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Title: Need to take steps to abolish salt cess levied on the salt production.

DR. K. GOPAL (NAGAPATTINAM): Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to urge upon the Government to remove salt cess collected by the Salt Department of the Central Government. The Government presently levies salt cess on the salt produced in the land exceeding 10 acres. A majority of people who are engaged in salt trade are very poor farmers and their livelihood runs on their daily earning. In this scenario, it is unjustifiable to levy cess on the salt production which was opposed by the Father of our Nation and it led to a great revolution during the pre-independent period as Salt Satyagraha. The Varadaraja Committee has already recommended the abolition of salt cess in the year 1980 and even the Exchequer is getting less than Rs. Five crore from the whole country as salt cess levied on thousands of poor salt workers.

Therefore, I strongly urge the Government to abolish salt cess immediately. I would also like to urge upon the Government to remove salt from the Central List as Item No. 58 in the Seventh Schedule of the Constitution of India, in view of the fact that only 10 per cent of the salt land is owned by the Salt Department of the Central Government.