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Title: Need to increase custom duty on imports of silk by 50%, fixing of MSP for cocoons and buying silk from farmers.

SHRI JAYADEV GALLA (GUNTUR): Madam, India is the second largest producer of silk in the world and Andhra is the second largest State producing silk in India. Andhra Pradesh (AP) has 31,000 metric tonnes of mulberry cocoons production. Sericulture has high employment potential. It is women-friendly and eco-friendly. But, the Government of India has recently reduced the customs duty from 30 per cent to 10 per cent on imported Chinese silk. This has resulted in swamping of South Indian sericulture industry by Chinese silk due to drastic fall in cocoon prices from Rs.400 in last summer to Rs.180 per kg now. The bi-voltine cocoon rate in SRU Guntur market in the second week of this month was only Rs.200 per kg. This gives an indication of what the status of market is in AP. This has hit very hard the Indian silk market leaving silk farmers and weavers in crisis.

I have a few suggestions. Firstly, keeping "Make in India" initiative in view, I request the Ministry of Textiles, Government of India to increase the customs duty on imports to 50 per cent to protect sericulture sector of the country. As an interim measure, I request the Government of India to give Rs.150 per kg as incentive to Indian sericulture farmers which will give them some solace from the flooding of Chinese silk.

Secondly, I request for fixing of acceptable MSP for cocoons also to benefit the sericulture farmers. Thirdly, I request the Ministry of Textiles to buy silk from farmers under the Market Intervention Scheme and save them from Chinese onslaught.

Finally, we produce only multi-voltine silk which is of low-wheel quality as it does not give continuity in reeling and threads and have many cuts whereas bi-voltine silk produced by China can easily reel out filament continuously up to 1,000 metres. So, the Government of India should also focus on this.

HON. SPEAKER Shri Arvind Sawant is permitted to associate with the issue raised by Shri Jayadev Galla.