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Title: Issue regarding hardships and misery faced by rubber cultivators due to decline in prices of rubber.

SHRI KODIKUNNIL SURESH (MAVELIKKARA): Madam Speaker, I would like to invite the kind attention of this august House and the Government of India on the sad plight and deplorable condition of rubber cultivators of India, especially of Kerala.

The price of rubber has come down drastically and it is Rs. 117 on 22<sup>nd</sup> November, 2014. It was around Rs. 152 during the last year in the same period. It is at an all time low in the last seven years. This has forced the rubber cultivators to indescribable hardships and misery.

HON. SPEAKER: You have given notice on bird flu. How can you change the subject?

SHRI KODIKUNNIL SURESH : Madam, now I am raising another issue pertaining to rubber farmers.

HON. SPEAKER: All right. You may speak now. But don't do like this in future.

SHRI KODIKUNNIL SURESH: Okay Madam.

The international rubber prices are falling and this has resulted in a sharp rise in imports by Indian rubber industries such as the tyre industry. The supply and demand gap assessed by the Rubber Board is around 60,000 metric tonnes of rubber only for the year 2014-15, whereas so far 3.25 lakh metric tonnes of natural rubber has been imported by the industry. This has put the domestic production of rubber in a jeopardy. If the situation of price drop persists, then the farmers' suicide may happen in the plantation sector, especially among marginal farmers.

There are about 11 lakh small and marginal rubber cultivators in Kerala who require urgent attention from the Government of India. In order to solve the problem of rubber cultivators, rubber industry may be included under the Make in India Scheme.

The import duty of sheet rubber and rubber products is only 8 per cent at present. It has to be increased to 40 per cent. The import duty of block rubber may be increased by 40 per cent since the tyre industry imports block rubber on a large scale. Safeguard duty is essential for retaining the cost of production of natural rubber.

So, I request the Government to consider the case on war footing and help the rubber cultivators, especially small and marginal farmers.

HON. SPEAKER: Shri M.B. Rajesh is permitted to associate with the issue raised by Shri Kodikunnil Suresh.