

**Title:** Regarding problems being faced by Tea Industry in India particularly in Assam, West Bengal and Tamil Nadu.

SHRI PRIYA RANJAN DASMUNSI (RAIGANJ): Sir, first of all, I would like to draw your kind attention to the fact that you evolved a very good strategy and a policy that matters of public importance raised by the Opposition should be adequately responded to by the Treasury Benches. If that was not possible, at least, these could be heard and then reacted to. To facilitate that process today, I have purposely chosen a subject. The answer to the issue could be dealt with by a Minister when the date for an answer comes.

I was assured by the Minister of Parliamentary Affairs that the concerned Minister would be available to reply to the matter. You also know it. The issue I am going to raise now is of a grave nature. But the Minister is not present. If this kind of assurance and treatment is offered to the Opposition, I do not know how to function.

MR. SPEAKER: The Minister of State is here.

SHRI PRIYA RANJAN DASMUNSI: No, Sir. ...*(Interruptions)*

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (DR. RAMAN SINGH): I will reply.

MR. SPEAKER: So, you can come to the subject directly.

**12.34 hrs.**

SHRI PRIYA RANJAN DASMUNSI (RAIGANJ): Sir, India achieved its distinction in the external trade market through tea during the last several years, if not centuries. In 1986-87, a long-term tea policy was evolved by the Government of India which also brought laurels and distinction from Germany, United Kingdom and even the United States of America where the tea-drinking habits were at a low stage.

For the last one-and-a-half years, the entire tea industry and the tea growers in India, who achieved this distinction, are facing an extreme crisis. I have raised this issue in the Parliament many times. The entire tea industry in the States of Assam, Tripura, West Bengal, Kerala, and a part of Tamil Nadu, especially in Coonoor, is in a shambles. The orthodox tea and the CTC tea are being sold at a throw-away price. Because of the bought leaf tea, a number of employment opportunities have been generated with the expansion of the tea cultivation programmes. The youngsters form a group and grow tea. They call it bought leaf and go to a factory for packaging. The shocking feature is that third-rate Sri Lankan tea and Kenyan tea, which are dumped in India, are being packed with Indian labels. It is being sold in the international market and is destroying India's image.

The Assam logo Tea and Darjeeling logo Tea, which was introduced by Indiraji once and launched by Rajivji, has no value now. The first class and second class Darjeeling Tea which normally comes in monsoon is now fetching the lowest price in the world. Therefore, the situation is gloomy.

The Assam tea growers, the trade unions there, Bengal tea growers and trade unions there came to Delhi and met me five-six times saying, let the Government seriously interact the issue and bring out a Tea Policy. The country's tea policy is such that the way the production is now being generated – I can tell you because I handled this Ministry for five years – by the year 2015 in the Indian market even Indian people will not find to drink tea. That is the position now. Year 2010 was the peak position which we drew in the Plan of 1986-87. It is now giving no returns because the international market has changed and the Government of India is quietly sitting on this issue.

Therefore, I demand, let the Government come out with a comprehensive Tea Policy ensuring this very prestigious market of India, both for domestic consumption as well as for exports. If it is not done seriously, a serious law and order situation will be created in Assam, in parts of West Bengal...*(Interruptions)*

Why I say so because tea is the backbone of Assam's economy. Goa's backbone is tea, in Tamil Nadu, entire Coonoor Valley's backbone is tea. I have written so many letters but they have not given a scant respect to this problem.

I conclude by saying that the Minister may kindly reply to this. Only last week when the international tea festival in various parts took place, it was held in Hamburg in Germany too, which used to buy the highest stake of Indian tea. They have now decided not to take this tea because the quality has changed. It is not because of us but because of the imported spurious tea which is being packed in different fashion and the label is changed.

The logo of Darjeeling Tea is at stake, the logo of Assam Tea is at stake and the entire tea industry is at stake. Therefore, I demand that the Government should make a statement, declare and come out with a comprehensive long-term tea policy of India.

MR. SPEAKER: Would the hon. Minister like to respond to this?

SHRI SUDIP BANDYOPADHYAY (CALCUTTA NORTH WEST): Sir, I, being a member of the Tea Board of India, fully endorse the views expressed by Shri Dasmunsi. The tea situation is such in India that the demand of Indian tea is gradually coming down in the whole world market. Russia is the best market of Indian Tea, and that too now is being reduced very seriously. We should be really very cautious and a full discussion is urgently necessary because tea brings foreign money for our country. If this industry gets affected then the economy of the country will be affected. Therefore, this matter needs to be taken up seriously without any delay...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI VARKALA RADHAKRISHNAN (CHIRAYINKIL): Sir, Kerala also produces tea and it is one of the worst affected States...*(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER: Please take your seat.

SHRI VARKALA RADHAKRISHNAN : Sir, we produce a good percentage of tea.

MR. SPEAKER: I respect your age, please sit down.

...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI E.M. SUDARSANA NATCHIAPPAN (SIVAGANGA): Sir, the Government has to reply to this...*(Interruptions)*

वाणिज्य और उद्योग मंत्रालय में राज्य मंत्री (डॉ. रमण सिंह) : अध्यक्ष महोदय, माननीय सदस्यों ने डोमैस्टिक और एक्सपोर्ट मार्किट में चाय उत्पादकों की समस्याओं के बारे में चिन्ता व्यक्त की है। मैं उसकी जानकारी सम्माननीय सदस्यों को देना चाहता हूँ। हमने 2002-03 के बजट में चाय के आयात पर लगने वाले 70 परसेंट सीमा शुल्क को बढ़ा कर 100 प्रतिशत कर दिया है। डोमैस्टिक मार्किट को सेव करने के लिए पहला उपाय यह किया गया और दूसरा 2002-03 के बजट में उत्पादन शुल्क दो रुपए प्रति किलोग्राम से कम करके एक रुपए प्रति किलोग्राम किया गया। 2001-02 के बजट में आयकर अधिनियम की धारा 33 (क) और (ख) के तहत छूट की राशि 20 प्रतिशत से बढ़ा कर 40 प्रतिशत की गई। टी बोर्ड ने इस दिशा में कदम उठाए। उसने कारखाना उन्नयन योजना की शुरुआत की जो देश में अच्छी गुणवत्ता की पारम्परिक और अपरिष्कृत सीटीसी चाय के उत्पादन को बढ़ावा देगी।

सरकार का इसमें प्रयास है कि हैंडलिंग पैकेजिंग और परिवहन भाग को पूरा करने के लिये , निर्यातकों को वित्तीय प्रोत्साहन देने के लिये एक योजना की शुरुआत की जा रही है। इसके अलावा बहुत सारे उपाय हैं जो डिटेल्ड डिस्कशन में आयेगा। मैंने यह प्रायमरी जानकारी दी है। (व्यवधान)

SHRI PRIYA RANJAN DASMUNSI : The long-term Tea Policy has been totally changed. ...*(Interruptions)*

डा. रमण सिंह : मार्किट में जो डैमेज हो रहा है पॉलिसी में वे सारी चीजें आयेंगी। यह बहुत महत्वपूर्ण विषय है। मैं आपकी और सारे सदन की चिन्ता समझता हूँ। सरकार ने तात्कालिक कदम उठाये हैं। मैंने उसके बारे में सारी जानकारी दी है। सरकार में क्षमता है कि हिन्दुस्तान के चाय उत्पादकों की समस्याओं का निराकरण हो। उसके लिये आने वाले समय में पालिसी पर विचार होगा।

MR. SPEAKER: Very good.

...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI PRIYA RANJAN DASMUNSI : Sir, I asked for the information whether the Minister will announce the Tea Policy of India or not. Syria has announced their Tea Policy and Sri Lanka has announced their Tea Policy. India's Tea Policy is not known. ...*(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER: The Minister says that you can raise a detailed discussion on this issue and he will reply to that.

Now, Shrimati Jayaben B. Thakkar.

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