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Title: Need to review the decision regarding use of jute bags in packaging of sugar and other foodgrains in the country.

PROF. SAUGATA ROY (DUM DUM): Sir, I want to raise a matter during the *Zero Hour* to draw the attention of the Minister of Textiles. It is a matter, which is affecting a large number of people in our State.

In our State, there are several million jute farmers, and 2.5 lakh jute workers. Jute industry is the biggest industry in West Bengal as also in Andhra Pradesh, Bihar and other places. Now, to save this industry, the late Prime Minister Shri Rajiv Gandhi in 1987 introduced the Jute Packaging Materials (Compulsory Use in Packaging Commodities) Act, 1987. Under the Act, 100 per cent food grains and 100 per cent production of sugar is supposed to be packed in jute bags. Earlier, there was a provision for cement packaging. Now, under pressure from the cement lobby, this has been given up. Now, what has happened is that the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs held on 11 October 2012 decided to dilute this provision. Under the new decision, 90 per cent of food grains and only 40 per cent of the production of sugar would be packed in jute bags. This will mean that the production in jute mills will have to be cut down, and this will be a terrible blow to the jute farmers, jute workers and the jute industry as a whole. This must have been decided due to the pressure of the synthetic lobby, that is, those who make synthetic bags.

I strongly protest against this, and I would request the Government to take back this decision. Due to this decision, already the price of raw jute, which was earlier Rs. 2,200 per quintal, has fallen to only Rs. 700 per quintal. The jute farmers will starve if this decision is not withdrawn. The jute mills are cutting down production and workers might lose their jobs. It is unfortunate that the Government has taken a decision which will deal a terrible blow to the dream of late Rajiv Gandhi Ji who wanted to save the jute industry.