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Title: Problems being faced by beedi workers.

SHRI M. APPADURAI (TENKASI): Hon. Chairman, my esteemed colleague Thiru S.K. Kharventhan spoke ahead of me highlighting the problems faced by the Beedi workers especially in the wake of the imposition of mandatory requirement to display statutory warning on the Beedi bundles with the danger mark depicting picture of skull on the Beedi bundles.

\*\*There are about 2 crores Beedi workers in the country. About 20 crores of people, the family members and dependents of Beedi workers and associated workers are much dependent on this industry. Already the excise hike is hitting this industry. To some extent Hon. Finance Minister has eased it. Union Health Minister has taken up the cause of the ban on smoking. It is commendable. But the insistence on displaying danger signal in the form of skull and bones along with the statutory warning on the Beedi bundles is a disheartening one. When Governments are running liquor vends the slogans like smoking is injurious to health may not be very appropriate. Even cigarette industry is not covered by this stringent measure, whereas Beedi Bundles are supposed to have these warnings printed on them. Since small Beedi industrial units are drastically affected by this measure of the Governments for the past one week such units are agitating closing their units. The Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu Dr. Kalamangal Karunanidhi has taken up this issue with the Union Government. From aesthetic point of view a picture of skull is distasteful and is also anti- sentimental. Hence I urge upon the Union Government to initiate suitable measures. In Tamil Nadu Beedi workers number about 50 lakhs, in my Thenkasi constituency alone there are about 5 lakhs Beedi workers. Hence I urge upon the Union Government to take alternative methods to educate the people about the evils of smoking but not in a crude way that will affect the livelihood of many poor Beedi workers.

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\* English Translation of the speech originally delivered in Tamil.

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MR. CHAIRMAN : You may submit the rest of the speech.