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Title: Need to address the problems being faced by the rubber growers in Kerala.

SHRI ANTO ANTONY (PATHANAMTHITTA): Madam, I request the Government to take immediate steps to redress the grievances of rubber growers in the country. They are under acute financial crisis due to the declining prices of natural rubber.

Madam, 90 per cent of rubber production and 90 per cent of the rubber farmers are from Kerala. In my constituency, 90 per cent of the farmers are rubber farmers and the rubber growing area is nearly one lakh hectare.

Rubber prices have fallen from Rs.240 to Rs.120 now-a-days. After the commission taken by the traders, the farmer gets only Rs.100 per kilogram. The cost of production of rubber is Rs.150 per kilogram.

The alarming situation that now prevails in the market is that the traders withdraw from buying natural rubber from the market. Really speaking, 12 lakh rubber farmers are now starving. The Government has already collected more than Rs.800 crore from the rubber farmers as cess. The Government is now keeping that money in the Price Stabilization Fund.

If the Government is ready to use this money to buy the excess rubber from the market, 12 lakh poor farmers will be saved. Already 3.5 lakh metric tonnes of rubber is imported to our country and big players have purposefully destroyed the price of natural rubber.

Madam, I urge the Government to intervene in this issue and take necessary steps to make sure that the rubber farmers get good prices.

HON. SPEAKER: Adv. Joice George, Shri Jitendra Chaudhury, Shrimati P.K. Shreemathi Teacher, Shri P. Karunakaran, Shri M.B. Rajesh, Shri Jose K. Mani, Shri Mullappally Ramachandran and Shri N.K. Premachandran are allowed to associate with the matter raised by Shri Anto Antony.

SHRI K.C. VENUGOPAL (ALAPPUZHA): There was an assurance from the Government that they will convene a meeting. ...(*Interruptions*)

HON. SPEAKER: You have already raised this issue. You only associate with the issue.

...(*Interruptions*)

SHRI K.C. VENUGOPAL: So far no meeting has been convened. ...(*Interruptions*)

SHRI N.K. PREMACHANDRAN (KOLLAM): Madam, the situation in Kerala is very serious. ...(*Interruptions*) Just ask the Minister to hold a meeting. ...(*Interruptions*)

SHRI K.C. VENUGOPAL: Last time when I raised this issue in 'Zero Hour', he has given me an assurance. ...(*Interruptions*) Please let the Government respond on it. ...(*Interruptions*) There was an assurance from the Government that a meeting of the MPs will be convened. ...(*Interruptions*)

HON. SPEAKER: Please sit down.

...(*Interruptions*)

SHRI N.K. PREMACHANDRAN: Madam, please ask the Minister to hold a meeting. ...(*Interruptions*) Direction from the hon. Chair is not being respected by the Government...(*Interruptions*) Direction from the Chair not being respected is very unfortunate. Last time when we raised the issue, hon. Speaker had directed the Government to convene a meeting of the MPs. But so far it has not been convened. Please give a direction. ...(*Interruptions*)

HON. SPEAKER: Prof. K.V. Thomas.