

**Title:** Regarding approval of notification for enhancing rate of customs duty moved by Shri Yashwant Sinha.

15.43 hours

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (SHRI YASHWANT SINHA): Sir, I beg to move:

"That in pursuance of sub-section (2) of section 8A of the Customs Tariff Act, 1975, read with sub-section (3) of section 7 of the said Act, this House hereby approves of Notification No. 127/99-Customs dated 1.12.1999 (G.S.R. 793(E) dated 1.12.1999) which seeks to amend the First Schedule to the Customs Tariff Act, 1975 so as to enhance the rate of customs duty applicable to goods falling under sub-heading Nos. 1001.10 and 1001.20 of the said Schedule from "free" to "50%"

MR. SPEAKER: Motion moved:

"That in pursuance of sub-section (2) of section 8A of the Customs Tariff Act, 1975, read with sub-section (3) of section 7 of the said Act, this House hereby approves of Notification No. 127/99-Customs dated 1.12.1999 (G.S.R. 793(E) dated 1.12.1999) which seeks to amend the First Schedule to the Customs Tariff Act, 1975 so as to enhance the rate of customs duty applicable to goods falling under sub-heading Nos. 1001.10 and 1001.20 of the said Schedule from "free" to "50%"

SHRI PRIYA RANJAN DASMUNSI (RAIGANJ): Sir, I beg to move:

That at the beginning of the resolution, the following be added, namely,-

"Considering the adverse impact on the farmers for Zero duty of import of wheat on OGL which had created an uncertainty in the farming community and" (1)

The entire nation is aware that this issue is related precisely to the large-scale wheat import in this country. At a time when the farmers are crying for their prices, are making their views clear before the Government, large scale wheat had been imported on the demand of both the rolling mills as well as a few trading communities. I am quite aware of the conditions imposed under the Exim policy. I was in the Ministry. I know how the Exim policy operates. I also know what is its obligation to WTO.

It is true that once we signed the WTO agreement, certain commodities have to be phase-by-phase brought from the restricted list to OGL. A few commodities have already been brought into the OGL. Wheat is one of the commodities which was in OGL and which is still in OGL. As per the WTO Agreement, it cannot go back to the restricted list. What I would like to say is, it is not a small issue. The item is now in OGL and the Government has no mechanism to control it and thus protect the farmers.

I do not know whether that practice is still alive or not but earlier the practice was, whenever an urgency is felt for import of any item, especially an agricultural commodity, two things will happen. One, a Cabinet Appraisal Note will come from the nodal Ministry. Second, the Appraisal Note is discussed in the Cabinet and the Government decide on the action; either to bring the material into the country or do not encourage its import. As I understand, in case of agricultural commodities, the Ministry of Agriculture every quarterly used to apprise the Government about the prospects of the crop keeping in view the climatic conditions like drought, heavy monsoon, moderate monsoon etc.

Secondly, the nodal agency - in this case, the Food Ministry, has to appraise the position of the buffer stock before the crop is available, expected position of the buffer stock after the crop is available and then, they recommend or they apprise or they alert or they make an alarm to the Government about the need to make further arrangements. Now-a-days, of course, to prevent inflation and to make more wheat available in the country and to keep the price level under check, sometimes the Government do adopt some mechanism.

MR. SPEAKER: Shri Dasmunshi, please be brief.

SHRI PRIYA RANJAN DASMUNSI: Sir, this is not merely an amendment. This is a matter of concern for the country. This is the reason why I took it up. On the other day when the hon. Finance Minister made this declaration, he assured that it would be taken up and discussed and Shri Pramod Mahajan had also assured in the House that it would be discussed. That is why I have moved this amendment and my amendment is not bad.

Sir, why did the Government decide to impose 50 per cent import duty at this stage? I have positive information that the Commerce Ministry has nothing to do with it, except to respond and respect the list of Exim Policy. They can do nothing more than that. But the principal monitoring agency which is the Food Ministry in this case, after consulting the Finance Ministry and Agriculture Ministry, do come to the Government and apprise the Government as to whether farmers will face adverse situation if import of wheat on zero duty under OGL is allowed to continue. But the wheat import had continued right from the day of the dissolution of the 12th Lok Sabha and during the period of election campaign - I am not saying the period of election, but the election process had started earlier - and several complaints from the farming community and others had appeared in the media asking the Government not to encourage it. I am not saying that the Government could have prevented the import. It could not have done that because it is under OGL, but what the Government could have done is, it could have put a restriction, by imposing the import duty in time.

Why did the Government - the question is very important - allow the import of wheat all these days? At the fag end, the Government came out with a statement that the buffer stock position is such that it cannot cope up with the situation. It had stated that there is no room even to keep wheat and it had also stated during the election campaign that the agricultural prospect in the country is very bright.

इतनी पैदाइश हुई, देश में कभी इतना अनाज पैदा नहीं हुआ। वोट के लिए ठीक है, लेकिन इतनी पैदाइश होने के बावजूद भी इतना इम्पोर्ट हुआ।

... (व्यवधान)

MR. SPEAKER: Shri Dasmunshi, please conclude. We had passed such Resolutions earlier even without any discussion in the House.

SHRI PRIYA RANJAN DASMUNSI : Sir, the amendment is very much related to the issue. I need your protection in this matter. The issue was raised not only inside the House, but also outside the House and there are only two speakers on this amendment, including me and Shri Varkala Radhakrishnan.

Sir, why was this amendment brought? I must justify the moving of my amendment. The Government owes an answer to the entire nation as to why the Government imposed the import duty only now. The Government had stated that they had taken this step by considering the adverse impact on the farmers of zero duty import of wheat under OGL which had created uncertainty in the farming community. So, what is wrong in accepting my amendment? Does the Government not agree that it has an adverse impact on the farmers of our country? Have the Government come to the conclusion that there is no adverse impact on the farmers? The buffer stock was good. So, either the Government ignored the appraisal of the Agriculture Ministry in the Cabinet or the Government was kept in the dark about the requirements of the Food Ministry or about the appraisal of the Food Ministry or despite knowing that there is abundant wheat available in the country, the Government kept quiet without imposing the import duty in time. So, if the hon. Minister accepts my amendment and incorporates the whole substance of it, I think, the farmers will be happy that the Government has, at least, accepted their concern. It is not an amendment criticising the Government; it is an amendment making the Government more involved with the concern of the farmers. I think, the hon. Minister would accept my amendment.

">SHRI VARKALA RADHAKRISHNAN (CHIRAYINKIL): Sir, I beg to move:

"> That in the resolution,-

"> for "50%"

"> substitute "100%" (2)

"> The import policy followed by the Government of India is quite detrimental to the interests of the farmers. It can be illustrated by the sufferings of the coconut-growers in Kerala due to an excessive import policy. Copra and coconut-oil have been imported without any restriction. With the result, the home production has been adversely affected and the coconut-growers are put to starvation in my State, Kerala.

"> Kerala is also the major producer of rubber. The import policy has adversely affected the import of rubber also. Twenty-two lakhs of coconut-growers and rubber-growers are put to starvation because of the wrong import policy of the Central Government. It is very strange. I do not understand the logic behind it. As the import duty on caprolactam has been reduced, the Fertilizers and Chemicals industry in Kerala is facing closure. The manure produced in FACT is not being sold; it is being kept there without being sold because you have unnecessarily reduced the import duty on caprolactam. The product of FACT could not be sold in the market. An industrial concern, which was started long before, even during the British period, and having a long history behind it, is now facing closure because of your wrong import policy.

"> Now, you have realised that you have allowed free import of wheat, which has adversely affected the farmers throughout India and now you are compelled to impose 50 per cent duty on import of wheat. I say that it must be increased to one hundred per cent because I am opposed to all kinds of import, which adversely affect the home products. So, I request the hon. Minister to accept my amendment and raise it to 100 per cent. Your import policy, which is detrimental to the interests of the people and detrimental to the interests of the farmers, will turn against you one day or the other and put you in difficulties.

"> With these words, I appeal to the hon. Minister to accept my amendment.

"> उपभोक्ता मामले और सार्वजनिक वितरण मंत्री (श्री शान्ता कुमार) : अध्यक्ष महोदय, सरकार ने जो इम्पोर्ट ड्यूटी लगाई, उसके सम्बन्ध में मुख्य रूप से एक ही बात कही गई कि देर से क्यों लगाई और इस बीच इम्पोर्ट क्यों होता रहा? मैं पिछले तीन-चार महीनों की फीगर्स देना चाहता हूँ। मई १९९९ में केवल ५३ हजार टन, जून १९९९ में ८९ हजार टन, जुलाई में १.६२, अगस्त में ३.०३, सितम्बर में ३.६४ और अक्टूबर में ४.०७ इम्पोर्ट हुआ। इस देश में ज्वोट का उत्पादन ७२० लाख टन होता है और हम १२६ लाख टन प्रक्योर करते हैं। इतनी मात्रा के अनुपात में तीन या चार लाख टन इम्पोर्ट करना बहुत कम है। इसके बावजूद ज्यों ही अगस्त-सितम्बर में लगा कि इम्पोर्ट तीन लाख से साढ़े तीन लाख और साढ़े तीन लाख से चार लाख टन हो गया तभी इसे एकदम देखकर इम्पोर्ट को डिसक्रेज करने की बात की गई। यह कहना कि इसमें विलम्ब हुआ, बिल्कुल गलत है। इसमें बिल्कुल भी विलम्ब नहीं हुआ।

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"> श्री प्रियरंजन दासमुंशी (रायगंज) : आपने अभी कहा कि अगस्त में अनुभव हुआ।

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"> Why did you not do it in August? Sir, he is admitting that during August he failed and it was wrong. Why did he not impose duty at that time? ... (Interruptions)

"> श्री शान्ता कुमार : अध्यक्ष जी, अगस्त में जो तीन लाख टन इम्पोर्ट हुआ, उसकी रिपोर्ट अगस्त के अंत में सरकार के पास पहुंची। सितम्बर में जो हुआ, उसकी रिपोर्ट भी सितम्बर के अंत में पहुंची।

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"> आप इस बात का अंदाजा लगाइये, आज हम कह रहे हैं कि अगस्त में इतना इम्पोर्ट हुआ, लेकिन उस इम्पोर्ट की रिपोर्ट सरकार के पास एक महीने के बाद पहुंचती है और उसके तुरंत बाद यह कार्यक्रम बनाया गया

... (व्यवधान)

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">SHRI PRIYA RANJAN DASMUNSI: Sir, I need your protection. The Minister cannot mislead in this manner. He has admitted that they had failed in August and September. Why did they not impose the duty at that time?

">MR. SPEAKER: Shri Dasmunsi, let the Minister complete first.

"> श्री शांता कुमार: अध्यक्ष महोदय, जिस देश का उत्पादन २० लाख टन है और यह इम्पोर्ट अब नहीं हो रहा है। यह पुराने समय से हो रहा है। यह अभी शुरू नहीं हुआ है, आपके समय से इम्पोर्ट हो रहा है।

">... (व्यवधान)

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"> श्री प्रियरंजन दासमुंशी : यदि आप इस पर पूरी डिबेट करेंगे तो हम भी बता सकते हैं कि कैसे इम्पोर्ट होता था।

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"> श्री शांता कुमार: हमने उस इम्पोर्ट के कारण जो देश का नुकसान होने वाला था, उसे भांपकर यह निर्णय लिया। मैं एक तथ्य सदन के ध्यान में लाना चाहता हूँ कि हमारे पास ८० लाख टन अतिरिक्त एक अक्टूबर को था और एक अप्रैल को यह स्थिति आने वाली थी कि हमारे पास १०६ लाख टन बफर स्टेट के अलावा अधिक होता। जो बफर स्टेट का नॉर्म है, एक अप्रैल को वह ४० लाख टन है। लेकिन इस हिसाब से अगर इस गेहूँ को निकालने की हम कोशिश नहीं करते तो एक अप्रैल, २००० को हमारे पास १०६ लाख टन गेहूँ होता। जिसके दो विकल्प होते - एक यह होता कि हम प्रोक्वोरमेंट नहीं करते, क्योंकि हमारे भंडार भरे होते। इसमें हमारा सात हजार करोड़ रुपया लगा हुआ था। यदि हम इम्पोर्ट नहीं करते तो किसानों की कमर टूटती, यदि इम्पोर्ट करते तो हमारी कमर टूटती। इसलिए इससे बढ़िया निर्णय और कोई नहीं हो सकता है। जो निर्णय सरकार ने किया है, वह ठीक समय पर ठीक निर्णय किया है। इसके द्वारा इम्पोर्ट ड्यूटी लगाने के कारण इम्पोर्ट डिसकरेंज हुआ है, इम्पोर्ट बंद हुआ है, इसके कारण हमारा फॉरेन एक्सचेंज बचा। हमारे भंडार खाली होंगे एक अप्रैल को, जो प्रोक्वोरमेंट होनी है, उसकी हमारी तैयारी हो जायेगी। अध्यक्ष जी, इस अतिरिक्त गेहूँ को रखने का प्रतिदिन हमारा खर्चा चार करोड़ रुपये है। जिस दिन हमने यह फैसला किया तो मुझे लगा कि विपक्ष की ओर से हमें बधाई दी जायेगी, विपक्ष हमारा धन्यवाद करेगा। इससे बढ़िया निर्णय आज की स्थिति में और कोई नहीं हो सकता था। लेकिन हर बात के लिए, विरोध के लिए विरोध करना विपक्ष की आदत हो गई है। इसलिए आप हमारा विरोध कर रहे हैं। इससे बढ़िया निर्णय और कोई नहीं हो सकता। इससे किसान का हित हुआ है, इससे फूड कॉरपोरेशन ऑफ इंडिया का हित हुआ है, इससे हमारे देश का हित हुआ है, कंजूमर का हित हुआ है। व्हीट के बारे में इससे बढ़िया निर्णय और कोई नहीं हो सकता था, यही मैं निवेदन करना चाहता हूँ।

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"> श्री प्रियरंजन दासमुंशी : अगर आपको किसानों का इतना ही ध्यान है, तो इस अमेंडमेंट से आपको कोई इनकार नहीं होगा, क्योंकि खुद आपने किसानों के हित को देखते हुए यह किया है और हमने भी इसलिए ही किया है, किसानों के हित को देखकर ही हम यह कर रहे हैं। आप इस मान लीजिए, आपको इसे मानने में क्या दिक्कत है।

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">MR. SPEAKER: Shri Priya Ranjan Dasmunsi, are you withdrawing your amendment?

">SHRI PRIYA RANJAN DASMUNSI: No, Sir, I am not withdrawing.

">MR. SPEAKER: The question is:

"> That at the beginning of the resolution, the following be added,--

"> "Considering the adverse impact on the farmers for Zero duty of import of wheat on OGL which had created an uncertainty in the farming community and" (1)

"> The motion was negatived.

"> श्री प्रियरंजन दासमुंशी : वित्त मंत्री जी ने आइज बोला है।

... (व्यवधान)

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">MR. SPEAKER: Shri Varkala Radhakrishnan, are you withdrawing your amendment?

">SHRI VARKALA RADHAKRISHNAN : No, I am not withdrawing, Sir.

">MR. SPEAKER: The question is:

"> "That in the resolution,--

"> for "50%"

"> substitute "100%" (2)

"> The motion was negatived.

">MR. SPEAKER: The question is:

"> "In pursuance of sub-section (2) of section 8A of the Customs Tariff Act, 1975, read with sub-section (3) of section 7 of the said Act, this House hereby approves of Notification No.127/99-Customs dated 1.12.1999 (G.S.R. 793(E) dated 1.12.1999) which seeks to amend the first Schedule to the Customs Tariff Act, 1975 so as to enhance the rate of customs duty applicable to goods falling under sub-heading Nos. 1001.10 and 1001.20 of the said Schedule from "free" to "50%"."

"> The motion was adopted.

">SHRI PRIYA RANJAN DASMUNSI : Sir, since the Government has betrayed the interests of the farmers in a clandestine manner, and since they did not take action in time, we are walking out in protest of that.

">15.59 hrs

"> (At this stage, Shri Priya Ranjan Dasmunsi and some other

"> hon. Members left the House.)

"> डॉ. रघुवंश प्रसाद सिंह (बैशाली) : हम भी इसके विरोध में वाक-आउट कर रहे हैं।

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"> १५.५९ बजे

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"> (तत्पश्चात् श्री रघुवंश प्रसाद सिंह तथा कुछ अन्य माननीय सदस्यों ने सदन से बहिर्गमन किया।)

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