

Seventeenth Loksabha

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Title: Regarding import of tax free rubber.

SHRI KODIKUNNIL SURESH (MAVELIKKARA): Speaker, Sir, the rubber farmers, especially, of Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, North-East and other parts of the country are in severe crisis for several years due to fall in the prices of natural rubber. It is because of the import policy adopted by the Union Government.

The farmers had received reasonable prices for natural rubber in a period when the Government of India followed a policy which banned the import of natural rubber in the country. The Government of India have changed their policy because the tyre manufacturers misled the Government that Indian natural rubber is of an inferior quality. The Government has commenced import of rubber from international market. This argument of the tyre industry and their lobbies is totally false. Our natural rubber is competent enough to be compared with any imported produce. It meets the quality benchmark. After the tyre lobby's pressure, the Government of India had decided to relax the Import Duty on natural rubber. After this decision, the demand for Indian natural rubber had fallen and gone downward spiral. Due to mounting losses and falling rates, the rubber farmers including small and marginal planters were compelled to stop cultivation. The rate of fertilizers is also high. The Rubber Board itself is under strain as it could not meet with the challenges posed by the crisis.

It will be noted that the then Minister of Commerce and Industry, Shrimati Nirmala Sitharaman had held several meetings with all stakeholders including the representatives of rubber farmers and members of the industry to analyse this matter. Even then the tyre lobby had misled the Government during pre-budget deliberations about the sectoral demands and urged the Government for zero Import Duty on natural rubber.

माननीय अध्यक्ष : आप तो शॉर्ट में बोलें ।

SHRI KODIKUNNIL SURESH : Yes, Sir. This demand is anti-farmer, anti-people and disastrous for the domestic rubber production.

This move will adversely affect the welfare of 13.1 lakh growers who are mainly small growers, and 4.93 lakh workers dependent on the agro-based industry.

I would strongly urge upon the Government to take urgent steps to protect the domestic rubber productions and farmers by increasing the import duty of natural rubber so that domestic prices are protected and farmers get maximum price. Thank you, Sir.

माननीय अध्यक्ष: श्री एंटो एन्टोनी, एडवोकेट अदूर प्रकाश, श्री राजमोहन उन्नीथन और श्रीमती राम्या हरिदास को श्री कोडिकुन्निल सुरेश द्वारा उठाए गए विषय के साथ संबद्ध करने की अनुमति प्रदान की जाती है ।