

nt>

Title: Demand to protect the interest of tea workers and coffee growers in the country.

SHRI KODIKUNNIL SURESH (ADOOR): Mr. Speaker, Sir, the tea industry, especially in South India, is facing serious crisis for more than a year now. The selling price of South Indian tea, which was Rs.98 per Kg, has come down to Rs.43 per Kg.

Sir, the cost of producing one kilogram of tea is Rs.60 plus. Many tea estates are on the verge of closure. It is likely to jeopardise the interest of 2.5 lakh labourers who are permanently employed in this part of the country. Of the 2.5 lakh tea workers, 90 per cent are *dalit* and woman workers. The entire tea estate in South India should be protected.

Sir, day before yesterday, there was a strike. All the tea workers participated in the strike. So, the situation is very serious in South India. The coffee and rubber growers are also facing serious crisis due to fall in prices. It is a very important issue. The Government should protect the tea workers and coffee growers.