

Title: Crisis faced by the tea industry and problems faced by Tea Plantation Workers.

SHRI P. KARUNAKARAN(KASARGOD) : Sir, I would like to invite the attention of the Government to the crisis prevailing in the tea industry in general and to the small tea-growers and workers in different States. In my own State Kerala, there are about 20,000 workers unemployed for the last three years. Forty-nine workers including women workers committed suicide. About eight tea estates are closed so far. In Tamil Nadu, in Nilgiri District, the situation is equally difficult. About 80,000 small tea-growers and their family members totalling to about four lakh are facing the same difficulty. Support price for tea has gone down to Rs.5 to Rs.6 instead of Rs.15 and Rs.16. As a result of that, the cost of production has gone up. So, they are not able to meet their minimum needs.

MR. SPEAKER: We had a full discussion on it.

SHRI P. KARUNAKARAN : In the last six years tea growers are struggling for a minimum price. With the intervention of the Government, the Indian Bankers' Association has prepared a special tea package but many of the banks have not implemented the same. This is also the case of West Bengal. Many of the tea estates are in the same state. ...(*Interruptions*)

MR. SPEAKER: We had a full discussion on this, Shri Karunakaran

SHRI P. KARUNAKARAN : Sir, I would like to request the Government to at least give the support price of Rs.15 and at the same time, time for repayment of the loan that has been taken by the small tea growers may be extended. Tea Board has to come to the field and it should take some action. Proxy bidding and the divisibility rule are the main reasons for lowering the prices of tea and the same has to be removed.