duty, but on cigarettes it is getting about Rs. 15 as excise duty on thousand cigarettes. I want to know whether this fact is leading the Government to minimize the injury by bidi. I want to know whether it is a fact that if bidi is so cancerous, in this situation why is this discouragement of showing the advertisements of skull and crossed bones etc.? That is very much threatening the people, threatening their livelihood and threatening the industry also. I want to ask the hon. Minister whether it is unreasonable to make such an advertisement; otherwise kindly withdraw it. Thank you. [[MSOffice8](#)]

MR. SPEAKER: There is a recommendation by the Standing Committee on Human Resource Development.

SHRI P. KARUNAKARAN (KASARGOD): Sir, hon. Minister of Labour is also sitting here. Considering the vast majority of workers engaged in the beedi industry, whose number is in lakhs and most of whom are women, getting very low wages – I want to draw the attention of the Government and also the Ministry – will the Government take immediate steps to implement The Beedi and Cigar Act in those States where beedi industry is dominant? Will the Government consider to levy excise duty on tobacco instead of the total number of beedis produced? I want to know whether the Government will take measures to give more funds to the Beedi Welfare Fund so

as to give the benefit to the workers. Will the Government consider to enhance the amount given under housing scheme from Rs. 40,000 to Rs. 1 lakh.

MR. SPEAKER: You cannot ask plenty of questions.

SHRI P. KARUNAKARAN : Will the Government consider establishing hospitals for the beedi workers? The former Labour Minister had assured this House that they will start hospitals in the beedi-producing areas. Considering the unorganised character of the beedi workers, will the Government provide a special insurance scheme covering all the beedi workers, whether they are in the Government or the private sector?

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA: Sir, there are 65 lakh beedi workers in the country. It means about four crore people are depending on this industry. We are not against telling the consumers about health hazards, but the problem is what he has stated in the end that showing or publishing pictorial warning, with a skull and two bones crossing it, will not adversely affect the beedi industry. Already a large number of beedi industries are on the verge of closure. Thousands of beedi workers, who belong to backward community of our country and poorer section of our country, merely get Rs. 50 to Rs. 100 per day for preparing 1,000 beedis. If it is made compulsory by way of the regulation, the notification issued by the Central Government to print a pictorial warning on the packet of the beedi, this will definitely adversely affect the beedi industries and thereby, lots of beedi workers will be affected. In the State of West Bengal, there are eight lakh beedi workers in five or six districts. Their livelihood will be adversely affected. There is a demand from various sections of the people, the workers, the trade unions and even the Members of Parliament, irrespective of political parties, that instead of pictorial warning, the warning may be put in some other form.

MR. SPEAKER: You mean 'in words'.

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA : It is being done in the case of cigarette also. Such type of warning should be printed on the packet of beedi. I would request the hon. Minister to consider this proposal in the interest of lakhs and lakhs of beedi workers whose livelihood will be adversely affected because of this new regulation, new notification issued by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.

MR. SPEAKER: You should not speak any more. We have a lot of work to do.

SHRI ADHIR CHOWDHURY (BERHAMPORE, WEST BENGAL): According to Dr. Swaminathan, we must see the world which is called a tobacco free world. Before it, we should ensure that the people, who would have been deprived of their livelihood, are taken care of.

That is why I am not pleading for promotion of tobacco consumption either in smoking form or in smokeless form. The fact is that lakhs of tribal people who pluck kendu leaves and tendu leaves are earning their livelihood from this. You are well aware that especially the tribal dominated areas are now being poached by naxalites. So, any kind of unemployment will further encourage naxal

agitation in those areas. We know that our country is a signatory to World Health Organisation's Framework Convention on Tobacco Control which aims at reducing tobacco consumption globally.

I hail from District Murshidabad which has the highest concentration of beedi workers in the West Bengal. They are about more than six lakh in number. There is no other alternative employment for those beedi rolling employees. Therefore, I would request the hon. Minister to adopt a phase-out manner in this regard. First we have to educate the beedi smoking people that it is injurious to health.

An agitation has been launched against tobacco consumption worldwide. But it involves lakhs and crores of poor and vulnerable people's livelihood in our country. My request to the hon. Minister is that instead of a pictorial depiction involving a skull and cross bones, or a dead body covered in coffin, the Government may consider printing of only a text warning. The shape of the beedi is conical. Therefore, it is hard for the beedi manufacturers to print this kind of an impression on the beedi packet.

May I ask the hon. Minister whether the Framework Convention has made it mandatory to depicting the impression of skull and cross bones or the dead body covered in a coffin? Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: I have already called five hon. Members. But there is a request from a new Member Shri Abu Hasem Khan Choudhury. Again, not as a precedent but by way of accommodation, I am calling him. Just put your question Mr. Khan Chowdhury.

... (*Interruptions*)

MR. SPEAKER: You are not a new Member. Just get rid of the idea that if anybody sends a notice I am obliged to call. Read the rules first. This is a wrong idea that is developing that anybody who gives notice would be called.

... (*Interruptions*)

MR. SPEAKER: Do not disturb him please, he is a new Member.

SHRI ABU HASEM KHAN CHOUDHURY (MALDA): Mr. Speaker, Sir, a lot of people in Malda District, about three lakh people, work in beedi industry. I am concerned about the workers. I do not understand why particularly beedi has been selected and they want to put the picture of a dead body on the beedi packet. Beedi smoking does not bring instant death. That kind of a picture will scare people away from smoking beedi. Whatever they are doing in the case of cigarette should also be done in the case of beedi also. Like 'Smoking is injurious to health', let them say that in the case of beedi also.

MR. SPEAKER: I compliment you on your maiden intervention. Now the hon. Minister.

... (*Interruptions*)

MR. SPEAKER: Sorry, I would not allow.

... (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: I will adjourn the House and go away. This type of disorderliness I will not permit. I will not permit, you go on shouting. There is a limit.

... (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Shrimati Jayaprada, then ask for a proper discussion.

Do not record one word of this.

(Interruptions) ... *

MR. SPEAKER: Please do not disturb the House. This is very wrong. Shrimati Jayaprada, this is very wrong. I will not allow. This is a Calling Attention. No, I will not allow.[\[r9\]](#)

Shri Athawale, will you go back to your seat? Do not stand up and interrupt!

Nobody bothers for the rules. You can shout at any time you like without caring for the permission from the Chair. Do not make this House ridiculous, please.

... (Interruptions)

अध्यक्ष महोदय : परमीशन नहीं देंगे।

हैड मास्टर अच्छी पोस्ट है, हैडमास्टर खराब पोस्ट नहीं है।

...(व्यवधान)

श्री इलियास आजमी (शाहाबाद) : अध्यक्ष महोदय, आप हिन्दी बोला करें, आपकी हिन्दी अच्छी है।

MR. SPEAKER : Thank you.

DR. ANBUMANI RAMADOSS : As the Minister of Health, I am equally concerned about the health of the citizens of the country. In my answer, I have given the percentage of people who are smoking and consuming tobacco. There are about 250 million people in India who use tobacco. When we say 250 million people, it is a huge number of people using tobacco products. Out of these 250 million people, approximately 40 to 45 per cent of them use *bidi*, approximately 15 per cent use cigarettes, and the rest use smokeless tobacco, that is, eating tobacco. I do not want to lecture to the hon. Members here about the problems faced due to tobacco usage because I am sure all the hon. Members know about

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the effects of use of it. It not only causes cancer, in fact, we have approximately one million cancer deaths in India due to tobacco usage. Tobacco not only leads to cdeaths, but it would also lead to

heart problems, lung problems, kidney problems, skin problems, impotency, mal-formation problems; and all sorts of problems are related to tobacco.

I could go one step further, approximately 40 per cent of all the health problems in this country is due to tobacco. Such a huge problem is being faced due to the tobacco usage. Mostly youngsters, in the age group of 10 to 12 and those who are out of school, take tobacco. This includes innocent kids who are using tobacco. Definitely we need to have a structured system for us to deviate these kids from using this produce.

Way back in 2003, during the previous regime, the Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products Act, 2003 was enacted. In that Act, it was clearly mentioned that pictorial warnings should be made mandatory in all the tobacco products. The Parliamentary Committee on HRD have also, after going through a lot of consultations with different associations, industry and everyone concerned, recommended that these mandatory warnings should be implemented.

Indian is one of the early signatories of The Framework Consultation on Tobacco Control (FCTC) by the WHO, where it is also mentioned that these things should be enforced in due course of time. Literally, a lot of countries in the world are using these pictorial warnings. Some of the hon. Members have stated that as to why we can have the wordings rather than pictorial warnings. I am sure, the hon. Members must be knowing that we have a statutory warning: Cigarette smoking is injurious to health. These words have not made any effect and the effect is miniscule and the usage of tobacco has increased. Scientifically, it does not have much meaning.

Then, the Parliamentary Committee on HRD have stated that for the literate and semi-literate, rural youths in the rural people who smoke, these pictures should deviate them from taking up this habit.

From the coming year, 2007, all the packaged food products in this country must mandatorily have the ingredients mentioned on the one side and the nutritional level value on the other side. So, people will know as to what they are eating and as to how much calories they are taking and as to what is the saturated fats. People have to know all that. This is one of the means of awareness creation for the people to deviate them from using this product.

I do not know how this pictorial warnings would definitely close the industry. This is not being enforced today. It is going to be enforced from February, 2007. I do not know as to how the industry says today that we have already closed down industry because it is not made mandatory from today. This notification is effective from 2007. Some of the issues raised by the hon. Members, who were very good friends like, Shri Yerrannaidu, have asked for the withdrawal of notification. [r10]

This is in the Act, which was framed in this august House way back in 2003, which says that it should be mandatory. This Act also says that there should not be smoking in public places, there should not be direct or indirect advertisement relating to tobacco products, tobacco products should not be sold to minors under the age of 18 years and tobacco products should not be sold within 100 m of educational institutions, pictorial warnings, nicotine and tar, contents of all tobacco products

should be mentioned. We have literally tried to enforce this which has already been passed in this august House.

Dr. Babu Rao talked about poor man's luxury. I do not know what statement is, poor man's luxury; is it the way to heaven or hell! Pertaining to some questions asked by hon. Members, if you permit the Labour Minister can answer to those points. He has come here for this Calling Attention only. If you permit him, Sir, he can take up some of the issues raised by the hon. Members, like, the identity card for beedi workers. My friend, Dr. Babu Rao has asked as to whether beedi is pre-cancerous. In my reply, it is clearly shown that there is no discrimination between cigarette and beedi. All are cancerous. In fact, beedis are smoked by poor, illiterate and innocent people and they tend to smoke more. Scientific studies done have clearly stated this.... (*Interruptions*)

Shri Karunakaran has raised some issues regarding Beedi Welfare Fund, housing scheme and hospitals. I am sure, my hon. colleague with your permission will reply to all that.

Shri Basudeb Achairra has said that the large beedi industry is on the verge of closure. I would like to reiterate that this Notification has not yet been enforced. It will come into force in 2007. In fact he wanted in place of pictorial warning any other warning. I have already explained that we have a warning today that 'Cigarette smoking is injurious to health' but nobody heeds to that warning.

MR. SPEAKER: Unfortunately, like the Child Labour legislation.

DR. ANBUMANI RAMADOSS: Yes, Sir. Countries like Canada, Brazil Thailand, Singapore, Australia, and European Union have enforced this and scientific study says that this has been very effective.... (*Interruptions*)

Shri Adhir Chowdhury wanted to know whether FCTC, Framework Commission of Tobacco Control is mandatory or not. As India's Secretary has mentioned that this should be in due course of time.... (*Interruptions*)

MR. SPEAKER: This is not question-answer session. You are very knowledgeable. Please go and meet him.

... (*Interruptions*)

MR. SPEAKER: Not a single word will go on record without my permission.

(*Interruptions*) ... *

DR. ANBUMANI RAMADOSS: In spite of all these details, notwithstanding, I have got a lot of representations from different parties, a lot of Members of Parliament, a lot of delegations from industry and almost all sections of industry saying that this will be a problem to the employment. Taking into consideration

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all these things, with your permission if all the Members agree we will try to postpone this Notification for four months. Instead of from February we can postpone it to May end...

(Interruptions) Only if the hon. Member accepts it... *(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER: If you do that I will not permit the Labour Minister to respond. He will not respond.

... *(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER: Do not record a single word. No word is being recorded.

(Interruptions) ...*

MR. SPEAKER: Hon. Labour Minister may make a very brief intervention if he so wishes.

... *(Interruptions)*

SHRI OSCAR FERNANDES : Sir, I am only replying to the points raised by Members...
(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: You may see, here also different views are expressed. This is not the manner in which you have to express your views. There is a limit. Five Members are allowed. As a matter of fact, a sixth Member has been allowed. We find that even the Labour Minister has volunteered to come. Listen to him. You go on having running questions and running comments.[\[R11\]](#)

SHRI OSCAR FERNANDES : Sir. Dr. Babu Rao Mediyam has raised the matter of issuing the identity cards to *bidi* workers. There is already a card but we will make a *pucca* system to give identity cards to the workers which can be used for a comprehensive purpose. The other welfare schemes like housing, scholarship, education, etc. we are doing everything in all the areas of the country.

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MR. SPEAKER: Now, we will take up Item No.22. Shri Bhubaneshwar Prasad Mehta to raise the Calling Attention Motion.

... *(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER: I would not allow this.

... *(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER: Do not record even one word.

*(Interruptions) ...**

MR. SPEAKER: Except Shri Mehta, nobody else will be recorded.

*(Interruptions) ...**

MR. SPEAKER: If you do not want the second Calling Attention to be taken up, I would adjourn the House.



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