

*SHRI VEERABHADRAM THMMINENI (Khammam) : Mr. Chairman, Sir, the present Government headed by Shri H.D. Deve Gowda claims to represent the farming community and other poorer sections of the society. Hon. Prime Minister claims himself to be a humble farmer. Sir, this Government should take certain steps to safeguard the interests of the farmers.

The cotton growers in the country are passing through a crisis today. They are facing too many problems. The reason is fast approaching. Cotton is now being grown in 80 lakhs of hectares. The cost of inputs has gone up manifold. Fertilizers, insecticides and seeds are now costing more. In spite of all these odds cotton growers have tried their best to raise the crop. But unfortunately, due to heavy rains the crop got either washed away or severely damaged. The ruling price of cotton at present is around Rs. 1700 or at the most Rs. 1800 per quintal. With this price, the cotton growers cannot even expect to get back the amount they had spent. It is too inadequate. The price should be at least Rs. 2500 to be remunerative. If the growers do not get at least Rs. 2500 as the minimum support price, it becomes difficult for them to survive. The only solution to the problem is allowing cotton exports. The Government should at once initiate measures to export cotton. In the Common Minimum Programme, it was assured that the United Front Government would take necessary steps to protect the interests of farmers. Sir, this is the right time to export cotton. The production of cotton is expected to be low this year in the cotton producing countries. The total production of cotton in the world was 19.9 million tonnes in 1995-96 and this year it is expected to go down by 2 million tonnes. It is expected to be around 18 million tonnes. That is why there is a golden opportunity to export our cotton of other countries at reasonably better prices. The production has fallen in the cotton producing countries like Pakistan, Uzbekistan and United States of America. Similarly, the demand in countries like Taiwan, South Korea and Indonesia. There is going to be a big gap between demand and supply. Only Australia and India are capable of meeting this growing demand world over. Indian cotton can fetch 80 to 85 cents per pound. We have the required surplus stocks of cotton to meet the export demands. We have produced 156 lakhs of bales of cotton in the past. This year the production is expected to touch 165 lakhs of bales. So, 10 to 15 lakhs of bales of cotton would be available for export between January to March. If the Government exports cotton, it can create better market for the cotton growers. The cotton growers can expect to get better prices for their produce. The State-owned CCI should enter the market and purchase cotton from the growers by offering them remunerative prices. Sir, there is one obstacle for exporting of cotton. There is a provision called selective

* Translation of the speech originally delivered in Telugu.

prices control system and because of this the exporters and not getting loans immediately. This provision should be amended to benefit of the cotton growers.

I once again request the Government to initiate exports of cotton and take all the steps necessary to offer remunerative prices to the cotton growers in the country.

Thanking you, Sir, for providing me an opportunity, I conclude.

[English]

SHRI M. KAMALUDDIN AHMED (Hanankonda) : Mr. Chairman, Sir, incidentally the matter which I want to raise is also the same as that of the previous speaker.

Sir, cotton being one of the foremost crops in Andhra Pradesh and particularly in my constituency, it is of prime importance to the farmers. Unfortunately, the prices of cotton have been an object for speculation and exploitation of the farmers by the unscrupulous traders. After the produce is brought to the market, the traders play tricks with the illiterate farmers and exploit them.

The Government agency, that is, the Cotton Corporation of India has to play the role of an agency for price support. It has not been of great help to the farmers in recent years. The delay in opening the purchase centres and refusal to buy the produce brought by the farmers has caused great hardship to the farmers. Though this irregular activity is going on for some years, this year it has become the main cause for the steep fall in the prices of cotton in Warangal District of Andhra Pradesh. The farmers are very distressed. They have to be relieved of their troubles and they have to be protected by the Government of India from the exploitation of the traders, as cotton is the commodity of control and monitoring by the Central Government.

I request the Government of India, through you, to direct the Cotton Corporation of India to go in a big way for the purchase of cotton in Warangal District of Andhra Pradesh and ensure remunerative prices to the poor farmers.

[Translation]

SHRI RAM TAHAL CHAUDHARY (Ranchi) : Mr. Chairman, Sir, I would like to draw your attention towards Vananchal region. Due to no rainfall during 'hithiya' drought like condition have prevailed in the whole of Vananchal region and many districts have been affected on account of this. In Ranchi, Western and Eastern Singhbhum, Dhanbad, Hazaribagh Palamau and Gumla blocks serious conditions have come up. Due to drought people are migrating from there. Even the cattle are not getting fodder and water. I would like to draw your attention to a condition of those blocks which I am