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Title: Regarding hardships faced by rubber cultivators of Kerala.

SHRI ANTO ANTONY (PATHANAMTHITTA): Madam Speaker, I thank you for giving me this opportunity. I would like to take this opportunity to make a submission regarding a very important problem faced by the rubber growers in Kerala.

As you know, rubber cultivation is the backbone of Kerala's economy. Kerala accounts for 78 per cent of the area under rubber cultivation and 90 per cent of the total rubber produced in India. There are 40 lakh rubber growers in the State, and an overwhelming majority of them are small and marginal farmers. Over 90 per cent of the households in my Parliamentary Constituency depend on rubber sector for their daily bread. Therefore, any adverse impact on the rubber sector will have a corresponding shock on Kerala's economy and livelihood of its people.

The present problem of rubber growers emanates from large scale import of natural rubber and subsequent fall in price in the domestic market. The quantity of rubber import has been increasing for the last several years. Earlier, the average import of natural rubber per annum was 2 lakh tonnes. However, 6.5 lakh tonnes of rubber has been imported in the last 18 months alone. Over 42 per cent of the rubber manufactured in the country last year was the imported rubber. This means nearly half of the rubber produced in the country became surplus due to the negligence of the rubber manufacturers.

India produces sufficient quantity of natural rubber. But rubber manufacturers always try to import natural rubber in bulk quantity for dipping the price in the domestic market. Massive influx of foreign rubber creates an artificial surplus of natural rubber in the domestic market. Therefore, the rubber manufacturers are not demanding rubber produced in the country.

In addition to rubber sheets, the manufacturers are importing other forms of rubber such as block rubber. Cheap rate is their major attraction. For instance, price of block rubber in international market is equal to the amount of Rs. 75 per kg. Massive influx of block rubber also causes further decline in the price of sheet rubber produced in the country. Moreover, the import of tyre, especially the used tyre also adversely affects the prospects of rubber growers in the country.

According to the data given by the Rubber Board, price of natural rubber was Rs. 243 per kg. in 2011. At present, the rate is at Rs. 106 per kg. This is the lowest rate in history. The last two years have been the worst period for rubber growers in the country as it marked a slash of Rs. 57 per kg. Even though the official figure shows a price of Rs. 106 per kg., the trade is not carried out at this rate. Therefore, middlemen procure rubber at rates below Rs. 100 per kg. It should be noted that the production cost of one kilogram of natural rubber is Rs. 150. As a result, the price of natural rubber has fallen below the cost of production. On the contrary, the fall in price of natural rubber does not mark corresponding decline in price of finished products of rubber.

HON. SPEAKER: Please conclude. You cannot make a lengthy speech.

...(Interruptions)

SHRI ANTO ANTONY: Madam, this is a very important issue. We raised this issue many times in this House, and we got many assurances from the Government. You may remember that during the Budget Session, we sought the protection of the Speaker and you were kind enough to intervene and we got an assurance, but nothing has been done so far in this regard. ...(Interruptions)

HON. SPEAKER: Please conclude now.

...(Interruptions)

SHRI ANTO ANTONY: Madam, the Rubber Board is totally paralyzed. The posts of Chairman, Secretary and Rubber Production Commissioner are still vacant. ...(Interruptions) So, we demand a ban on import of natural rubber. That is our request and we seek your protection in this matter. ...(Interruptions)

HON. SPEAKER: You can all associate with him.

...(Interruptions)

HON. SPEAKER:

S/Shri P.K. Biju,

P. Karunakaran,

Jose K. Mani,

N.K. Premachandran,

Kodikunnil Suresh,

Mullapally Ramachandran,

M.K. Raghavan,

D.K. Suresh,

R. Dhruvanarayana,

Rajeev Satav,

Adv. Joice George, and

Dr. Kirit P. Solanki are permitted to associate with the issue raised by Shri Anto Antony.

...(Interruptions)

HON. SPEAKER: Please take your seats.

...(Interruptions)

माननीय अध्यक्ष : खड़गे जी, ऐसे डेबेटिंग नहीं होता।

â€¦(व्यवधान)

गृह मंत्री (श्री राजनाथ सिंह) : अध्यक्ष महोदया, यदि वे चाहते हैं कि मैं इस संबंध में रिस्पोंड करूं तो मैं यही कहना चाहता हूं कि उन्होंने इस अहम सवाल को खड़ा किया है। मैं इस संबंध में संबंधित मंत्री जी से बात करूंगा और उनकी इस बात को यहां पहुंचाऊंगा ताकि उसका समाधान निकालें।...(व्यवधान)