

by the Government in the Taramakant tea plantation area?

SHRI SALMAN KHURSHEED: With respect to the hon. Member I submit that the notice is for coffee and not for tea. But if the Member has any information.

MR. SPEAKER: He is trying to understand whether any land had been acquired for coffee or tea and if yes he wants to know how much of land was acquired.

SHRI SALMAN KHURSHEED: We do not acquire the land as it is a State subject. However, what we would certainly welcome is that if any problem is being faced by the Adivasis or it is known to the hon. Member, if that information is given to us, we will certainly pay to utmost attention to it.

SHRI MRUTYUNJAYA NAYAK: Sir, Daripadi is in the district of Phulbani and it is located at a most higher altitude in Orissa from the sea level. It is called the Darjeeling of Orissa. Phulbani and Bolangir districts have been declared as backward districts as well as 'no industry' districts by the State Government. It has conducive fertility and congenial weather conditions. I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether he will give priority on this consideration, to take up these districts and include them for implementation of the project in a big way.

SHRI SALMAN KHURSHEED: Sir, the hon. Member's desire for us to help the Darjeeling of Orissa is certainly most welcome. To begin with, I assure the hon. Member that I will take the first opportunity to visit the Darjeeling of Orissa and whatever help is part of the scheme that has already been laid down and whatever help we can give to that area, we will certainly be happy to give.

SHRI SRIKANTA JENA: Sir, the Hon. Minister has stated that around 6,335 hectares of land is available in Orissa for coffee plantation and out of this only 1,300 hectares have been utilised. There are districts like Keonjhar and Mayurbhanj where coffee can

be planted and those areas have not been identified, due to the attitude of the Coffee Board on the consolidation. What is the meaning of consolidation? The coffee plantation is already there in 1,300 hectares. The demand is that more areas have to be identified and the point is whether Coffee Board is going to utilise those extra areas available in those four districts and other areas of the other districts.

SHRISALMAN KHURSHEED: The hon. Member has asked a very good question. I must explain that the consolidation relates to total productivity that we are able to get from the areas in which coffee is already produced. There are other problems. There are problems of fighting pests; there are problems of production. We want to ensure that coffee grown in Orissa gets the same conditions that are available in other parts of the country, if not better. As and when we are able to expand the acreage, we will certainly encourage the expansion of acreage. It also depends on the price that is available to us in the world market and the price agreement has to be reached under the National Coffee Agreement. There is some uncertainty which is the reason why we are not concentration on further acreage before we consolidate what we already have got.

Import of Rubber

*226. **SHRI P.C. THOMAS:** Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the exporters of rubber goods are allowed to import rubber; and

(b) if so, the reason thereof and the quantum and value of such imports during the last three years?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): (a) and (b). A statement is laid on the Table of the House.

STATEMENT

(a) **Yes, Sir.**

(b) Imports of rubber by exporters of rubber goods are allowed to make such exported goods competitive in the international market. The estimated quantum and value of such imports during the last three years are as under:-

	Quantity (Tonnes)	Value (Rs. crores)
1988-89	8472	14.25
1989-90	17896	27.69
1990-91	20243	30.50

SHRI P.C.THOMAS: Though the import and export are continuing, it is a welcome step that this Government has stopped imports by STC. It is unfortunate that while Shri V.P Singh's Government was here, about 40,000 tonnes of rubber was imported by the STC. Along with that stock, the stock which has grown extends now to 86000 tonnes. The poor cultivators of rubber who account for 6.5 lakh in number, plus with the efforts of about 20 lakh labourers, the production of natural rubber has increased. Now there is a surplus of rubber. With this incentive import which comes to about 22000 tonnes estimated for the next year, the total surplus after the bufferstock.

MR. SPEAKER: Please come to the question. If you have a long question, you don't get the answer. Please come to the proper question.

SHRI P.C.THOMAS: Along with the imported rubber, plus the rubber produced, plus the 22000 tonnes of rubber which is coming as import on export, there is a surplus of 50000 tonnes. My question is, whether the Government will at least lift the ban on export, so that the cultivators or consumer societies of dealers could export rubber and thereby save the poor cultivators.

SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM: First of all I must thank the hon. Member for the very deep concern that he has shown in the last several days on the rubber front. I am sorry,

he had to go on a fast. But I assured him repeatedly that rubber is engaging my attention.

Four months ago when we assumed office, we were told that India would have to import rubber for the next three years. Today we are in a happy position to say that India would not have to import rubber, we are self-sufficient in rubber.

The next question is, are we in a position to export rubber. This is a very serious question which has to be addressed seriously. No country, in my view, should enter the export market in fits and starts. We should enter the export world market only if we are sure that we would be a regular and reliable supplier of a quality product at a competitive price. That situation in my honest judgment has not yet arrived.

Nevertheless, I have directed STC which has about 20000 metric tonnes of rubber imported last year and the year before and I must say without meaning to criticise anybody that last year there was excessive imports; it was poor judgment; 20000 tonnes of rubber - to explore the world market. In the world market Malaysia is the price setter Malaysian price is about two thousand rupees less than Indian rubber per tonne. It will be difficult to enter the world market. But I am seriously attending to the problem and I will try to find an answer in the next couple of weeks.

SHRI P.C.THOMAS: In the world market the present price is, in rupee terms, Rs, 20.5 per kg. What the cultivator gets is much less than that here. There is rubber latex which comes direct from the rubber tree. Rubber sheet which is produced by the farmer comes next. My humble question is, whether the Government will at least allow the rubber latex to be exported. There is one more aspect. There is 85000 tonnes of rubber latex which has been centrifuged and kept as stock.

MR. SPEAKER: There are many other Members who want to ask questions. I must

do justice to them also. Please come to the heart of the question.

SHRI P. C. THOMAS: So, kindly explore the possibility of exporting latex.

SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM: The hon. House will pardon me; I cannot give an assurance. I have directed the STC to explore world markets. If, as a result of that exploration, we find that there is market for latex, certainly we will export latex. I cannot give the assurance.

SHRIMATISUSEELAGOPALAN: Now, we have an excess production of rubber in the country. So far, we have buffer stock in our hands. May I know from the hon. Minister as to whether he will keep this buffer in the custody of the Rubber Board so that it will not be mis-utilised against the interests of the farmers?

SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM: Sir, the estimated stock at the end of the year is only an estimate. Our consumption is about 30,000 metric tonnes of rubber per month. There is a feeling that we should have three months stock. But when I visited Kottayam and Cochin, after speaking to both growers as well as the consumers, I agreed that we can reduce the buffer stock to two months' stock — one month's stock in the hands of the growers and one month's stock in the hands of rubber products manufacturers. Since the rubber crop has just started coming in the last month-and-a-half, I will have to wait and see. If at the end of the year stock is likely to be more than 60,000 metric tonnes, then, I can move confidently on the export front. The stock will remain in the hands of the growers as well as in the hands of the rubber product, manufacturers. Rubber Board, as such, does not carry stock.

SHRI P. C. CHACKO: I thank the hon. Minister for his sincere attempts to tackle the situation. But in spite of the best assurances given by the Minister, a crisis situation is developing in the price front of the natural rubber. Under some pretext or the other, the industry is able to manage import of natural

rubber thereby, slashing the price of Indian rubber. Will the Minister and the Government think of banning the import of natural rubber completely, at least for the time being?

SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM: Sir, as I said, STC does not import rubber. I have not allowed STC to import rubber this year. There is a scheme for the import of rubber which is under advance licence. This is by exporters who have to buy certain qualities of rubber at international prices in order to make rubber at international prices in order to make rubber products and sell them at international prices. That scheme operates separately.

Sir, I share the concern of the hon. Member and I am addressing the problem; the prices have dropped and the STC has entered the market. I am confident that in the next few days STC's intervention in the market will bring up the price to the benchmark of 20950 per tonne.

MR. SPEAKER: Let us see, what kind of question is put by the Member coming from a non-rubber producing State. Shri Chhedi Paswan.

[Translation]

SHRI CHHEDI PASWAN: Mr. Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister has stated that there is little possibility of export in foreign countries. So I would like to know what steps are going to be taken by the Government to popularise and expand the rubber industry so that maximum people can get employment.

MR. SPEAKER: Would you like to use rubber products for providing employment?

SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM: He is talking about natural rubber which is in the pervade sector. Rubber growers are essentially in the private sector. When you are asking about the rubber products, now that we are marginally surplus in rubber, we must encourage rubber and produce more. Last year for example, rubber products have fetched about Rs. 240 crores. There is more rubber; there

will be more rubber products and that will give employment for in organised sector. Growing of natural rubber will be in the private sector.

SHRI RAMESH CHENNITHLA: The rubber growers in Kerala are facing a grave situation. Now the Minister has mentioned about the prices. I would like to know the present position of the cost study done for the natural rubber for increasing the prices.

SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM: Sir, the last study was done by the Cost Accounts Branch of the Finance Ministry and the revised prices of rubber were announced on the 15th of January 1991, about 11 months ago. I have already directed that the data should be gathered and another study should be done. As soon as the next study is completed, we will consider about revising the prices of rubber.

SHRI V. DHANANJAYA KUMAR: What we understand from the answer given by the Minister is, we must have enough stock of rubber to enter the competitive export market. In my constituency of Mangalore in Sullia Taluk, the Government it self owns rubber plantation and the entire South Canara district is fit to be encouraged to grow more and more rubber.

So, I would like to know from the Minister whether the Government thinks of encouraging growing more and more rubber in this area so that we grow more rubber and enter the competitive export market.

SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM: Sir, we have to grow more rubber. But our rubber must be competitive in the world market. If we grow costly rubber or our rubber costs more than the international rubber, we cannot export to the world market.

The problem today is not technology. The problem is the high cost of rubber culti-

vation in India. That is why Indian rubber price is approximately Rs. 2,000 per tonne more than the international prices. Now, on the one hand, the cost is already high. On the other hand, the rubber growers complain that it is not getting them a remunerative price. (*Interruptions*)

The cost cannot be reduced overnight. The labour charges are high in Kerala. Given a high-cost labour given that it is in the private sector, the only way to make our prices competitive is to increase productivity. And we have an approximately Rs. 700 crore plan to increase productivity. If productivity goes up, production per acre will go up and prices will come down. There are no short-cuts.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

[*English*]

Export of Onion Seeds

*227. **SHRI CHANDRESH PATEL:** Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether onion seeds were exported during January 1, 1989 to October 31, 1991;

(b) if so, the places from which these were exported and the quantity and value thereof;

(c) the countries to which the onion seeds were exported and the foreign exchange earned thereby;

(d) whether representations have been received from some organisations from time to time requesting for better price for their produce; and