

Title: Steep decrease in the prices of coconut and its products.

MR. SPEAKER: I will allow you. Let, Shri Krishnadas speak first. I am having all the notices with me.

...(Interruptions)

SHRI N.N. KRISHNADAS (PALGHAT): Sir, the problem which is being faced by the coconut growers of the country is very serious. There is a steep decrease in the price of coconut and coconut products...(Interruptions) Sir, it is affecting the life of common coconut growers all over the country.

Sir, one year back, in Kerala, the price of the coconut was around Rs.6 to Rs.7. Now it has come down to Rs.1.50. This kind of a price decrease in Kerala hit the life of the coconut growers. This is a very serious matter. The main cause of the price decrease is the liberalised import policy of the Government of India, which is continuing in the country. Now the coconuts and coconut products like palm oil, etc. are being imported liberally throughout the country. This is causing a very serious problem to the coconut growers all over the country.

Sir, one year back there was mite infection in the coconut all over the Southern States of the country. At that time, we had raised the matter in this House and we discussed that with the concerned Minister. The Minister concerned of the Government of Kerala also came here and discussed that with the Agricultural Ministry. But not even a single rupee has been granted to the Government of Kerala to overcome this mite problem. Now, this steep decrease in the coconut price is creating a very serious problem.

The Government of India announced the support price of copra, but it was totally inadequate and not only that but there was a delay in announcing that price. So, it was not helpful to even a single farmer in Kerala and other Southern States....(Interruptions) So, I urge upon the Government to come forward to ban the import of coconut and coconut products, at least, for a certain period. Otherwise, the coconut growers all over the country cannot survive.

I thank you for giving me time to speak on this subject...(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: On the same subject Prof. A.K. Premajam, Shri Suresh Kurup, Shri T. Govindan, Shri Ramesh Chennithala, Shri Radhakrishnan, Shri G.M. Banatwala, Shri V.M. Sudheeran, Shri A.C. Jos and Shri E. Ahamed also associate with Shri Krishnadas on this issue. Now the Minister.

...(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Yesterday, we had taken a decision in the BAC that on a subject one Member can speak and others can associate with him. Now the Minister.

...(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: You are not allowing the Minister to give reply.

...(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: I am not going to allow anybody because the Minister is going to reply. If you have any doubts, you can ask the hon. Minister after the reply.

...(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: What is this? You are not allowing the Minister to reply. Please take your seat. Now, the Minister.

...(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Shri P.C. Thomas, please take your seat. The hon. Minister is giving the reply. You are not allowing him to reply.

...(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: Nothing should go on record except what the hon. Minister says.

(Interruptions)*

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI NITISH KUMAR): Mr. Speaker, Sir, I share the concern expressed by the hon. Member. The coconut growers are facing certain difficulties. There is no doubt about it. The price of coconut has fallen sharply. The Government has increased the import duty on Palmolein. So far as our Ministry is

concerned *(Interruptions)*

SHRI A.C. JOS (TRICHUR): It should be done. ...*(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER: Shri Jos, what is this?

SHRI NITISH KUMAR: So far as my Ministry is concerned, I have recommended further increase in the import duty so that it could help our growers. So far as the procurement is concerned, you know that the existing policy of the Government is to procure copra and ball copra. ...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI P.C. THOMAS (MUVATTUPUZHA): That is not being done now. It is a very serious issue. ...*(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER: Shri Thomas, let him complete. What is this?

SHRI NITISH KUMAR: The procurement is done through NAFED, which is the designated agency of the Central Government. They are procuring copra and ball copra. I heard that there were some complaints and they had suspended the procurement. Immediately I took up the matter with NAFED officials. There was some problem of storage in Kerala for two, three days. That was sorted out. I asked them not to stop the procurement business for a single day. Now they have started the procurement.

The other problem is relating to mite. So far as this problem is concerned, ...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI RAMESH CHENNITHALA (MAVELIKARA): The main point is about the minimum support price. ...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI N.N. KRISHNADAS : They want you to increase the minimum support price. ...*(Interruptions)*

PROF. A.K. PREMAJAM (BADAGARA): The minimum support price is far below the procurement price. ...*(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER: They are asking about the minimum support price.

...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI NITISH KUMAR: It is a declared price. ...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI A.C. JOS: It is totally inadequate. ...*(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER: Please take your seats. What is this?

SHRI NITISH KUMAR: Actually the farmers grow coconut. Normally they are not in a position to process it and to dry it. The businessmen take it from them and they do all those things. Finally, the procurement is done through those businessmen. ...*(Interruptions)* Some farmers also do the processing and they are also benefited. This is the established practice. ...*(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER: This is not the way. Please take your seats.

SHRI NITISH KUMAR: The Agriculture Minister of Kerala came and met me. He proposed that the Government should think of ...*(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER: Shri Jos, you need not supply information to the hon. Minister. Please take your seat. What is this? You are obstructing the Minister.

SHRI NITISH KUMAR: I am speaking in your favour. Please hear me. ...*(Interruptions)* The Agriculture Minister of Kerala came and met me. He advised that coconut should be procured and not copra and ball copra.

As you are all aware, there are so many problems in procuring coconut. There is handling problem and also storage problem. There is no processing facility with NAFED, which is the designated agency. A fresh policy decision will have to be taken. I am told that the hon. Members are going to meet the hon. Prime Minister and they can discuss all these things with him. ...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI A.C. JOS : We are going to meet you also. ...*(Interruptions)*

SHRI NITISH KUMAR: I would be willing to help to the growers of coconut to any extent. The day before yesterday, I had gone to Chennai to attend an international Conference on coconut. I expressed my views there. I had

discussed these things with so many people. I am willing to support your views. I am willing to help the coconut growers. I am aware of their problems. ...(*Interruptions*)

MR. SPEAKER: This is not the proper way. What is this? The Minister is supporting your view. Even then, you are not allowing him to reply.

...(*Interruptions*)

MR. SPEAKER: Now, Shri Somnath Chatterjee.

SHRI SOMNATH CHATTERJEE (BOLPUR): Mr. Speaker, Sir, on this, it appears that the hon. Minister has taken a very firm attitude.

He says, so far as his Ministry is concerned, it has recommended for the increase of the import duty. You are a Cabinet Minister. You see the intensity of the suffering of the people there. When you have done it, you see that it is implemented soon. Mere recommendation is meaningless unless the Government accepts it and implements it. Therefore, Shri Nitish Kumar, it is your duty to see this. Since you have come back again, I wish you well. At least, you do something for the people. Merely saying you have done your duty, your Ministry has done its duty, is meaningless....(*Interruptions*)

SHRI P.C. THOMAS (MUVATTUPUZHA): There is one more clarification.