Whenever we ask time to speak, we are told that our name is at the tail end. We have been in queue since yesterday.

17.26 hrs.

DISCUSSION RE : CRASH IN PRICES OF AGRICULTURAL COMMODITIES CONTD.

[*English*]

SHRI DIGVIJAYA SINGH (Rajgarh) : Sir, today we are seeing a strange phenomenon operating in the markets of this country where the agricultural produce prices are going down but the retail and whole-scale prices are going up. It is a strange phenomenon but it has been an age old practice in this country that whenever the agricultural produce comes in the market the prices fall and when the farmer has sold his produce the prices rise.

Looking into this background we are grateful to the late Prime Minister, Shrimati Indira Gandhi when she created the Agricultural Prices Commission in 1966 and later on when it was felt that the agricultural costs and prices should be looked into our Prime Minister, Shri Rajiv Gandhi, has given it a thought and converted it in Agricultural Costs and Prices Commission.

The subject under discussion is quite different. As far as the prices of agricultural produce are concerned I have got a lot to say but I will confine my speech to the actual implementation of the agricultural prices fixed by the Commission. It is unfortunate that till now although we are fixing minimum support price of a number of agricultural produce yet we have not been able to develop an effective procurement agency throughout the country which can look after and implement the prices which are declared by the APC. The agricultural commodities are being sold below the minimum support price whether it is rice, soyabean or jowar in North India or coconut and other things in South India This requires very close looking into by the Agriculture Ministry. We owe a responsibility to the farmers and we have to ensure that whatever minimum support price has been fixed by the government the farmers should get that price. It is the responsibility of both the Central and State governments.

Sir, I also feel that procurement is being confined to bigger 'mandis' where the farmers are bringing their produce. In tribal areas most of the agricultural produce is sold in weekly markets where the procurement agencies are not functioning and, therefore, the persons who are benefitting from the minimum support price are not the farmers. It is the middlemen, whom we call 'kenchias', who are going to the weekly markets and purchase paddy from the farmers at a lower price. Therefore, I would request the hon. Minister to ensure that in the weekly markets the prices of agricultural commodities are monitored so that the actual farmer gets the benefit of the minimum price operation.

Sir, at the same time the actual implementation takes a very long time. Provision of funds, provision of gunny bags-weighing machines, all these things take a very long time. Although the State Government takes a decision to start procurement the basic facilities are not available at the market place and because of non-availability of these facilities the prices of the agricultural commodities fall and the Government is not able to procure agricultural commodities effectively. Therefore, to ensure proper price to the farmers the Government has to take advance action, at least two months ahead so that the funds are available for the provision of gunny bags, weighing machines, etc. at the market places to facilities procurement. A very detailed micro-planning has to be done at the lower level so that the farmers get remunerative price.

Sir, it has been the experience—I was the Agriculture Minister in the State of Madhya Pradesh for some time-that State like Madhya Pradesh is already short of funds for the developmental activities and the resource needed for procurement drive has to be provided by the Government of India. This would help the State Government to come into this kind of operation

[Shri Digvijaya Singh]

with a larger magnitude. Sir, in my State, in this kharif season, paddy, soyabean, maize, jowar, etc. are being sold at prices lower than what has been recommended by the Agricultural Prices Commission. That is why I suggest that in the case of these commodities, a very close monitoring has to be done at the State level, at the weekly market level and at the mandi level so that the farmers get the remunerative price for their goods. The Government of India should come forward to give financial assistance and also give ways and means advance so that the State Government can go in for an effective immediate support price operation. At the same time it has been covered that the Government of India has declared the price for coarse grains. But it is not procuring coarse grains at its level and because of this the State Government has to bear a large financial burden and a large amount has to be given by way of support price for the coarse grains like maize, jowar, etc. I would therefore request the Government in include these coarse grains with wheat and rise so that minimum support price could be given and the procureement could be done by the Government of India and these coarse grains could be sold at the subsidised rate through public distribution system.

Sir, in the case of oil seeds and pulses in which the country has definite economic interests, they are included in the 20-point programme also-it has been observed that minimum support price is not given to them Madhya Pradesh is the biggest producer of soyabean in the country and 80% of the total soyabean production in the country was in my State. But unfortunately soyabean is being sold in the State at Rs. 220 per quintal whereas the fixed rate is Rs. 275 per quintal. I would point out that it is very much against the interests of the farmers in the State. Although the State Government is making very great effort to go in for a minimum support price operation, it is finding it difficult because there are financial constraints. The Government of India should come forward and help the State Government. If the farmers get incentive and if they get remunerative price for their produce, there is no doubt that more and more areas would be brought in for the cultivation of oil-seeds, pulses, etc. I would therefore request the hon. Minister kindly to help the State Government by giving extra funds for immediate support price operation.

Sir, cotton is being procured by the Cotton Corporation of India. But they are in league with the big traders and this has been my conservation and wherever they are large arrivals of cotton, the Cotton Corporation of India goes out of the market on some pretext or other because of which the prices suddenly fall.

The farmers have perforce to sell their produce at very unremunerative prices. We have, therefore, to look into this. In Madhya Pradesh, cotton is one of the major crop particularly in Khandwa, Khargon, Dhar and Jhagwa, which have a large tribal population. They have to sell the cotton at weekly markets. The Cotton Corporation of India, through any agency, whether Marketing Federation or any other agency must procure cotton or help Cotton Corporation of India to procure cotton in the weekly markets, where the tribals sell their produce.

The sugarcane prices have not been announced as yet. These should be announced immediately because the crushing season has already started. I would request the hon. Minister, who himself is a farmer to come with a pragmatic approach to ensure that the farmers of Punjab, Haryana Madhya Pradesh and the South get proper prices as promised, otherwise the farmers may lose their confidence in the minimum support price that we declare.

SHRI N. TOMBI SINGH (Inner Manipur) : Mr. Deputy-Speaker, Sir, it is a well known fact that our economy today is facing a very serious situation of incongruity, but this does not mean that we have not made strides in our general economy. We have made progress in various sphere including the sphere of agriculture, but the serious fact which has contributed to the incongruity is that while in one sector there are complaints against rise in prices, just in the other sector, there are complaints

of crash and decreage in prices of agricultural produce. When the farmer himself goes to purchase the finished products of his own produce he has to pay very high prices which he cannot afford.

The point at issue is how to solve this basic incongruity in our economy which is striving to rise to its great heights.

I do not want to cover the grounds which my hon. friends have already covered. Observations have been made about cotton, coconut, jute etc. I would, therefore, only cover new ground which have not been covered.

In my State of Manipur, maize is grown in abundance. But this is only a fancy food for the common people; it is not their staple food. The maize has to be procurred and sold outside. The procurement of maize is a very difficult process, particularly the storing aspect of it. Naturally, the middle men exploit the farmers and its result has been that the farmers have stopped to grow maize in most cases.

Sir, you know the special topography of Manipur. It is a land-locked area: There are no industries, no railways. Wherever agricultural crops are possible, there should, therefore, be sufficient efforts to utilize them and to give remunerative prices to the farmers, particularly in respect of maize in Manipur. I know in the neighbouring areas of Nagaland and Meghalaya, similar problems must be there, but I have no direct knowledge about that. But as far as my State is concerned, we can produce abundant quantity of maize. As I said, our people do not consume maize as a staple food. This has, therefore, to be exported outside. Procurement must be helped by the Government.

Only the other day, I raised the question. In reply to an unstarred question, the Minister has said that the FCI and other agencies of Ministry of Agriculture cannot procure coarse grains like maize etc. Sir, I would like to suggest that a review may be made in regard to the policy of procurement, particularly in regard to crops like maize. For paddy, since our people consume paddy and also because the quality of our paddy is good, our people and consumers collect paddy inspite of the rising prices. Naturally, Government need not to go to their rescue. I would like to mention about one other crop, i.e. sunflower. We can grow sunflower and there is wild growth of this plant. Here also, no measures are taken for exploitation of this crop for useful ends. Till very recently, there has been a proposal to start a glucose factory in Manipur but I do not know where it is stuck up. If some such factories come up, most growers will have remunerative prices. One ICAR unit is functioning there and they are making surveys there. Maize is such a crop where the complicated process of agriculture is not needed. It grows very easily without much effort, without much fertilizers and so on, because the natural atmosphere suits it. So, I would suggest that through ICAR and also through the Industries Ministry, through your own initiative, the maize crop of our area should get remuneratives prices. With these few words, I would like to once again request that these things should receive your special attention.

[*Translation*]

SHRI BALWANT SINGH RAMOOWALIA (Sangrur) : Mr. Chirman, Sir, today a discussion is going on in this House on decrease in the prices of agricultural produce. It appears from the speeches of the hon. Members, who spoke on the subject as if they are not discussing the fall in prices of agricultural produce, but are shedding tears. Why is it so ? What are the reasons for such a gloomy picture ? Government should think over it. I come from Punjab. It is a matter of regret that a reference is made about the prosperous condition of Punjab, about the prosperity of the Punjabi farmers in the country. I am very much pained to point out to this House that the condition of Punjabi farmers is as miserable and deplorable as the condition of farmers in other parts of the country. The prices of articles manufactured from agriculture produce are increasing whereas the prices of agricultural produce are going down. Why is it so ? The general consumer is being fleeced Similarly, the farmer is being exploited. I

[Shri Balwant Singh Ramoowalia]

have come to the conclusion that certain people in this Government, I cannot say all, in connivance with the private traders are doing so in order to make State Trading a failure. It is a serious conspiracy. The people who are toiling for the progress and development of the country are being exploited so as to provide undue benefit to the capitalists of the country.

Take for instance the case of Food Corporation of India. It is sad that Shri Buta Singh has not visited Punjab even once. For as many as 20 days nobody went there...(*Interruptions*) Will kill him, he is safe. It is we who are the target. I was trying to draw your attention to the Paddy situation in Punjab. The paddy price was not announced this year in the first instance. Just listen to what the Government did. An announcement was made that the farmers should not sell the paddy till 1st October and instead store it in their houses Paddy was harvested on the 7th September but the farmer is being exhorted not to sell it. After all, where will the farmer store it ? Moreover, the paddy price was also not announced. I believe that the price of rice has not yet been announced and that is why the rice hullers are not purchasing it. The farmers kept waiting for 25 to 30 days in the *Mandis* but not even a single buyer come forward to buy it. The people are now fed up. The Food Corporation of India should be rechristened as Fed-up Corporation of India. It is a hopeless name. The Inspector takes Rs. 1.50 per bag to announce the price. The hon. Minister is well aware of it but no action is being taken against them. Suppose a farmer has 100 bags of paddy to sell, the Inspector demands Rs. 1.50 to quote the right price. The farmer does not have any other alternative but to bribe the Inspector because he knows that otherwise he shall have to wait and suffer. The Inspector has been empowered with unfettered discretion. The farmer is being openly exploited... (*Interruptions*) I will not say that the money goes to the Congress funds but it must be flowing to a person who is part of the Government machinery. This is the plight of farmers of Kerala, Punjab and Andhra Pradesh. It is the same everywhere.

I would suggest that Government should call a meeting of the leaders of the Opposition at the beginning of the year and discuss the problems of farmers and there itself the course of action should be decided and implemented accordingly. If that is not possible, the States should be empowered to take suitable steps to protect the interests of the farmers. But the Government neither want to decentralise the power nor help the farmers. The very backbone of the country will be broken if this continues which will be harmful not only for you but for the country also. It has been reiterated time and again that the farmers in Punjab are not getting the full value of their produce. In Punjab the situation is that paddy is not being bought even when the rate has been slashed by Rs. 10 per quintal. The same is true of cotton and sugarcane. As a result, the Punjab farmers burnt the paddy in the fields and fed sugarcane to their cattle.

I would, therefore, emphasize the need to take Members of the Opposition in confidence for not only solving the matters of national concern but also to give serious thought to the survival of farmers, to safeguard their interests and to redress their grievances and ensure a bright future for them. If this is not done, it would create more problems as the farmers are suffering from discontent.

With these words I thank you.

[*English*]

SHRI SOMNATH RATH (Aska) : Sir. the last Session we discussed the rising prices of rice, sugar, vegetables etc. Now we are discussing the crash in prices of agricultural produce. So, the theory of economists on demand and supply has also failed.

The fall in prices means there is more production and no demand. It is a paradox.

In India, at the time of harvest, prices fall. Agriculturists are exploited then, because cultivators have no storing capacity. After the harvest, they have necessarily to sell their produce, to meet

their needs. At that time, neither FCI, nor cooperatives and different Boards go and meet the cultivators, to purchase their produce at support prices. At that time, only the middlemen and hoarders play a great role, and the cultivators are forced to sell their produce at a lower rate, what is called a distress sale. So, this matter requires to be reviewed and action taken for the benefit of Agriculturists.

Have the FCI or cooperatives which are financed by State Governments and the Central Government started procurement this year ? They have not. They will start procurement later, thus leaving the cultivators at the mercy of the hoarders. This situation requires immediate attention of the Government. Secondly, we know that Basmati rice could not be exported, for the simple reason that rice similar to Basmati is admixtured. As such, rice fails to find a market in foreign countries.

Government of India is to be congratulated for the fact that once India was importing rice, wheat and are now able to export rice as well as wheat. I have been to Canada and America. The problem there also is the same. Because of huge production, the cultivators there are facing the same problem. This has now become a global phenomenon.

It may not be possible for India to export wheat also. Taking this into account, our policy has to be changed. It must be seen how best Government can come to the rescue of the cultivators. Similarly, when sugar cane is selling at a lesser price, why should we procure sugar from different countries ? Why not purchase sugar at this time ? We can then have enough sugar. So, these are matters which require immediate attention of the Government.

It is seen that the subsidy given by Government never reaches the cultivators in full. For the instance, in some States, a scheme is in vogue to produce more rice. As far as Orissa is concerned, in even block, there is a pilot project to grow more rice, and the policy of the Government being that the about Rs. 10 lakhs are given to each block to supply cultivators, seeds, fertilizer and agricultural implements at a subsidised rate, and that subsidy is meant for the cultivators. I had put a question to the hon. Minister of Agriculture. His reply is that last year in my constituency at two blocks about Rs. 5 lakhs had not been spent in each block. My second question was : what will happen to that amount ? His answer is : it will be adjusted this year against the subsidy. The Central Government gives subsidy to the State Government, but the State Government is not able to give subsidy to the cultivators either by way of selling agricultural implements at lesser rate or the fertilizer or giving them training in technology and the agriculturists suffer. Similarly, this year, small farmers require 10 kg. 5 kg. of fertilizer at a subsidised rate, but packets containing 50 kg of fertilizer are being sold. Government has given lakhs of rupees to the apex marketing societies not only in Orissa but in other States also where the scheme is in vogue to see that the fertilizers are procured much earlier and given to the cultivators, but the apex marketing societies never care to see that the poor cultivators, small cultivators get fertilizer in small packets. That was done previously, but not now. So, the cultivator is not able to purchase a pocket of fertilizer containing 50 kg at a time ; and when it is weighed, the weight is only 47 kg

As far as the scheme of grow more rice is concerned, though the Government of India is giving huge amount to States, the States, while implementing the scheme, are misusing the subsidy, because the apex marketing society in Orissa is running into huge loss. So a portion this subsidy is utilized by them to meet the loss.

The hon. Minister has said about the Agro Industry Corporation in each State. He said that they should not only be a selling agent and getting commission, they should have their own production factories and see that the same is supplied to the cultivators. But what is happening in Orissa ? This Corporation has not got any factory, spray instrument and agricultural implements. They only purchase them like any other person and supply them to the cultivator, and a portion of subsidy amount goes to the Corporation.

[Shri Somnath Rath]

So, the whole subsidy amount, that is meant for the cultivators, never, reaches them. It is a cent per cent centrally sponsored scheme for subsidy. Neither the State Government nor any other agency can take advantage of it. Not only these hoarders, and Agro industry Corporations, black-marketeers but also the cooperatives exploit them, and they are acting as middle men and exploiting the subsidy given to the cultivators ; as I said, pardon me to repeat, lakhs of rupees are given to them as soft loan, loan at a lesser rate of interest to see that they purchase fertiliser in time and give them to the cultivators as required by them in small packets, but they do not it. These are the factors that require the scrutiny of the government, because the Central Government gives subsidy. The agriculture producers is, not purchasing them at the support price ; it must be purchased at the support price at the time of harvest ; much earlier, steps should be taken. Unless that is being done, we may say anything in this House, it will not materialized at the grass-root level.

One of my colleagues from Kerala has said that coconut trees are dying because of the disease. But the coconut seeds in Sakashigopal, Orissa, have been tested and found resistant to this disease root wilt. Why not the Indian Government takes steps to see that the coconut seeds from Orissa especially from Sakshigopal are sent to different parts of India to solve this problem ?

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER : The time is 6 P.M. How long should we continue ?

SHRI BASUDEB ACHARIA : We will continue tomorrow. We can adjourn now and continue it tomorrow.

SHRI V. KISHORE CHANDRA S. DEO : We will continue tomorrow.

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS (SHRI GHULAM NABI AZAD): How long would they like to sit ? I think one hour will do.

SHRI V. KISHORE CHANDRA S. DEO : If they wanted to finish they could have finished now itself.

SHRI E. AYYAPU REDDY : We take it up on Monday.

SHRI GHULAM NABI AZAD : We can extend up to 7 o'clock and we will see how many people will speak. It all depends on you. If yon speak long, it will go on.

SHRI E. AYYAPU REDDY : We can have it for one hour now and one more hour tomorrow.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER : Nobody will sit tomorrow. Tomorrow is a Friday.

SHRI GHULM NABI AZAD : We can extend by one hour and then we will see. Now we will extend by one hour. Then if necessary we can continue on Monday.

SHRI V. KISHORE CHANDRA S. DEO : Monday will be all right.

SHRI INDRAJIT GUPTA : We can have it on Monday.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER : What about the hon. Minister ? They want to sit for one hour more.

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI S. BUTA SINGH) : If Shri Ghulam Nabi Azad is prepared to give a dinner we can sit.

SHRI GHULAM NABI AZAD : I do not mind.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER : They wanted to extend by one hour and later, on Monday they want it to be concluded.

SHRI INDRAJIT GUPTA : If you extend by one hour now it will not serve any purpose. That will not be sufficient.

(Interruptions)

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER : Then we will extend by one hour. We can take up the remaining part on Monday. So, it is

decided that we will sit for one hour more.

Now Shir Bharat Singh.

[*Translation*)

SHRI BHARAT SINGH (Outer Delhi) : Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir the House is discussing the agricultural production in the country Everyone has tried to draw your attention to the problems of farmers and how they are not to able get full value of their produce. The reason is slackness on the part of FCI to make purchases when the crop is harvested. Similarly, the traders purchase the farmers' produce at cheap rates with the help of middlemen and store it. The farmer does not get full value of his produce.

The Commission also does not get any benefit. If the Consumer get the commodities at cheap rates, it is all right because the Consumer is farmer's kin. Just now the House discussed the rates of cotton and how there has been a sharp fall in them. The farmer produces cotton and sell in the market at a cheap price but when cloth is produced out of the same cotton, the farmer has to purchase it at high price. We would, therefore, like that the farmer should get remunerative price of his produce and for his hard work and at the same time the consumer should also get wheat, rice, or coconut or any other commodity at cheap rates. I would like to give a few suggestion in this regard.

When F.C.I. purchases wheat, it stores it in the godowns. Sometimes due to paucity of capacity in the godowns or rains the foodgrains are spoiled and then it is sold at the Fair Price Shops. If anyone points out the difference between the sample and the stock being sold, he is informed that this is what has been supplied by the godown. Government will have to pay attention in this direction so that the consumers get quality goods at fair price. We would like quality foodgrains to be supplied to the consumers and the farmer should also get full value of his produce. Besides, the farmers should get agricultural implements at fair price. The Government must be aware that the farmer's produce is purchased at the price fixed by Government but the implements are very expensive in the market. The prices of these implements are continuously increasing. Government should check them. I would suggest that price of agricultural produce should be fixed before the harvest season sets in. At present there is great hue and cry about cotton prices, prior to that it was about wheat prices and sugarcane prices. The farmer will not face any difficulty if Government fix the prices before the crop is harvested and Government agencies start making purchases. If the Government do not purchase the foodgrains at the support price, the traders purchase it at cheaper prices and hoard it. What the farmer is not able to earn even after a year's hard toil along with his family, the trader earns it within one month.

Much has been said about increase in the price of sugar. But why is it so? Sugar is produced from sugarcane and I think the sugarcane crop in Uttar Pradesh this year is poor as compared to previous years. The reason is that it is infested by insects. Had the Government paid attention in this direction there would have been a bumber crop. Had the Block development officer and other departments tried to save the sugarcane crop from insects, it would have resulted in high yield and consequently higher production of sugar.

It is a well-known fact that Government provides good seeds, fertilizers and means of irrigation which has increased the production and yield per hectare. We remember when India achieved independence, its population was 30 crores, and we used to import foodgrains but now when the population is about 75 crores, our godowns are full of foodgrains and we have become self-reliant. The reason is that Government have provided facilities for agriculture, nationalised the banks, provided means of irrigation and quality seeds to ensure an increase in the production. But the farmer is annoyed when he d es not get remunerative price for his produce even after investing his entire money and toiling throughout the year. I would, therefore urge that the farmer should be provided remunerative prices and implements at

[Shri Bharat Singh]

cheaper rates. The BDO at the Block level should provide quality seeds, fertilisers and insecticides. The mill-owners should be directed to purchase as much sugarcane as possible and produce maximum sugar out of it. I have often seen farmers waiting at the mill-gate with cart loads of sugarcane for days together and still their turn does not come. They do not get money for months together. The Government should see to it that they get their money in time and their produce is lifted from the fields itself. It has been observed that rates of pulses, rice, turmeric and red chillies is cheaper as compared to last year. The price of tea has gone down by Rs. 7. Washing soap-with the brand name 555-has also become cheaper. Gram dal, sugar and vanaspati prices have shot up. The Government should seriously think about vanaspati and ask the farmers to cultivate more of oilseed crops so that its price could be reduced. The DDA has allotted 15 shops to Super Bazar to open new branches so that it can provide cheap and quality goods to the consumers. We are farmers but we would like the consumers to be benefited. The middlemen purchase the potato crop and hoard it in the cold storages and they are able to earn so much overnight, that it is equal to what the farmer earns after six months of hard toil. I believe that they double their investment with the help of that crop. The same is true of cotton as well. Some farmers take loans from different societies upon 80 per cent of their investment. They sell their produce at the opportune time. But there are poor farmers who do not have holding capacity. They want money urgently for marriage, construction of house or similar other requirements. There are yet other farmers who are under heavy debt and they have to sell their produce at half rates. The result is that they are not able to meet all their domestic obligations. 80 per cent of our population resides in the villages. It is only when they progress, that our cities and towns in particular and the country in general will progress. Our young Prime Minister, Shri Rajiv Gundhi wants India to progress at a fast pace. But before that the small impediments will have to be removed so that the Indian farmer can make progress and become prosperous. I would suggest that farmers should be provided remunerative prices of his produce. There are many such consumers who do not even have ration-cards. Those who live in slums, should also be provided ration-cards. At least make a provision that those who figure in the 1985 voters list should be issued ration-cards to enable them to get foodgrains at cheap rates from Fair Price Shops.

Sir, I thank you for giving me an opportunity to speak.

[*English*]

PROF. P.J. KURIEN (Idukki) : Sir, first of all, I would like to draw the attention of the hon. Minister to one contradiction. The contradiction is this consumer prices are on the increase. But the prices of agricultural commodities are on the decrease. The increase in consumer price is not passed on to the agriculturists. The decrease in agricultural produce price is not reflected in the consumer price. This means, there is something wrong with the system. The middleman is taken away the entire margin. I enquired in Delhi markets. The price of one coconut is Rs. 4 ; in Kerala it is less than 1 rupee. The difference it 300 per cent. Even if you compute transportation cost at one rupee, the difference is 200 per cent. Where does it go ? The Minister should examine it. In every field, good performance is rewarded. But in the agricultural sector alone good performance is being punished. When our farmers produce more, they work hard and produce more. But what happens ? They are being forced to sell their produce at throw-away price. They are in utter distress. This type of system is very detrimental to the interests of agricultural economy. All farmers should be assured of a steady, minimum price so that they can have their economy worked out on that basis. Then only the interests of the country will survive ; then only the interests of the farmers will survive. Now there is something which is wrong with the whole system. When the farmers produce more, they actual fall into distress and

trouble. Therefore, Government should made a total study of the economy and evolve an integrated policy regarding pricing, by which the farmers will be assured of a minimum, steady price. Depending upon the cost of production, they should be offered a remunerative price. Otherwise there is no point in shedding crocodile tears for the farmers. I hope that the Minister will take note of this and take the necessary steps.

Regarding coconut, hon. Members have already spoken here. Only one thing I would like to say. Coconut is actually an edible oil used for cooking purposes. But it is not in the Oilseed list. People of Tamilnadu, Andhra Pradesh and even in the northern parts of the country use coconut oil for cooking purposes. But even though we have excess of coconut oil, we import the edible oils and spend crores and crores of foreign exchange. So, my suggestion is that coconut oil should be subsidised and it should be made available in consumer packs to people. In Kerala everybody prefers coconut oil to any other oil. Last year Kerala consumed 50,000 tonnes of Palmolin oil which has been imported at the expense of our scarce foreign exchange. My suggestion is that you can subsidise coconut oil and sell it in consumer packs and these 50,000 tonnes of coconut oil will be consumed in Kerala alone and we will thereby be able to save lot of foreign exchange. So, this aspect of the matter should be examined.

Then, Sir, my next point is that minimum floor price should be assured for coconuts. There is some excess of coconut oil in the country. That should be exported. This is my suggestion. This should be exported to create a psychological impact in the market so that prices will go up. They say that there is import of coconut oil. That should be stopped. This is all about coconut.

One word about one commodity which is produced in my Constituency. That is cardamom. Our country is producing nearly 5,000 tonnes of cardamom a year of which 3,000 tonnes is nearly from my Constituency and 2,000 tonnes is from other places. But we are all unfortunate because of that because the cost of production of cardamom is estimated to be Rs. 200/- per kg by the Central Government agency, the Cardamom Board at the price the growers are getting is Rs. 140/- per kg and even less than that. Unfortunately, even for that price, there are no buyers in the market. I know the growers in Tamilnadu and Karnataka are not major growers. They have small holdings, say, one acre, half-an-acre or one hectare. But for them this cardamom cultivation has become a very difficult affair and they are all in distress. Our country is getting valuable foreign exchange from cardamom. Last year, we got Rs. 70 crores in foreign exchange from cardamom alone. This industry is in peril. The reason is there is a small increase in production and our competitors in the international market, Guatemala, is also producing cardamom and there also, production increased. Therefore, the international buyers, the Gulf countries mainly, are reluctant to buy. International prices have fallen. Within one month, Guatemala cardamom will come into the market and they can sell it at cheaper rate. Guatemala can sell cardamom at less price and, therefore, there will be no buyer for our cardamom because in the international market there is a surplus of 2,000 tonnes. There will be no buyers. Therefore, I would request the Agriculture Minister to take up the matter, if necessary, with the Commerce Minister so that some funds will be allotted to the Cardamom Board. The STC can buy at a price of Rs. 250/- per kg and they should export cardamom and thereby save the industry and our foreign exchange and our growers.

SHRI INDRAJIT GUPTA (Basirhat) : Sir. I am sure that you have duly noted the deep concern and anguish which is being expressed in this House on the crash fall in agricultural prices. It cuts across all party lines. So, you cannot ascribe this to any kind of political motivation. All Members here are deeply concerned. (*Interruptions*). This discussion which will conclude on. Monday giving the hon. Minister ample time to prepare his arguments, will not be really useful unless the policy of the Government is discussed in this respect. It is not a question of

[Shri Indrajit Gupta]

some piecemeal figures given about this crop or that crop. The entire policy of the Government in this matter is what is under discussion and under review because we are now in the first year of the Seventh Five Year Plan. As soon as the Plan starts operating, we find this phenomenon which has been referred to by so many Members here. On the one side, prices of agriculture produce are crashing and, on the other side, prices of essential commodities for the consumers are rising. So, it is quite a serious malady. You have to explain how you are going to tackle it. As far as I see in the Plan document, there is some proposal made to abolish or gradually to reduce the subsidies on food and fertilisers.

We are totally against this proposal. In our country, in the conditions which exist in this country at present, you have to have selective subsidies-it cannot be helped-not only for the producer but also for the consumer remembering what you have stated here in this House only yesterday. Although you claim that you have reduced the number of people living below the poverty line, still, according to your own figures, there would be somewhere between 250 and 300 million people who are still living below the poverty line. They have to be protected. They have no purchasing power, and they will be absolutely reduced to a state of starvation if you do not have, through your public distribution system, a selective subsidy. That policy also, you have begun to give up, as you have done just now in the case of sugar. It is not as though you are paying very high prices to the sugarcane grower and, therefore, you have had to raise the price of levy sugar by 40 paise per kilogram and also increase the supply of free sale sugar. Now, you have fixed Rs. 16.50 for sugarcane at a recovery of 8.5 per cent and for the next year you have announced that the price will be Rs. 17. But the sugarcane growers say that this price does not even cover their cost of production. And their sugarcane production has gone down from the peak of 83 lakh tonnes to about 50 lakh tonnes, causing you to import ten lakh tonnes from abroad pending release of foreign exchange. This is a very peculiar thing. You pay less to the sugarcane growers, you prefer to import sugar from abroad and you push up the price of levy sugar for the public, for the ordinary public, by 40 paise per kilogram. What is your policy, you must explain to us. Of course, this is one item in which there is no public sector institution or agency which is doing the purchase operations. But in the case of cotton or of paddy or of jute, we want to know what is the policy directive that you give to the Jute Corporation of India, to the Cotton Corporation of India or to the Food Corporation of India. They are all public sector organisations set up precisely for the purpose of holding the price line, that is to say, for the purpose of ensuring that minimum support prices are given to the growers. But is it happening ? In the case of medium staple cotton, the price fixed was Rs. 535 or Rs. 537, but actually from so many States complaints have come that the cotton grower is having to sell at Rs. 400 or even less than Rs. 400. What is this Cotton Corporation for ? What is it doing ? In the case of paddy, a price of Rs. 142 has been fixed this year as the paddy procurement price, but you have heard that in the Punjab they are selling paddy at Rs. 120 to Rs. 125. In the case of jute, of course, you know what has happened. The other Members have also referred to it. Here in this House, on the 13th August, it was announced by the then Minister in charge of Textiles-unfortunately the new Commerce Minister is not present here ; I would like him to deal with this jute matter which is supposed to be his special area—that the Jute Corporation of India would enter the market and start purchase of raw jute—this was stated in August—would mop up between 25 and 33 per cent of the new crop would give the farmers not only the minimum support price but Rs. 25 extra per quintal. You please look up the record. This was what was stated by the Minister then in the House. And what happens subsequently ? The support price announced for raw jute was Rs. 235, but it has gone well below that ; and people are forced to sell their jute at even Rs. 200 per quintal or even less than that depending or the variety of jute. I do not know what

assurance you can give about jute now because all the raw jute, most of it, the bulk of it, has passed out of the hands of the peasants ; it is now in the hands of the middle men. You may not find raw jute with the peasants now. Whom are you going to benefit now by giving some price for the raw jute ?

We are living in conditions where our peasants do not have any holding power, except for a handful of people, perhaps, who are very affluent or rich, who have got Benami land only. That is a different matter. But generally peasants in our country, jute growers of course above all, have no holding power at all. They cannot hold on to their crop after it is harvested and bargain for better price. They have to sell it immediately if they are to get two square meals the next day. Why sell it immediately it is already sold. It is already sold before it is harvested, you know that. How are you helping these people ? I know what will happen. The prices of raw jute have crashed this year, the growers will probably cultivate a smaller acreage. They will divert more land to other crops and next year this will give an opportunity to the mill owners to say that there is a shortage of raw jute. Therefore, we must close down some mills or seal the looms and retrench some workers and this goes on in a merry sort of vicious cycle year after year.

You don't have any stable policy at all. As many Members have said, the whole policy is to operate in such a way that big traders or agents of these mills get absolutely free hand to operate in the open market. The intervention of the State agency is absolutely minimum. They seem to be hand in glove with these big traders. I know about jute, there all sorts of brave statements are made, but when it comes to the transit, it is the jute mill owners and their agents operating in those districts of West Bengal and other jute growing States who are able to force the growers to sell their raw jute absolutely at distress price. How are you helping them ?

I want to say that this is the kind of situation. I don't know what is the motivation of the Government behind it. You should please tell us. Are you satisfied with what is happening with cotton prices ?

In Gujarat for example—here one Gnjarat Minister is sitting and that is why I am referring to Gujarat-what has happended to cotton prices ? Gujarat cotton growers have been demanding that for goodness sake export quality of cotton should be allowed to be sent out at higher prices.

In Andhra Pradesh, in the cotton growing areas, a large amount of last year's produce is still lying. So, in some places the peasants have burnt it and they have spent two thousand to three thousand rupees per hectare on fresh investment for new crops. But they are getting not more than three hundred rupees. So, Sir, what is the Policy ? We don't want to hear some statistics only that in jute it is like this, in sugar it is like this and in cotton it is like this. What is the policy you have got ? There is an Agricultural Prices Commission. You have got these public sector institutions which are the purchasing agencies. And then you have got some sort of an estimate of what is meant by remunerative prices for the farm. What is your definition of remunerative prices ? Cost of production, plus how much ? Please tell us commodity by commodity. How is it estimated ?

PROF. N.G. RANGA : Cost of production plus risk plus remuneration.

SHRI INDRAJIT GUPTA : Oh yes, plus transportation charges, plus something else. What is that formula which operates now-a-days, please tell us. How is it that almost in every case it results ultimately in the farmer having to sell at prices even below the declared support price ? This is not a statutory minimum price. Sometimes it is loosely referred to statutory minimum price. There is no statutory minimum price. Why should there not be a statutory support price ? The concept of national support price has no value in actual practical experience. Because your institutions cannot maintain it. Sometimes they openly say that we will only start buying after the prices have fallen below the support price. Even that

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they don't do. By that time the crop goes out of the hands of the peasants altogether.

My point is that he is not helping the poor. If he could stick to his commodity then he might profit later on. But here, it goes out of his hands. He could not store it, he could not keep it. This time the support prices for cotton, I think have been announced two and a half months after it has been harvested. How are the peasants to get any kind of protection ?

So they are being looted by the big sharks, the operators in the monopoly trade market, the big speculators and operators, sometimes acting on behalf of the mill-owners and you are just playing into their hands. I think you cannot do it out of ignorance. You know very well what is happening. So I charge this Government that they are doing it wilfully. They are shedding tears all the time for the farmers of the country but actually in practice they are throwing them to the wolves. This will lead to a very serious situation. I do not mind if they lose the support of the peasants—I will be happy. But the point is that there will be a lot of trouble in the country and the whole economic system in the country is going to be sabotaged. So they should tell us what is their Policy.

[*Translation*]

*SHRI G. S. BASAVARAJU (Tumkur) : Mr.Deputy Speaker, Sir, three months we had discussed the problems of consumers in this august House. Now we are debating about the fate of farmers. Consumers and farmers are the worst hit in our country. This is the main crux of tobay's subject. The price of agricultural products have been slashed down heavily.

So far several hon. Members have expressed their serious concern about the farmers. Our hon. Minister Shri Buta Singhji is also a farmer and has all sympathies for the poor farmer of this country. But this is not enough. Our lip sympathy help neither the farmer nor the consumer. We have to do something concrete and positive so that our farmers can gain some confidence and continue to produce more and more.

The condition of the farmer throughout the country is the same whether he belongs to Punjab, Karnataka or Andhra Pradesh. Farmers cannot maintain a car even if they possess thousand acres of land. Farmers producing huge quantities of foodgrains cannot lead a better life. That is the condition of farmers in our country.

Farmer is the backbone of this country. More than 70% of the people are cultivators. But unfortunately their living conditions have not improved. Industrialists and business men are leading a luxurious life. They are not at all bothered about the farmer. In fact, they are the persons who are mainly responsible for the miserable life of farmers.

A farmer has to pay Rs. 32/- for a metre of water pipe. Fertilizers are also costly. But what does he get for his produce ? The sugar that is produced from one tonne of sugarcane can earn about Rs. 450/- even if it is sold in the Control market. In addition to sugar molasses worth about Rs. 400/- can be extracted. Bagasse is used as fuel. But the unfortunate farmer may get only one hundred to one hundred and fifteen rupees per tonne of sugarcane. In some places this rate has been enhanced upto Rs. 160- But this is also a meagre amount.

Agricultural prices Commission is not doing its job satisfactorilly. While fixing the prices it is not taking into account the hard labour of the farmer. The implements used by the farmer, cost of the fertilizers and the labour of the family members of the farmer are also neglected. For sugarcane the farmer should get at least Rs. 300/- per tonne. For paddy at least Rs. 200/- should be given per quintal. Most of the farmers are sticking on to agriculture because they do not have any other alternative.

* The speech was originally delivered in kannada.

Many of my colleagues have explained the difficulties of coconut growers in the country. These difficulties are rampant in Kerala, Karnataka and Tamilnadu.

Long ago, the rate of arecanut was Rs. 500/-per quintal. In Karnataka Kampco society was formed and the rate of arecanut went upto Rs. 3000/- This rate never came down, throughout the country. Similarly, facilities for marketing cocouut should be provided. There is an Act regarding. All India Coconut Development Board which has no provision for marketing facilities. If proper facilities of marketing are provided, coconut growers can be encouraged. Otherwise coconut growers will perish as stated just now by our colleague Prof. PJ. Kurien. In Delhi the consumer has to pay Rs. 4 to 5 per coconut. At the same time in Kerala and Karnataka for each coconut the grower is getting only one rupee. This is the irony of the situation. Therefore, I earnestly request our hon. Minister Shri Buta Singhji to bring an amendment to the Act regarding AICDB to provide marketing facilities to the coconut growers. Coconut is used in the preparation of daily food in Kerala, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Tamilnadu and many other States. Coconut oil is used abundantly in Kerala and its neighbouring States. So if there are marketing facilities it helps the consumers in the above mentioned States,

The condition of cotton grower in our country is no way better than other farmers. The FCI is also of no use to the farmers and consumers. The price fixed by FCI is not encouraging it is always less than the open market. On accouut of this it is the mill owners and agents and vested interests who are enjoying the benefit. Medium and small farmers are always at a loss. Many of the handlooms are being closed. Last year in my State many farmers have burnt cotton because they could not find buyers. Some of my colleagues coming from other States have also referred to the burning of cotton.

Other foodgrains like ragi, jowar, maize etc. are also not getting a good market. For vegetables and fruits there are no cold storages. The Centre should come forward to help the State to open cold storages in every district headquarters. In addition to this it sh uld be seen that there is a direct transaction between the growers and the consumers. Agents and middle men must be elimiuated once and for all.

FCI while procuring foodgrains removes about 2 Kg from each bag. This has to be stopped. Once the procurement rate for paddy was fixed at Rs. 100 only but before that the business man had purchased paddy from the farmers at the rate of Rs. 80/- and finally they sold it to the FCI at the rate of Rs. 100/- This is how the traders are cornering the profits. Hence I request the hon. Minister to fully control the activities of FCI.

The States have financial constraints and hence the Centre has to help them to give remunerative prices to the farmers throughout the country. If the farmers are not encouraged I am sure that we will have to face serious food shortage. On the other hand if farmers are encouraged we can earn huge amounts of foreign exchange. I hope the Minister would l ok into the problems of seriously and help them to grow more and more. I thank you for giving me this opportunity to speak. With these words I conclude.

[*English*]

SHRI GEORGE JOSEPH MUNDACKAL (Muvattupuzha) : Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, I will be speaking only on a very few points. Coconut is a major cultivation of Kerala. Nearly three million people are cultivating coconut in Kerala. Last year, its price was Rs. 4 and now it is less than Rs. 10.70. Nearly a thousand crores of rupees are lost by the poor coconut cultivators of Kerala. Who is getting benefit ? The benefit is accrued Tata Oil Company and Hindustan Lever. What was the price of a cake of soap and a bottle of hair oil two years back ? Their prices have gone up by 200 to 300 per cent whereas at the same time coconut oil price has crashed. Coconut oil is the raw-material for hair oil and soap. The big monopoly houses are getting huge profits at the expense of small farmers. So, the

[Shri George Jeseph Mundackal]

Government must ensure that cultivators must get remunerative prices for their commodities. In the interest of integrity and unity of India do not neglect the poor cultivators of Kerala.

Now, I want to suggest one or two things for improving the poor conditions of Kerala cultivators. First, the Agriculture Minister should see that the Coconut Board which has not got enough funds is given more funds like Rubber Board. The Coconut Board should be given more funds for new planting and re-planting of coconut trees. Coconut tree is a long-time crop. After eight to ten years only the coconut tree starts yielding income. The farmer must get interest-free loans for cultivation of coconut trees. So, I suggest to fix minimum price for coconut oil and copra and treat coconut-as edible oil seed. The Government should come forward for purchasing the surplus cocount oil and copra and export them through STC by giving subsidy to cultivators.

In 1971, the rubber price had crashed. Gingar We exported only 5 thousand tonnes of rubber. Immemiately afterwards the price shot up from Rs. 4 to Rs. 8 per kilo. So, with the help of the Government, by way of giving interest free loans and subsidies to the farmers producing coconut and rubber we can save them from the plight.

Then another point is about ginger. is cultivated by small farmers with one acre or two acres. Unfortunately, the price of ginger is only Rs. 12 per kilo this year. Last year it was sold at Rs. 43 per kilo. The ginger produced in Assam and Shimoga are not suitable for dry ginger. It can only be used for ginger juice. Unfortunately the ginger produced in Assam and Shimoga was converted into dry ginger and exported to foreigen countries. The Commerce Ministry and the Quality Controller are responsible for this mistake. As the quality was very poor, it was shipped back to our country. That is the reason why the price of ginger had crashed. I would request the Government to institute an inquiry into this matter and punish the quailty.

With regard to pepper, the Government is charging Rs. 3 per kilo as exise duty. But when floods and land-slide occurred in Kerala, nobody came forward to help the poor farmers. In the case of coffee, the government is charging more than Rs. 7 per kilo as export duty. Sir, import of rubber, coconut oil, copra, nutmug and cloves are affecting the long term cultivators of our country. For the cultivation of these commodities, the farmers have to wait for more than eight years. If the cultivators of these commodities are not able to get remunerative price, what will be their future, that too after wating for 8 to 10 years? who is going to help those farmers who are engaged in long-term cultivation? I would therefor request the hon. Minister to protect the interests of the coconut cultivators. In the northern part of our country, nobody knows about the long-term cultivation. There, if there is no remunerative price for their produce, they can change the pattern of crop cultivation say, from groundnut to wheat. They can frequently change the pattern of cultivation. But in the case of coconut, rubber nutmug and cloves, it cannot be done. The cultivators have to wait for 8 or 10 years to get the. Sir, as you are a farmear, coming from a farmer's family, you know the difficulties of farmers. I would request you kindly to consider giving assistance to the poor farmers and weaker sections so that unity and integrity of the country are protected and safeguarded.

[*Translation*]

*SHRI V. S. VIJAYARAGHAVAN (Palghat): Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir I thank you for giving me the oppotunity to speak. I also thank the hon. Minister for Agriculture for agreeing to a discussion on such an important subject. Sir, Kerala is the land of coconuts. The name 'Kerala' itself is derived from coconut. This only shows the importance of coconut in the life of the people of Kerala. But today the coconut economy is facing a serious crisis and 3 million families who are liggeged in the coconut cultivation are in distrress. The steep fall in the prices of coconut and its products has dealt a crushing blow to the economy of Kerala.

*The speech was originally delivered in Malayalam.

In 1984 the price of coconut and coconut oil went up for a while. The price of coconut was around Rs. 4 per nut then. Similarly the price of coconut oil was Rs. 33 per quintal. But this did not last long. The decline started almost immediately and today the price of coconut is below Rs. one and that of coconut oil is around Rs. 1470/-. Such a steep fall in prices has not happened in recent past. People who depend on coconut have lost their only means of livelihood. this has caused the State of loss of Rs. 1000 crores. The consequence of such heavy loss in a State like K erala whose financial condition is precarious, is anybody's guess. Therefor it is the prime duty of the Government to protect the farmer of Kerala and its economy.

What are the reasons for this crash in prices of coconut? Import of these products has been of the important sectors responsible for the fall in prices. It is no use denying that the import from time to time of coconut oil and copper has led to fall in prices in the past. Although the hon. Minister had said during the budget session that coconut oil will not be imported, that has not reassured the people of Kerals. Therefore the Govt. should make acategorical statement that it will not import coconut oil under any circumstances.

Another reason for the fall in prices is the decline in the internal consumption of coconut oil. In 1984 when there was a steep increase in the price of coconut oil people switched over to other cheap edible oils. In Kerala about 78000 tonne of coconut oil was being used. But now this has come down by 30000 tonnes. That means the consumption has come down by almost 40%. So the question is what is to be done in the present situation ? Steps should be taken to boost the internal consumption of coconut oil. The Karshaka Congress of Kerala has made a suggestion in this regard. The suggestion is that the floor price of coconut should be fixed at Rs. 2000/- and the Government should buy the stock from the farmers, and supply it through the ration shops at the same price at which other oils are being sold. The Government of Kerala has accepted this suggestion. In fact when the prices crashed the Government of Kerala spent Rs. 17 crores and procured 14000 tonnes of copra. But this step did not stabilise the prices. What more can be done by a Government which has serious financial constraints ? Therefore, the Centre should take certain steps immediately. First, the floor price of coconut oil should be fixed at Rs. 2000 and the STC should be directed to buy at least 20000 tonnes of coconut oil. Secondly, the soap and vanaspati manufacturing units should be asked to use 30% of coconut oil in the manufacture of these products. Before that the ban on the use of coconut oil in the manufacture of vanaspati should be lifted.

Coconut is not at present treated as an oil seed although the coconot oil accounts for 7% of the oil that is produced in the country. Therefore I would request that coconut should be treated as oil seed.

I want to say a word about the coconut Board. This Board does not have enough powers to deal with all the problems pertaining to coconut. It does not have administrative powers or financial powers. Therefore this Board is not able to do anything effectively in providing relief to the growers. Therefore, the coconut Board should also be given the same powers which are being enjoyed by the other commodity Boards such as cardamom Board, Coffee Board etc.

Finally I must say a word about the paddy cultivation who are in distress due to the fall in the price of paddy. They are unable to repay the loans Therefore I would request the Government to declare a moratorium on the repayment of loans. I would also like to request the Government to set up a paddy Board which will be able to do better service to the farmers.

Before I conclude I would again request the hon. Minister for Agriculture to come to the rescue of the coconut and paddy cultivators Kerala. He had taken keen interest in providing relief to the flood affected people of Kerala during the last monsoon. I would request him to show the same interest in the problems of the poor farmers of Kerala.

Witr these words I conclude.

SHRI KALI PRASAD PANDEY (Gopalganj) : It is after a tireless effort that I have been given an opportunity to speak and I thank you for this.

All the hon. Members have expressed their deep concern at the State of agriculture with special reference to cotton, paddy, wheat, sugarcane, jute, coconut etc. Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, 75 per cent of the country's population resides in the villages and this section of society is not organised to raise their voice in support of their demands and because of their indigent condition, they are unable to meet their leaders. What treatment is meted out to the farmer ? You may recall that in the past, rallies have been organised in the name of farmers. The late Prime Minister Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri had raised the slogan of 'Jai Jawan Jai Kisan' but the plight of farmers has gone from bad to worse and it is so appalling that it beggars description. Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, successive Governments have reiterated time and again that the interests of the farmer will be protected but to-date none has taken care of their interests. The farmer does not get remunerative price for his produce and even the cost of production, whether it is cotton or sugarcane, is not sometimes fully realised. It has come to our notice that the cotton, sugarcane or any other crop is largely damaged due to insects. On the one hand the insects harm the farmers, on the other hand the mill-owners and the bureauerats exploit them. The Indian farmers were expecting remunerative price for sugarcane this year. I know that the only means of livelihood for the farmers of northern Bihar is sugarcane.

Much has been said about cotton. Gandhiji had visualised that a time will come when we would be able to export cheap cloth woven on the '*Charkha*', which would also benefit the poor people. But today the situation is that the cotton growers are forced to burn their produce as there are no purchasers. There is no explicit policy in this regard. So long as the the textiie policy is not changed, the cotton-growers will continue to be neglected.

I come from an area where sugarcane is grown in abundance. The farmer is exploited in two ways. Once, when his produce is weighed and thereafter when he has to wait for his payments which at times extends to a period between six months to two years. If the amount is Rs. 400 the brokers help them in recovering Rs. 200 and half of it is charged as commission. The farmer is helpless and as he does not have any other means he agrees to it. Proper arrangement should be made for this purpose. Once, while replying to Prof. Ranga, Rao Birendra Singh, the then Agriculture Minister was furious that some hon. Members are in league with the millowners and advocate their cause. I would like to know why action is not initiated against those mill-owners who neglect the farmers. Why are they not arrested under the Cr. P.C., the goonda act or the MISA. The sugar mill-owners at Hathua in Bihar close down their factories when the dues to the cane growers accumulate to the tune of crores of rupees. This sugar factory has been recently taken over by Government but no announcement has yet been made whether earlier payments due to the farmers for previous years will be made to them or not. We merely discuss these issues in Parliament while the poor farmer does not have two square meals. The farmer toils throughout the day and works hard but as payments are not made to him in time he remains impoverished. Something concrete should be done for the farmers, instead of merely raising slogans for them. When Chaudhary Charan Singh was in power, he raised slogans for farmers and organised Kisan rallies and this Government has also done the same thing but the rich are becoming richer and the plight of farmers is going from bad to worse.

I am not speaking on behalf of any party, and, being an independent Member, I would request you that the policy which would be announced in thts regard should be implemented in toto.

19.00 hrs.

[*English*]

SHRI E. AYYAPU REDDY (Kurnool) : Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, I shall not take

much time, but I cannot avoid making a mention of certain hard facts. A cup of milk costs Rs. 6; a single plantain costs Rs. 3; a piece of *idli*. costs Rs. 3; a plate of soup costs Rs. 25; a sumptuous meal costs Rs. 1400; all this in five-star hotels in India, which are overcrowded. The same identical articles in a village cost 50 paise, 30 paise, 40 paise and 80 paise. This is the disparity. Now, these hard facts remind that the disparity between the urban incomes and rural incomes has been growing. It was 1 : 2 about fifteen years ago ; now it is more than 1 : 8. Just to illustrate this, if we take the bank accounts of all the banks, we find that rural indebtedness has grown very steeply during the last twenty to thirty years. Facts speak for themselves.

Above all these things, I would like to mention about one social phenomenon. Today, nobody is prepared to give his daughter in marriage to a peasant or an agriculturist, even if he belongs to any class, rich or poor. If one says that he is a decent peasant, living in a village, the father of a daughter is not prepared to give her in marriage to him. This is the social phenomenon that is taking place today.

Unfortunately, the *Kisan* belongs to an unorganised lot. No doubt, we have great *Kisan* leaders and Prof. Ranga is here. But unfortunately, the Kisan belongs to an unorganised lot and the trade in agricultural produce is in the hands of trading community. All crop- based industries are again with industrialists or with the trading community. So, my humble request is that the Government should adobt a policy by which the *Kisan* is able to organise himself. Encourage organisation of the *Kisans* so that they are not exploited and they are able to protect themselves.

My next suggestion is that so far as the agro-based industries are concerned, please see that the *Kisan* has got a petermining say in starting these industries or in the manufacturing process or ownership of these agro-based industries. This is my second suggestion. So long as the trade and industry relating to agricultural products are in the hands of a third party, the *Kisan* stands exploited.

Coming to my own State, we have been requesting the Union Government to allow us to procure rice ourselves, so that the overhead charges which the Food Corporation of India is incurring, can be avoided. Wa have offered to procure the paddy at a cheap price with no overhead charges. We say we will pay better price to 'the producer and supply it cheaper at a subsidised rate to the *Kisans*. Instead of allowing a monopoly in procurement to the Food Corporation of India, I request the hon. Minister to consider this proposal. Wherever a State Government comes forward or procure paddy ot grain and other agricultural produce, it must be allowed to do so, so that there is healthys competition between the State Government' procuring agencies and the Food Corporation of India. We will also be able to find out as to who is able to do better and more efficiently.

Then Sir, with regard to cotton, I have been a member of the Cotton Corporation of India, ten years ago. The prices of cotton fifteen years ago, were between Rs. 400 to Rs. 700 per quintal for various varieties of cotton. Now, the prices are the same during the last fifteen years. This year, unfortunately, they have crashed down.

The Cotton Corporation of India's agencies are there. But so far as the State of Andhra Pradesh is concerned, the role which they adopt is thoroughly disappointing. Not only disappointing; it is one which gives room for people to say: 'Let the Cotton Corporation not be there. Let it be wound up." What is happening is that when the support price announced for cotton is about Rs.550/—, even the Cotton Corporation's agencies are colluding with the local merchants and trying to classify cotton into various grades. The agent tries to say : 'Your cotton is of the poorest quality; therefore, I am not in a position even to pay Rs.200 or Rs. 300 per quintal." So, having drought cotton all

[Shri E. Ayyapu Reddy]

the way from the villages, the kisan is compelled to sell his cotton at a throw —away price to the Corporation or the third party merchant, and take the unremunerative price which is put into his hand. This is the position.

So far as export and import are concerned, the kisan has no say at all. We do not know why you are importing agricultural products which could be produced here, e.g. edible oils, sugar, cotton, jute all these things which can be manufactured from out of the agricultural produce here, are imported, with the result that our kisan is not able to get remunerative prices. So far as import —export policy is concerned, the kisan lobby or the kisan's representative must be there. He must be given an opportunity to state his own interests; and there must be somebody to protect his interests.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER : The House now stands adjourned, to meet again tomorrow at 11 a.m.

19.07 hrs.

The Lok Sabha then adjourned till Eleven of the Clock on Friday November 22, 1985 Agrahayana 1, 1907(Saka).