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Title: Need to review tripartite agreements between SAARC countries with a view to protect the interest of indigenous tea plantation sector – Laid.

SHRI VARKALA RADHAKRISHNAN (CHIRAYINKIL) : The tea plantation sector in the country is facing serious crisis. Many plantations in various parts of the country has been closed and many are on the verge of closure. Lakhs of labourers have lost their livelihood and many are on the brink of retrenchment. Near famine conditions exists in many of the labour settlements with many starvation deaths reported from different parts of the country.

The decision of the Central Government to remove the quantitative restrictions on imports even on agricultural produces has paved the way for uncontrolled and large scale import of tea from other countries. The tripartite agreements between the SAARC counties allowing manufactures to import tea at a very low import duty further aggravated the situation. The indigenous produces are finding it extremely difficult to compete with subsidised imported tea resulting in the collapse of the tea sector in the country.

I urge upon the Government to take adequate and immediate steps to review the agreement to save the interest of the thousands of workers and the tea plantation sector as a whole.