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**Title:** Demand to continue the provision of free electricity to the farmers of the country.

SHRI M. CHINNASAMY (KARUR): Sir, I would like to draw the attention of the Government to the recent announcement made by the Prime Minister in the Chief Ministers and Power Ministers Conference last Saturday to withdraw the provision of free electricity to the farmers and charge 50 paise per unit. The Minister of Finance has also announced in the Budget that all farm pump sets would be fitted with meters. It has caused concern and has created tension and apprehension among the farming community. The farmers are naturally aggrieved and agitated.

Sir, Tamil Nadu, Punjab, and Andhra Pradesh are among the very few States in the country at present which supply free electricity to the farmers. The statement of the Prime Minister is very painful and regrettable. The entire farming community in the country is upset by the announcement. All *kisan* leaders and political leaders have condemned this move. The All India Anna DMK Party, General Secretary, and former Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, Dr. J. Jayalalitha has also condemned this. She has also accused the Prime Minister of going back from his earlier commitment made in 1998 to let the State Governments decide about the continuation of free electricity to the farmers.

Sir, I demand that this benefit to farmers should continue. It has also been reported that a number of farmers have committed suicide in Andhra Pradesh and Bihar for want of remunerative prices for their crops.

MR. SPEAKER: Shri Chinnasamy, we are going to discuss exclusively the farmers' issue on 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup>. Please take your seat.

...(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: How can you read during 'Zero Hour'?