

Title: Regarding a dharna staged by the farmers in Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala.

SHRI VARKALA RADHAKRISHNAN (CHIRAYINKIL): Sir, I am also raising a very serious matter in this House. Today we, the Members of Parliament representing Kerala, were constrained to stage a *dharna* in front of this House highlighting the farmers' demands in Kerala.

About 15 thousand farmers are staging a 101-hour *dharna* in front of the Kerala Secretariat and also in front of the various District Headquarters. Their demands include stopping the import of agricultural products like rubber, pepper, coconut oil, etc. All these items are being imported without discrimination to the detriment of the local farmers. The local farmers are facing a very serious crisis. The plantation crops such as cardamom, coffee and tea are out of the market because they could not be sold in internal market because of the import policy of the Central Government. The farmers are in debts. They are not able to pay back their agricultural loans because of this policy. Recovery proceedings have been launched against them. They are not able to sell their produce. All these agricultural products are being imported. As a result of this the produce of Kerala and other States is not able to get a market and is not able to compete with the imported material. The net result is that the farmers are facing starvation. Starvation deaths have not taken place yet. They may occur within a short time. Banks have initiated recovery proceedings against farmers. The court attachments are being directed against the farmers. They are in difficulties.

Because of all this, the farmers are staging a historical *akhanda* – which means uninterrupted – *dharna* in front of the Kerala Secretariat. There is a very very serious situation. I request the Central Government and the State Government to take immediate steps to initiate relief measures for getting the condition of the farmers in a better state. Otherwise, we will be again facing a serious crisis.

MR. SPEAKER: Prof. A.K. Premajam, Shri P. Rajendran, Shri Sunil Khan, Dr. Ram Chandra Dome, Shri Sudarsana Natchiappan and Shri Adhir Chowdhary associate themselves with Shri Verkala Radhakrishnan on this issue.