

Fifteenth Loksabha**Session : 3****Date : 24-11-2009**

Participants : Scindia Shri Jyotiraditya Madhavrao, Hegde Shri Anant Kumar, Antony Shri Anto, Kumar Shri Shailendra, Karunakaran Shri P., Mahtab Shri Bhartruhari, Mani Shri Jose K., Panda Shri Prabodh, Singh Dr. Raghuvansh Prasad, Ray Shri Bishnu Pada, Majumdar Shri Prasanta Kumar, Thomas Shri P. T., Chacko Shri P.C., Manian Shri O. S., Punia Shri P.L., Scindia Shri Jyotiraditya Madhavrao

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Title : Further discussion on the motion for consideration of the Rubber(Amendment) Bill, 2009 moved on 6th August, 2009 (Bill Passed).

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: We go to the next matter. Item No. 15 – Rubber (Amendment) Bill. The hon. Minister.

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI JYOTIRADITYA M. SCINDIA): I rise to present the Rubber (Amendment) Bill, 2009. Natural rubber, Mr. Deputy-Speaker, Sir, plays an important role in the industrial and economic development of the country. ... *(Interruptions)* Rubber plantations provide the principal raw-materials required for the manufacture of around 35,000 items of rubber products ranging from toy balloons to tyres of the joint earth moving equipment.... *(Interruptions)*

Rubber cultivation is basically environmental friendly and it helps in the ecological restoration of the countryside; functions as the source of the much-needed firewood and precious timber, easing the pressure on natural forest for wood, timber and providing vegetable oil, oil cakes and honey as by-products.... *(Interruptions)*

The Indian rubber plantation industry provides direct employment to over four lakh persons and offers large opportunities of employment in allied activities.... *(Interruptions)*

महोदय, ये लोग शोर मचाकर प्रगति और विकास के बारे में सुनना ही नहीं चाहते हैं। हम रबर और रबर से बनने वाली चीजों के संबंध में एक नया विधेयक लाकर इस क्षेत्र में सुधार करने और राहत देने का काम कर रहे हैं, लेकिन ये लोग सुनना ही नहीं चाहते हैं। ...*(व्यवधान)* I am not yielding..... *(Interruptions)*

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: The House stands adjourned to meet again at 3 p.m.

14.08 hrs.**The Lok Sabha then adjourned till Fifteen**

of the Clock

MR. CHAIRMAN : The hon. Minister to continue.

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI JYOTIRADITYA M. SCINDIA): Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Sir.

I shall start from where I ended where we were interrupted by some din in the House when I just started to introduce the amendments to the Rubber Act, 1947. I would like to place on record one point and that is, the new generation was sitting here in the stands and I think the new generation expects a vibrant India to function, an India which looks after the people's interests, specially the interests of small plantation growers across this country. So, I would urge the Opposition to give a patient hearing to these amendments and try and pass this Bill today.

Sir, the rubber plantation industry is one of the most important vibrant factors of the economy in India today. The profile of our plantations in rubber has changed considerably in the last 60 years whereas in 1947, close to about 67 per cent of plantations comprised of large estates, today close to 90 per cent of the area under plantation and 93 per cent of the production comprises of small share holdings amongst 1.13 million plantation holders. The average size is only close to about half-a-hectare which is something which we need to look at very specifically, especially in the interest of small growers.

The world's rubber planted area is close to about 10.33 million hectares. India today is the fifth largest and, therefore, this is an area where India can emerge as a core competitive player on the world stage. We produce on 6.62 lakh hectares which is under plantation and our share of the world market is close to 6.2 per cent, only behind Thailand, Malaysia and China. In terms of production of natural rubber, India produces close to 0.88 million tonnes which is close to 9 per cent of the world market share of 9.9 million tonnes across the globe. But the important area where we need to concentrate, which is not the case with other plantation sectors, is the area of productivity and today I am very proud, not only proud of the Government's interventions, but most importantly proud, of the impetus that small growers have given this industry on the world stage.

India, Mr. Chairman, Sir, is the number one country in terms of productivity in the world in the area of rubber. We produce close to 1,896 kilograms of rubber per hectare and we have been number one in the area of productivity on land in terms of rubber from the year 2006. We are also the number three consumer of natural rubber across the world. This has all been possible because of the adoption of RR11 105 rubber clone in the early 1980s. This is popularly known as the wonder clone and the Government has provided close to about Rs. Five crore to the Rubber Research Institute to set up a brand new facility in terms of infrastructure. RR11 417, RR11

422 and RRII 414 are the new clones that have been developed by the Rubber Research Institute which have been released in the market and these 400 series clones have shown, in a very short span of time, a 20 per cent yield improvement over RRII 105 and have come to tapping stage between 10 and 12 months earlier than the other clones. Therefore, technological intervention is working in the rubber plantation sector and we need to do more than a revolution here just as we had done years ago in the agriculture industry. In order to meet the future demand, close to 60,000 hectares are to be covered under the new planting in the Northeast Region during the 11th and 12th Plan periods. For this purpose, the Government has approved the setting up of three Regional Offices of the Rubber Board in the Northeast Region and creation of as many as 52 additional posts.

Sir, development and control of rubber is regulated under the Rubber Act of 1947. This Act was enacted, as we are all aware, on the 18th of August, 1947. It is now being amended in the light of the 159th Report of the Law Commission of India on Repeal and Amendment of Laws Part I. Over the years, the rubber industry has undergone immense changes. I talked about the composition of the rubber plantation industry changing. I think, in that light we need to put in a refocus into the Act today and how we need to change it in view of these developments. There are a couple of proposed amendments, seven in particular, that I would like to dwell upon before I leave it open to the House for discussion.

First of all, the definition of small growers is being changed from the existing limit of 50 acres, which is roughly about 20 hectares, to ten hectares. This is especially important because we want to focus the funds that are available under the auspices of the Rubber Board, Rs.580 crore, to ensure that we target the small growers to increase yield, to increase productivity and to bring in technology and marketing at the front line.

Along with this, it is also proposed to establish a Rubber Development Fund in place of the two funds that are existing to facilitate the quick and smooth flow of money. I believe that this will also help in improve the functioning of the Rubber Board.

An enabling provision is being made to charge an exempt cess from the exporters. This is obviously being done in light of the Audit Objection that was in place for charging cess from exports on natural rubber from 1961 to close to 31st of August 2003.

In order to make the amendments grower friendly, certain provisions are being scrapped. We must move with the times and as modernity comes in place, we must have in place systems that will actually assist and not hold back rubber plantation growers. Therefore, provisions, such as registration of estates under Section 10, licensing for planting and re-planting under Section 17 and reports to be submitted by licensees on a product on a periodic basis under Section 18 are proposed to be scrapped. This, I believe, will firmly ease the burden on the rubber growers.

The Rubber Board is also being empowered to implement the standards for quality marking, labelling and packing for the produce or processed in or imported or exported from India. This, I believe, will give better recognition to the domestically produced rubber in the international market. The domestic consumers will also be able to get good quality rubber from foreign markets through quality checks.

Here, let me emphasise that we will make sure that the process is facilitatory in nature, not bureaucratic, not troubling to the small grower and that is our commitment as Government of India to the small growers of the country and to the Members present here in the House.

Currently cess is being collected from the manufacturers at Rs.1.50 per kilo. This also involves a laborious process of filing of returns, assessment of cess by the Board and demand and collection of cess from the assessee. Therefore, to change this paradigm, we are putting in place an amendment which is proposed to provide for self-assessment and remittance of cess by the assessee. I think, with modern systems coming into place, the concept of actual trust is something that we must put forward from the side of the Government. You must have trust to disclose and on the basis of that make judgement.

The cess being a specific duty, the assessee will not have any difficulty in determining himself the cess due and remitting the same. This will definitely simplify the procedure and I believe that the hon. Finance Minister will also take my side on that position.

There is also a petty penalty of close to a thousand rupees being put in place today as it stands on the violation of the rubber cess, which is rampant. In order to make it more stringent, the amount is proposed to be increased to close to Rs.5,000, along with a proviso to compound offences punishable under this Act which has been included to avoid the cumbersome process of litigation and legal process.

It is also proposed to broad base the Rubber Board. Today, we have close to about 26 members on the Rubber Board. Close to about ten members are from the Central Government, eight from Kerala, two from Tamil Nadu, three Members of Parliament and two *ex-officio* members. We are planning and intending to include one representative from the Commerce Ministry and one representative from the Department of Agriculture to ensure that Government functioning along with the programmes and implementation is put in place.

The amendments that have been proposed by the hon. Members essentially to provide welfare measures for small growers and workers and tapers are existing provisions of the Act and read with Sections 9 (2)(b) and 8(2)(f) of the Act. It will take care of such schemes which are being implemented by the Rubber Board.

The provision of fixing any particular price, for example, Rs.130 a kilo, sometimes may create difficulties of the Act as a broader provision for fixing minimum and maximum price. Our growers are getting better prices in the domestic market. The Government is continuously monitoring the price of rubber domestically and internationally. The Government also monitors the domestic availability of this very important raw material. Along with that, the provision of implementation of quality standards by the Rubber Board has been proposed to improve the quality of the domestic as well as imported rubber. The Rubber Board is taking various efforts to improve the quality of rubber production throughout the country. Quality begets price. Therefore, omitting the dealer from this section would defeat the purpose of bringing this amendment as a sizeable quantity of rubber would be left out of the ambit of this Act. However, to ensure accountability and avoid any arbitrariness, the Government has already built up a safety clause that such inspections can be carried out only after getting approval of the Chairman of the Rubber Board.

Mr. Chairman, Sir, with these words, I commend the Bill to the House.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Motion moved:

“That the Bill further to amend the Rubber Act, 1947, be taken into consideration.”

श्री अनंत कुमार हेगड़े (उत्तर कन्नड़): सभापति महोदय, सदन के सामने जो रबड़ बिल रखा गया है, मैं इसका स्वागत करता हूँ, लेकिन इससे पहले कुछ प्रश्न उभरकर आते हैं। इस सदन का पहले से जो संप्रदाय रहा है कि सदन में जो भी बिल प्रस्तुत करना होता है, उसे पहले स्टैंडिंग कमेटी में प्रस्तुत किया जाता है जहाँ उसके बारे में विशेष रूप से चर्चा होती है। उसके बाद उसे सदन में लाया जाता है। लेकिन रबड़ बिल बाय पास करके सदन में आ गया। हम इसका मतलब नहीं जानते। इसे स्टैंडिंग कमेटी में चर्चा के बगैर सदन में सीधा प्रस्तुत करने का उद्देश्य क्या था, सरकार को स्पष्ट रूप से बताना होगा। जो भी हो, लेकिन आजादी के साठ साल बाद सरकार को रबड़ किसानों के बारे में याद आई, यह बहुत खुशी की बात है। 1947 का जो एक्ट था, उससे पहले काफी डिमांड थी कि इसमें अमेंडमेंट किया जाये। छोटे और मीडियम लैवल के किसानों को जो तकलीफ हो रही थी, उसके बारे में जिक्र करने की डिमांड थी, लेकिन सरकार सुन नहीं पाई थी। आज मैं स्वागत करता हूँ कि कम से कम साठ साल बाद 1947 के बिल को अमेंड करके सदन में रखा गया।

यदि हम इस बिल में गहराई से जाकर झाँके, तो कई सवाल उठते हैं। पहला, सैस के बारे में जो कहा गया, वह ऊपर से बहुत ठीक दिखाई देता है, लेकिन अंदर जाकर झाँके तो कई प्रश्न उठते हैं। सैस कैसे खर्च करेंगे, क्या उसके लिए किसी नियम का प्रावधान किया गया है? अगर नियमों का प्रावधान किया गया है, तो वह किस तरह खर्च होगा? स्मॉल और मीडियम लैवल के ग्रोअर्स के बारे में जिक्र किया गया। यह उन्हें पहुंचेगा, ट्रेडर्स को पहुंचेगा या एक्सपोर्ट इन्सैनटिव के नाम पर कहीं और न चला जाए, इसके बारे में सरकार को पूरी जानकारी देनी होगी। रबड़ बोर्ड को पूरा अधिकार दिया गया है या नहीं? यहां चर्चा करवाकर सैस फंड का यूटीलाइजेशन कैसे होगा, हमें इसके बारे में जानकारी चाहिए। बैनीफिशियरी कौन है? सैस का फंड किसे पहुंचेगा? यदि इन प्रश्नों का उत्तर विस्तृत रूप से सदन के सामने प्रस्तुत किया जाएगा, तो मैं मानता हूँ कि यह पारदर्शिता से पारित हो जाएगा।

दूसरा विषय क्वालिटी कंट्रोल का है। क्वालिटी कंट्रोल बहुत बड़ा विषय होता है। हमें सारी दुनिया के सामने स्पर्धा में रहना चाहिए, हमारी क्वांटिटी और क्वालिटी प्रोडक्शन बढ़नी चाहिए।

यह हम मान लेते हैं, लेकिन उसके साथ-साथ क्वालिटी कंट्रोल कैसे हो, हकीकत में अगर थोड़ी नजर डालें, तो जैसा अभी मंत्री साहब ने कहा कि 89 से 93 परसेंट ग्रोवर्स स्मॉल सैक्टर से ताल्लुक रखते हैं। जो लॉट रबड़ है, उसकी क्वालिटी मैनेटेन करना बहुत कठिन होता है। इसे शायद रबड़ के किसान ही समझ सकते हैं। बड़े पैमाने पर जो रबड़ उगता है, बड़ी मात्रा में जो प्लांटेशन ऑर्नर्स हैं, वे क्वालिटी कंट्रोल कर सकते हैं, लेकिन छोटे किसान आज भी क्वालिटी कंट्रोल नहीं कर पा रहे हैं। उसका मैकेनिज्म आज तक रबड़ बोर्ड ने नहीं दिया है। कॉस्ट इफैक्टिव टेक्नोलॉजी यूज करके कैसे उसकी क्वालिटी बढ़ाई जाये, इस बारे में अब तक कोई जिक्र नहीं किया गया है। इस कारण 89 से 93 परसेंट किसान अपने कच्चे माल की गोडाऊन में डालेंगे और बाद में रबड़ बोर्ड का कोई अधिकारी आकर क्वालिटी मेजर करेगा और कहेगा कि यह क्वालिटी

ठीक नहीं है, तो छोटे किसान कहां जायेंगे? इसका लाभ सिर्फ बड़े प्लांटर्स को होगा, क्योंकि क्वालिटी मैनेटेन्स वे ही कर सकते हैं, छोटे किसान नहीं कर पायेंगे। इसके बजाय क्वालिटी अवेयरनेस ट्रेनिंग अगर सरकार दे दें, क्वालिटी आउटपुट कैसे लाया जाये, इसकी ट्रेनिंग अगर सरकार रबड़ बोर्ड के द्वारा दे, तो छोटे किसान समझ सकते हैं कि क्वालिटी प्रोडक्शन कैसा आना चाहिए। वे मेहनत करके ठीक ढंग से मार्केट में अपनी क्वालिटी प्रोडक्शन ला सकते हैं। अगर उसके प्रोडक्शन की क्वालिटी होगी, तो उन्हें दाम मिलेगा। अगर क्वालिटी नहीं होगी, तो दाम नहीं मिलेगा, लेकिन सरकार उसके बीच में आकर कहे कि यह क्वालिटी ठीक है और यह क्वालिटी ठीक नहीं है, तो इस मामले में हम क्या पढ़ें? इससे छोटे किसानों को दिक्कत होगी। मैं यह आग्रह करना चाहूंगा कि इस विषय को ध्यान में रखते हुए सरकार को नियम रूपित करना चाहिए।

तीसरा विषय, मंत्री साहब ने कहा कि बोर्ड में 26 मैम्बर मौजूद होंगे। लेकिन किसानों के रिप्रेजेंटेटिक्स कितने होंगे, यह प्रश्न है। मैंने स्पॉइस बोर्ड में भी काम किया है। स्पॉइस बोर्ड में जितने भी रिप्रेजेंटेटिक्स होते हैं, वहां ट्रेडर्स, किसान, प्रोसेसर आदि के रिप्रेजेंटेटिक्स होते हैं, लेकिन रबड़ बोर्ड में कितने रिप्रेजेंटेटिक्स रबड़ इंडस्ट्री, रबड़ किसान, ट्रेडर्स, एक्सपोर्टर्स के होते हैं, ये जानकारी देनी चाहिए। अगर ये बैलेंस मैनेटेन नहीं करेंगे, तो ब्यूरोक्रेटिक रूल बन जायेगा। हम यहां पर बैठकर रूल देंगे और वहां सिर्फ इम्प्लीमेंटेशन होता जायेगा, किसानों की कोई सुनने वाला नहीं होगा, इंडस्ट्री की कोई सुनने वाला नहीं होगा, ट्रेडर्स की कोई सुनने वाला नहीं होगा। इसलिए मैं आग्रह करूंगा कि उस बोर्ड में किसानों के प्रतिनिधि भी रहने चाहिए, ट्रेडर्स के प्रतिनिधि भी रहने चाहिए और जो रबड़ इंडस्ट्री से आते हैं, उन लोगों का प्रतिनिधित्व भी इसमें रहना चाहिए। रबड़ बोर्ड का जो अमेंडमेंट लाया गया है, हमारे लिए यह खुशी की बात है कि कम से कम 60 साल बाद जो अमेंडमेंट आया है, वह अमल में आये। लेकिन इन छोटे-छोटे विषयों को देखकर, उनका अध्ययन करके अगर हम इस बिल को पारित करें, तो किसानों को लाभ होगा। इतना कहकर मैं अपनी बात समाप्त करता हूं।

SHRI ANTO ANTONY (PATHANAMATHITTA): Mr. Chairman, Sir, I strongly welcome the Government's noble initiative to amend the Rubber Act, 1947. It shows the commitment of the Government to a sector that has shown a productivity increase of 465 per cent in the last 50 years.

Sir, I represent a State where 90 per cent of rubber in India is produced. Ninety per cent of the rubber growers belong to the category of small farmers. According to the Rubber Board statistics, there are only 283 large scale farmers but there exists more than 10 lakh small scale farmers. But the large scale farmers, whose number is mere 283, get three representatives in the Board of Directors whereas more than 10 lakh small scale farmers get a meagre three representatives. This makes decisions of the Rubber Board getting greatly influenced by the tycoons in the sector.

Hence, Representation of small growers in the Board of Directors should be increased from the present three to six.

Sir, there exist 2400 rubber producers' societies that make significant contributions to the 3.5 lakh rubber growers. There is a National Federation too known as NFRPS. These societies are constituted as per the guidelines of the Rubber Board.

All the benefits of the Rubber Board are distributed through these RPSS. Why can they not be given representation?

It is a universal norm to give representation to the employees in the management. But Rubber Board still remains an exception. It is quite natural for the Board to give representation to its own employees. At least, one representative should represent them.

Sir, the P.P Prabhu Commission was appointed by the Central Government in 2001. It recommended reducing the representation of officials in the Board and give more representation to farmers. But the proposed Amendment seeks to increase their representation by another three, leaving farmers' woes unheard.

I am so sorry to inform the House that the Prabhu Commission's' recommendations still remain unimplemented.

Sir, an RPS from my home village, Idamaruk has fought a long battle to protect the interest of our farmers and the hon. Supreme Court in the Idamaruk case, 2001 has made it mandatory for the Government to fix a Minimum Support Price. Accordingly the Government fixed the Minimum Support Price for rubber. But I am afraid that the insertion of four words 'if it deems necessary' in Section 13 would amount to a dilution of judicial verdict.

I represent a Constituency whose economy revolves round rubber. But during the last four years, diseases like chikungunya, viral fever and other infectious diseases have destroyed the modest family budgets of plantation workers, especially working in small and marginal holdings in this area. The Annual Report of Rubber Board attributes the fall in 2007 production to the spread of viral fever in major producing areas of Kerala during monsoon season. The fever caused an acute shortage of tappers. Hence, I would request the Government to instruct Rubber Board to modify the existing schemes and to create all health insurance schemes for labourers and their families and crop insurance schemes for farmers. The Government should take necessary steps to assist the Board for meeting this expenditure.

History has shown us that between 1998 and 2003, price of rubber fluctuated between Rs. 18 and Rs. 26 forcing several farmers to the brink of suicide. So, there is a need to create the Price Stabilization Fund, which will act as a cushion against such price volatility. Therefore, the Government should create a Price Stabilization Fund that provides assistance to farmers who suffer losses due to natural calamities and price fall.

High volatility in price should be prevented by banning Futures Trading. Speculators are greatly responsible for making the price very, very volatile. Hence, transaction without physical transfer of the goods should be banned. Price fluctuation could also be curbed by creating a healthy supply-demand situation, a good buffer stock of rubber, utilising the States and Central warehouses, rubber producer societies' godowns, etc.

Sir, I welcome the proposed Amendment, which seeks to redefine 'small grower' as an owner whose estate does not exceed 10 hectares in area. It is quite natural for them to be eligible for the benefits announced under the Central schemes. But Rubber Board's arbitrary redefinition of the term 'small grower' has scuttled the very purpose of the Government's noble cause. Most of the schemes of the Rubber Board are now focused on rubber plantations of small growers who own up to five hectares in this area. For example, the Rubber Plantation Development Scheme (Phase VI); Rules for New Planting and Replanting Components 2007-08 up to 2011-2012 issued by the Rubber Board defines holding under Rule II (2) as 'an area of land not exceeding five hectares planted with rubber owned by a person or jointly by a group of persons and includes areas proposed for new planting under the scheme.'

These differences in definition of 'small grower' by the Central Government and the Rubber Board should be stopped. The Government should be categorical in defining the small grower. No further dilution by any other agency is permitted.

In Clause 9, substitution of new Section for Section 17 vests arbitrary powers to the Board officials. This clause gives arbitrary powers to the Rubber Board officials to inspect the rubber sold or purchased by a dealer. The inclusion of "dealer" in new Section 17(2) should be omitted. I hope the hon. Minister will favourably consider and accept this suggestion. It should be noted that 30 per cent of the rubber produced in India, especially in Kerala, falls below the RSS 5 grade standard, which, according to the Rubber Board, is of inferior quality. But it should also be emphasized that such poor quality rubber is normally produced by small rubber growers who do not have proper storage or processing facility. Giving powers to the officials to make dealers answerable for storing poor quality rubber will force the dealers to reject the rubber brought by small growers. The Board should give adequate training and awareness among small and marginal farmers for maintaining quality.

I suggest amendment in Clause 7 (b). The amendment is expected to be passed today, that is, 24th November, 2009. The Clause reads, "...that the Central Government may specify zero paise per kilogram as the rate of duty of excise on natural rubber produced in India and procured for export by the exporters of natural rubber for the period from the 1st April, 1961 to the 31st August, 2003."

Instead, the timeframe should be extended to today, the 24th November, 2009. Rubber processing and manufacturing industries, nurseries, training schools for tappers, etc., should be started in the co-operative sector

too with the support of the Rubber Board.

I welcome the Government's decision to restrict imports of artificial rubber and allied products. I also appreciate the new drive of our enthusiastic Minister of Commerce to encourage exports. Recently, the hon. Minister of Commerce and Industry stated that India will export 50,000 tonnes of rubber. It is an excellent proposition. But how can we achieve it? Is there any action plan?

All the negative factors preventing this are in force. For example, international rubber price is fluctuating between Rs.8 and Rs.9 per kilogram less than the Indian price. In April-July, 2009, export was 880 metric tonnes but the import was 75,000 metric tonnes. This is alarming and this will go against the interest of small growers. This would lead to slash in domestic price in the near future. It needs great efforts to correct this gross mismatch between exports and imports.

Urgent steps should be taken to address adverse balance of trade. It is equally important to export value-added rubber instead of natural rubber.

Both India and China are emerging as the production centres of the world. India is having a comparative advantage with its sound and stable democratic backing, that is, technically superior labour force and one kilogram *per capita* consumption in rubber. Still it is lagging behind China. Why? India exports natural rubber whereas China focuses on rubber products.

Why is India far behind in industry-friendly research of applied type, especially in the non-tyre rubber products? Why Rubber Board could not contribute to the needs of the time, despite crores of rupees being allocated annually for research purposes? Now, India experiences a negative growth rate in non-tyre rubber product manufacturing sector. I would like to know the steps taken by the Government to improve the situation. Instead of exporting rubber, it could be value-added in our nation itself and these products could be exported, as China does.

China is emerging as a key player in this area and India may lose the edge to become a global leader in future.

The Government should launch a new scheme to promote rubber re-plantation.... (*Interruptions*) At present, rubber growers are not interested in rubber re-plantation. It would get good price. It will take seven years for a rubber plant to mature and to provide yield.

During his tenure a rubber grower will not get any income, but he has to bear expenses of his cultivation. This is the reason behind his reluctance to replant rubber. But timely replantation is essential to ensure steady production of rubber. Therefore, the Government has to introduce subsidy in a proper scheme to assist farmers to promote rubber replantation.

I will have to express my deep appreciation for the Hon. Minister Shri Anand Sharma and Hon. Minister Shri Jyotiraditya Scindia whose exceptional leadership quality, wisdom and capability will take the sector to sky high limits. I strongly believe that the proper implementation of the Bill will make India a global player in the

world. On behalf of the rubber farmers of Kerala, may I take this opportunity to express our best wishes for this noble mission?

श्री शैलेन्द्र कुमार (कौशाम्बी): माननीय अध्यक्ष महोदय, आपने मुझे रबड़ (संशोधन) विधेयक, 2009 पर बोलने का अवसर दिया, इसके लिए मैं आपका आभारी हूँ और मैं इस विधेयक के समर्थन में बोलने के लिए खड़ा हुआ हूँ। माननीय सिंधिया जी ने बड़े विस्तार से अपने भाषण में रबड़ उद्योग से संबंधित इस संशोधन विधेयक पर अपने विचार व्यक्त किये हैं, मैं उनसे अपने को सम्बद्ध करता हूँ। रबड़ से बनी वस्तुओं का हमारे जीवन में बहुत ही महत्वपूर्ण स्थान है और रबड़ का इस्तेमाल विभिन्न प्रकार की वस्तु बनाने में होता है। रोजमर्रा की वस्तु जो हम प्रयोग में लाते हैं, रबड़ का इस्तेमाल उनके बनाने में होता है। रबड़ से गुब्बारे भी बनाए जाते हैं तथा बहुत प्रकार के बच्चों के खिलौने बनाने में भी इसका उपयोग होता है और उन चीजों को हम देश से बाहर भी भेजते हैं तथा राजस्व का भी उससे फायदा होता है। रबड़ का हमारे पर्यावरण पर भी अनुकूल प्रभाव पड़ता है। हमारे माननीय मंत्री जी जो संशोधन विधेयक लाए हैं मैं उस पर अत्याधिक बल देना चाहूँगा। इसके प्लान्ट्स साउथ में या पहाड़ों पर ज्यादा होते हैं और जो पुराने रबड़ के पेड़ होते हैं उनसे गौंद निकालने का काम भी हमारे किसान करते हैं। रबड़ के पेड़ से दूध इकट्ठा करके तथा उसे प्रोसेस करके वे उसे कारखानों में भेजते हैं। इसमें किसानों की काफी मेहनत लगती है, इसलिए हमें किसानों की तरफ भी ध्यान देना होगा, जो रबड़ के पौधों को लगाते हैं और दूध को इकट्ठा करके विभिन्न कारखानों में ले जाते हैं जहां उससे कच्चा माल बनता है। उसके बाद रबड़ के टायर, वाशर, बुश और न जाने हजारों तरह के मैकेनिकल प्रयोग में इसे लिया जाता है। हमारे जीवन में इसका बहुत ही महत्वपूर्ण उपयोग है। इसलिए हमें इसे प्राथमिकता देनी चाहिए तथा किसानों को इसके लिए सब्सिडी देनी चाहिए, ताकि किसान इसका ज्यादा से ज्यादा उत्पादन करें। हम रबर की वस्तुओं को बनाकर बाहर भी सप्लाई करें, ताकि हमारे देश को विदेशी पूंजी मिले और हमारा देश विकास करे।

इन्हीं शब्दों के साथ मैं रबर संशोधन विधेयक, 2009 का समर्थन करते हुए अपनी बात समाप्त करता हूँ।

SHRI P. KARUNAKARAN (KASARGOD): Mr. Chairman, Sir, I agree with the views expressed by the hon. Minister that there should be some amendments in this Act. It is true that this Act had come into force 62 years back. In the long duration of this period, a large number of changes have taken place. The volume of export and import has increased; the size of the farms have changed. Earlier there were big estates; but in Kerala, as stated by the hon. Member, a large number of land-owners are small farmers. In each and every house, especially in some districts, we see some of the rubber trees. They are not the big farmers. Of course, they are small farmers.

When we think about the changes that have taken place in the duration of these 62 years, I think there should be some intensive study by the Ministry. There is no time-consuming aspect as stated by the hon.

Member. This Bill can be referred to the Standing Committee. The Standing Committee can take into account the changes that were taken place. Earlier, rubber was concentrated only in one or two States. Now it is there in Kerala, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal and Tripura and in many other States. This industry is growing fast. That issue has to be realised. I suggest that it is better that we refer the Bill to the Standing Committee. Within no time, in this Session itself, we can discuss the Bill in detail and that would be better to strengthen the Bill.

When we go to some of the suggestions regarding the Bill, the first thing is that I place before the hon. Minister the recommendations of the Prabhu Commission. I think it was in 2001 that the Prabhu Commission was appointed. The Commission's report was submitted and I think the Government has accepted that report. According to the recommendations of that Commission, the main recommendation is that each and every Board is too big and the size has to be reduced. The Commission also recommended that the number of Government nominees can be reduced. Not only that, but on the practice of sending observers to each Committee, it is also at the expense of the concerned Board; that also should not be the case. These were the main recommendations.

The Committee has especially come to these conclusions after studying the functions of the Rubber Board. The Rubber Board in Kerala has made some very remarkable changes. It is because of its independent work. All the stakeholders were given due participation be it the Government stakeholders, the traders, farmers, MPs and also the other workers. Now the Government has made the recommendation that three more Members have to be included and these three Members are the Government nominees. With regard to the rubber industry the large number of the farmers, 90 per cent of the farmers in Kerala are small farmers. The Government says that 'we are democratically functioning; the Bill is with a democratic spirit' but at the same time the Government is inducting bureaucrats or the Government officers not taking any person from the workers' side or from the farmers' side or from others. I strongly oppose the decision or the suggestion of the Government to take only the Government nominees. If you want to take three more persons you have to give due importance to the farmers also.

Another issue is on the quality control by the Government. When we speak about quality control, I fully agree. But, at the same time, you may see that a large number of farmers are small farmers. If the hon. Minister comes to Kerala he can see that each farmer daily goes with a rubber sheet to the traders. They do not know the other issues and the other things.

Hon. Minister, Prof. Thomas and hon. Member, Shri Chacko know of it because they come from the State of Kerala. Of course, quality control is required with regard to export and import, but at the same time, when we talk about this quality control aspect, the small farmers may be cheated and that would be used by the traders. But that also has to be taken very seriously. I do not object to it, but at the same time, if the Bill is referred to the Standing Committee, we can have a better discussion with regard to this aspect.

The issue of collection of cess is also the most important issue, but at the same time, we have to see whether the cess collected by the Government or the Rubber Board would be used for the welfare of the workers or for many other things. So, the collection of cess is also important, but at the same time, we will have to see who will be benefited.

In Kerala, there are a large number of small farmers, as stated by the other hon. Member from the State. The economy of Kerala, to a large extent, depends upon cash crop. The main crop is rubber. The only cash crop

which is not affected by price fluctuation is rubber, but we cannot say whether its price will come down. So, there should be an assurance by the Government or some mechanism by the Government to have price fixation. There should be some price support to the rubber industry.

The Government should also take some welfare measures for the workers in those areas, as stated by the hon. Members, like new schools, hospitals etc. I know well with regard to the workers engaged in rubber industry that after ten or twelve years, they would become the victim of some special diseases. So, there should be some special hospitals for their treatment in those areas because the Government has decided to collect the cess.

While I am admitting or agreeing to some of the clauses made by the Government, I think, it is better to strengthen the Bill by sending it to the Standing Committee. Also, we can reduce the size of holding by small farmers, especially in the new situation. The bigger estates have gone; only small estates are there. Now, not only the small estates are there, each farmer is doing rubber cultivation with small pieces of land. This has become a special feature of the rubber industry and that really contributes to the 90 per cent of the total production of the rubber.

Considering all these aspects, I think, this Bill can be strengthened and that would be better for the credibility of the Minister and also the Ministry to have such an intensive discussion.

With these suggestions, I conclude.

SHRI B. MAHTAB (CUTTACK): Mr. Chairman, I am reminded of the day this Bill was listed for discussion during the last Session, but subsequently it was sent back and not discussed because the Minister was not present. Today, of course, the Minister of State for Commerce and Industry is with us and he has piloted this Bill.

As has been said, India is the fourth largest producer of natural rubber with a share of 8.9 per cent in world's production in 2008. Despite not having the best regions geographically favourable for growing natural rubber, yet our country continues to record the highest productivity among major natural rubber producing countries. Our country is also the fourth largest consumer of natural rubber with a share of 9.2 per cent in world consumption, but the basic consumption is done by the auto-type sector which has accounted for 57.5 per cent of natural rubber consumption. We also export natural rubber though the quantity is less. I fail to understand this. I would like to get an answer from the Minister, if he can educate me, to understand why at all we export it when we have a demand here in the country.

My next point is about the definition of the small farmer or cultivator as it is called. You have mentioned about 50 hectares of land and that has been there. I think, it is too small for a crop or plantation programme. In the definition it needs to be enhanced. The Minister can consider it. This amendment seeks to delete provisions and substitute some of the existing provisions in the Rubber Act.

Over the years, the industry has undergone immense changes. There is no doubt that omissions of these Sections will remove cumbersome restrictions. The Rubber Board, which was at one point of time only giving suggestions and advice, has submitted several proposals under the Eleventh Five-Year Plan for improving productivity and quality of natural rubber in the traditional and non-traditional rubber growing regions. I would come to the non-traditional rubber-growing regions later on. Firstly, I would like to say that the Government has approved six schemes with a total outlay of Rs. 611.40 crore, which is being implemented by the Rubber Board during the Eleventh Five-Year Plan.

This Bill aims at creating a Rubber Development Fund, which is supposed to meet the expenses of rehabilitation of small growers. We are told, through the Bill, that a self-assessment procedure would be introduced to replace the existing assessment and collection of cess, which is time consuming and cumbersome. I welcome the provisions for enhancement of penalty for violation of the Act, and compounding of offences to check illegal transaction and evasion of rubber cess.

India overtook Japan in total natural rubber consumption, and it has emerged as the third largest consumer after China and the United States. I would like to draw the attention of the Minister and the Government regarding the problems the farmers are facing who are cultivating rubber. The rubber plantations are exposed to perils like fire, lightening, forest fire, bush fire, flood, storm, cyclone, land-slide, rock-slide, drought, etc.

Mr. Chairman, the peculiarity of rubber plantation is -- Mr. Karunakaran can help me out -- that if a few trees in a holding are damaged or they perish, then that particular patch of land cannot be used until the time all the trees are cut and the area is re-planted. The rubber plantation insurance should be made in an effective manner, and the cultivators be protected from any type of risks. The system that we have today is not that helpful for the plantation growers of rubber. Therefore, my suggestion would be to take up measures to increase natural rubber production in the country through extension of cultivation-productive enhancement schemes.

A subsidy of Rs. 30,000 per hectare is being provided in non-traditional regions, but it is very much insufficient and it should be increased. For instance, this subsidy includes planting subsidy, planting material grants, transportation grants, quality planting natural material generation and distribution, assistance for irrigation, boundary protection, and soil conservation. There are so many of them, and only Rs. 30,000 is being provided as subsidy to the cultivator.

Orissa comes under non-traditional region. The rubber planted area of natural rubber in Orissa in 2007-2008 was only 528 hectares, and production of natural rubber was only 114 tonnes. There is ample scope to increase it, but a matter of concern here is that productivity of rubber in Orissa is lower than the national productivity. I would suggest that the Government should provide more inputs and subsidy for the non-traditional regions to increase the cultivable area of rubber.

Today, productivity stands at 1.4 tonnes per hectare which is nearly 30 per cent lower than that of the top producer, Thailand, which has 1.8 tonnes. Malaysia is introducing plants cloned for higher yields and expects output to rise by 50 per cent, to as high as 1.5 million tonnes, by 2020.

Lastly, I would mention about local demand and export possibility. Today, the benchmark grade RSS-4 was at Rs. 106 per kilogram in mid-October, while the international price which has increased sharply to Rs. 112 a kilogram. This gap, being the in-charge of Commerce and Industry, I think, the Minister will understand, will enhance exports from India and thereby create problem for indigenous rubber-based industries.

I, therefore, suggest first to protect the interests of small cultivators; second, to provide more inputs and subsidy to rubber cultivators, and third, the Government should have a long-term plan to meet not only our domestic demand in full, but also create a greater role in the world market.

SHRI JOSE K. MANI (KOTTAYAM): Hon. Chairman, Sir, we believe that the Amendment to the Rubber Act has been brought in for securing the interests of the small farmers. If it be the case, then it should be ensured that the small farmers are benefited by the process.

I would like to say that sub-clause (1) of clause 17 states that an officer authorized by the Chairman can inspect at any reasonable time the rubber sold or purchased by a dealer for ensuring the standard or quality. We are not against improving the quality of rubber. We should improve the quality of rubber. But the fact is that out of the total production of rubber in the country, as was already mentioned in the House, about 92 per cent is manufactured or produced by the small farmers. Out of the total production of rubber, 30 per cent of rubber is ungraded, it is called rubber lots, or it is RSS-5 or below that; it is not approved or recognized by the Rubber Board. This happens because as you know, there are ten lakh small farmers who hold a land of about two hectares or below, and these farmers do not have any facility to process rubber, or they do not have any facility for storage or they do not have the know-how. They also do not have the financial assistance or the strength to have the processing unit.

The fear of inspection by the officer and also the fear of punishment, imprisonment, and penalty will discourage a dealer not to collect 30 per cent of production which is of lower quality. If the dealer is reluctant to take the lower quality product which is produced by the small farmer, then the small farmer will be left in lurch or there will be no takers at all.

My suggestion is that the farmers should be assisted financially and technically to improve the quality by providing them a processing unit. I would request the Minister to delete this particular clause.

Another point which I would like to bring to the notice of the hon. Minister is that the Amendment proposes to induct three more Government representatives in the Rubber Board. According to the rubber statistics which were already mentioned in the House, there are about 283 big farmers, and there are three representatives of the big farmers in the Board. There are about 10,00,500 small farmers, but they only have three representatives in the Board. Now, with the introduction of three more Government representatives in the Rubber

Board, the representation of small farmers will definitely get diluted. My suggestion is that the number of representatives of small farmers should be increased instead of the number of Government representatives.

Subsidy given for replanting is about Rs.19,000 per hectare. As you know, once replanting takes place it results in years of holiday and the farmers are left with no income during that period. Because the cost of replanting has in general gone up, farmers are postponing their replanting. So, my suggestion is that the subsidy should be increased from Rs.19,000 per hectare to Rs.30,000 per hectare to meet the increased cost of production.

The amendment proposed to be made to Section 13 of the Rubber Act is unnecessary and it should be withdrawn. It was originally mandatory for the Government to fix a minimum floor price. But the amendment intends to make it discretionary for the Government by using the words, 'if it deems necessary'. This discretion is given to the Government to fix a minimum floor price or not to take it up at all. I, therefore, submit that in the larger interest of lakhs of rubber cultivators in the country, this amendment has to be withdrawn or may be referred to the Select Committee for study by experts.

In my humble opinion there are some objectionable clauses in the proposed Bill which are detrimental to the interest of small farmers. In Rajya Sabha the Bill has been referred to the Select Committee. In my opinion, we should also refer this Bill to the Select Committee for further study. I hope the Government would agree to it.

SHRI PRABODH PANDA (MIDNAPORE): Hon. Chairman, Sir, I broadly support this Rubber (Amendment) Bill, but I think it would have been better if it had been forwarded to the Standing Committee for further study as there are some shortcomings in the Bill. Rubber is one of the important cash crops cultivated in our country, mainly Kerala and the North Eastern States. Rubber plantations are exposed to the perils of nature like fire, lightning, forest fire, floods, storm, tempest, inundation, landslide, rockslide, earthquake, etc. So, the rubber-growers are facing acute problems and it should not be taken casually. The peculiarity of rubber plantation is that if a few trees in a holding are damaged, that particular patch of land cannot be used till the time all these trees are replaced.

With regard to the Bill, I would say that a Bill envisaging the exemption of over Rs.16.68 crore shows the natural rubber produced and procured in the country for export and providing relief to both producer and exports. What is the import and export position of our country? During April-October this year, it is observed that exports were 2639 tonnes whereas imports were 1,26, 472 tonnes. So, exports were much less than the imports and we are still dependent mainly on exports. Why is it so? This is because the domestic prices were ruling over the international prices. So, the Government should ponder over this point.

It is already observed that the majority of tyres imported are from China.

16.00 hrs.

It is observed that 4.68 lakh trucks and buses and 14.11 lakh car tyres are already imported. In this Bill itself, it is stated about the small growers. What is the definition of 'small growers'? It should be clarified. Definition of 'small growers' is to be amended. Small growers would be the owner whose estate does not exceed 10 hectares. At least this should be there as against the exist limit of 50 hectares.

With regard to 'public interest' it is stated that the Central Government will think over to provide more concession in the case of 'public interest' What is the definition of 'public interest'? Another point has been mentioned by several hon. Member and it is about the Rubber Board. There is a little scope for the induction of the representative of farmers in the Rubber Board. In such a scenario, how can one say that it is democratic? It would be nothing but a mechanism of bureaucracy.

All these shortcomings are there in the Bill. Hence, I propose that it would be better to send it to the Standing Committee on Labour or Commerce so that they would go through the Bill and make suggestions and they would fill up the lacunae.

With these words, I broadly support this Bill.

डॉ. रघुवंश प्रसाद सिंह (वैशाली): सभापति महोदय, इस सदन में रबर के किसानों की खराब स्थिति के विषय में दक्षिण के, केरल के जो माननीय सदस्यगण हैं, बराबर सवाल उठाया करते हैं। माननीय मंत्री जी ने बिल को लाने के वक्त दावा किया कि 62 वर्ष के बाद, सन् 1947 के विधेयक को संशोधन करने का प्रस्ताव हम लाए हैं। उनके द्वारा इंट्रोड्यूस होने के बाद माननीय सदस्यों ने छोटा किसान-छोटा किसान का बड़ा सवाल उठाया। उस लोभ का मैं संवरण नहीं कर सका। मैंने सोचा कि देखें कि इस विधेयक में छोटे किसान के विषय में कुछ है या सिर्फ व्यापारिक कारोबार है, व्यापारी लोगों को फायदा पहुंचाने के लिए ही यह विधेयक है।

शुरू में हेगड़े जी ने जो सवाल उठाया है, मैं उनसे सहमत हूँ कि सन् 1947 के विधेयक में संशोधन 62 वर्ष के बाद आ रहा है। क्या जल्दबाजी है कि इस मामले में स्टैंडिंग कमेटी को इग्नोर किया गया? यह बताना पड़ेगा। स्टैंडिंग कमेटी में जाकर माननीय सदस्यगण गहराई से छानबीन करते कि छोटे किसान की क्या परिभाषा है? इसे पांडा जी उठा रहे हैं, लेकिन करूणाकरण साहब ने छोड़ दिया। इस सवाल पर स्टैंडिंग कमेटी...(व्यवधान) हम संक्षेप में बोलेंगे। केवल किसान की बात बोलेंगे।

(Dr. Thambidurai *in the Chair*)

महोदय, ऐसा लगा कि केवल यह व्यापारियों के लिए विधेयक आया, उनको मदद करने के लिए आया है। इस सवाल का जवाब होना चाहिए कि स्टैंडिंग कमेटी से क्यों परहेज हुआ है? यह स्टैंडिंग कमेटी में क्यों नहीं गया है? जब 62 वर्ष का विलंब हो ही गया, तो दो-चार महीने और लग जाते, स्टैंडिंग कमेटी गहराई से छानबीन करती और जिस बात के लिए विधेयक लाया गया है, उसको हम पूरा करते। इस बारे में कई माननीय सदस्यों ने सवाल उठाया है, उधर के सदस्यों ने भी कहा है कि विधेयक को स्टैंडिंग कमेटी या प्रवर समिति या किसी में जाना चाहिए, इसकी छानबीन करनी चाहिए। नहीं तो आप इस सवाल का जवाब दें, हम सवाल उठाते हैं।

लघु किसान, छोटा किसान की परिभाषा पहले क्या थी? पचास एकड़ से कम जमीन वाले किसान छोटे किसान होंगे। उस समय में सीलिंग एक्ट नहीं था। केरल के करूणाकरण जी और बाकी लोग सवाल उठा रहे हैं। आपके यहां सीलिंग एक्ट नहीं लगा है। अब उसे पचास एकड़ से घटाकर दस हेक्टेयर किया गया है। 10 हेक्टेयर का मतलब 25 एकड़। 25 एकड़ और कम वाले किसान लघु हैं तो दो-ढाई एकड़, पांच एकड़ वालों को कौन से किसान कहा जाए। कैसा सवाल है, धोखाधड़ी है, सदन की आंख में धूल झोंकने का नाम छोटा किसान है। छोटे किसान 25 एकड़ जमीन तक वाले होंगे। हम सवाल उठाते हैं कि केरल में सीलिंग एक्ट है या नहीं? कितना हाइएस्ट है, कितनी एकड़ जमीन वाले किसान छोटे किसान होंगे? क्या आपके राज्य में हजार, दो हजार एकड़ वाले बड़े किसान हैं? देशभर में सीलिंग लगी, कुछ जोड़कर रखा होगा। 25 एकड़ मतलब 10 हेक्टेयर का जब छोटा किसान होगा, तो दो-ढाई एकड़ लघु कृषक, सीमांत कृषक की देशभर में जो परिभाषा है, क्या डैफिनेशन है और आप 25 एकड़ की डैफिनेशन दे रहे हैं। ढाई एकड़, पांच एकड़ तक जमीन का किसान लघु और सीमांत किसान होगा। इसमें बड़ी भारी साजिश है और बड़ा भारी षडयंत्र लगता है। इसीलिए स्टैंडिंग कमेटी में जाने से परहेज किया गया। देश में लघु किसान की क्या परिभाषा है, माननीय सदस्य देख लेते। इसमें किसान के लिए क्या है? प्रोड्यूसर, प्रोसेसर, मैन्युफैक्चरर और एक्सपोर्टर - इन्होंने बिल में एक्सपोर्टर का क्या फायदा लिखा है - इसके परिणामस्वरूप भारत में उत्पादित और उक्त अवधि के लिए प्राकृतिक रबड़ के निर्यातकों द्वारा निर्यात के लिए उपाप्त की गई प्राकृतिक रबड़ के संबंध में 16 करोड़, 68 लाख, 59 हजार रुपये के उपकर की छूट होगी। एक्सपोर्टर को छूट हो जाएगी लेकिन प्रोड्यूसर कहां जाएगा। यह एक्सपोर्टर के लिए, मैन्युफैक्चरर के लिए और प्रोसेसर के लिए है। क्या किसान प्रोसेसर कर पाता है? किसान प्रोसेसिंग करे, किसान एक्सपोर्ट करे, क्या इसमें उसके लिए कोई प्रबंध है? कुछ नहीं है। सब माननीय सदस्य छोटा किसान, छोटा किसान कहते हैं, लेकिन बिल में छोटे किसान के प्रोटेक्शन के लिए कुछ बात ही नहीं है।

रबड़ निधि बनेगी। रबड़ निधि में क्या खर्च होगा। बिल के नम्बर 1 में लिखा है - रबड़ बोर्ड का सारा खर्च उसमें किया जाएगा। उसमें किसान को क्या मिलेगा। रबड़ निधि का खर्च बोर्ड के व्ययों पर होगा। उस बोर्ड में कौन है? माननीय सदस्य ने कहा कि उसमें काम करने वाले मजदूर हैं। वामपंथी भाई, छोटे किसानों की बात बोलनी चाहिए, मजदूर की बात बोलनी चाहिए। जो मजदूर प्रोसेसिंग और मैन्युफैक्चरिंग में काम कर रहे हैं, उनके प्रतिनिधित्व का क्या होगा। उसमें तीन सदस्य बढ़ाए हैं जिनमें दो सदस्य व्यापार विभाग के होंगे और एक कृषि विभाग से होगा। आप सरकारी विभाग के दो प्रतिनिधि रखना चाहते हैं तो व्यापार विभाग के दो सदस्य क्यों रहेंगे और कृषि विभाग का एक सदस्य क्यों रहेगा। जिसमें प्रोड्यूसर कहीं नहीं रहेंगे, लेबर कहीं नहीं रहेगी। मेहताब साहब का सवाल ठीक है कि यह ऐसा विषय है कि एक्सपोर्ट भी हो रहा है और इम्पोर्ट भी हो रहा है। हिन्दुस्तान में रबड़ की खपत कितनी है। हम इसमें आत्मनिर्भर क्यों नहीं हो पा रहे हैं? सरकार में यह इच्छा शक्ति होनी चाहिए कि हिन्दुस्तान में रबड़ की जो जरूरत है, हम अपने प्रोड्यूसर को इतना प्रोत्साहन देंगे, मान लें केरल में 90 फीसदी या नार्थ ईस्ट में सरकार ने दावा किया है कि हम उत्पादन करवाएंगे। यदि वहां जियोग्राफिकल, जलवायु और उस तरह का वातावरण है, तो क्यों नहीं दावा करते कि हम आत्मनिर्भर हो जाएंगे, इम्पोर्ट की जरूरत नहीं होगी। जब सरप्लस हो जाएगा तब हम एक्सपोर्ट करेंगे नहीं तो इम्पोर्ट का दरवाजा खुला है और एक्सपोर्ट का दरवाजा भी खुला है।

एक्सपोर्टर्स के टैक्स की माफी हो रही है। किसान तीन नम्बर पर चला गया है। फार्मर्स का क्या होगा? केरल के माननीय सदस्य बतायें कि रबड़ के किसान की क्या स्थिति है? वैसे इस देश के हर किसान की बहुत ही खराब स्थिति है, लेकिन रबड़ के किसान की बहुत ही खराब हालत है। वह उत्पादन करेगा, तो उसे खरीदने वाला कोई नहीं होगा। वह माल बिकेगा ही नहीं। मैन्युफैक्चर्स, प्रोसेसर, एक्सपोर्टर्स पहुंचेगा और किसान का गला दबायेगा। अब किसान को लाचारी है, तो

वह क्या करेगा? वह उत्पादन करेगा, तो उसे कुछ आमदनी होगी जिससे उसके घर का खर्चा चलेगा, खेती के लिए वह खाद, बीज खरीदेगा, कपड़ा खरीदेगा और बच्चों को पढ़ाई करायेगा, दवाई का प्रबंध करायेगा, बीमारी का इलाज करायेगा। किसान अपना उत्पादन बेचने के लिए लाचार है। लेकिन इस बिल में, मैं फार्मर्स के लिए कोई प्रोटेक्शन नहीं देख रहा हूँ। व्यापारी, एक्सपोर्टर्स के प्रोटेक्शन आदि के लिए यह विधेयक है। इसलिए स्टैंडिंग कमेटी से परहेज हुआ है। इस बिल को स्टैंडिंग कमेटी में भेजने के लिए यह क्यों इग्रोर कर रहे हैं? स्टैंडिंग कमेटी में गहराई से छानबीन होती है। इनको क्या जल्दबाजी है? इसमें 62 वर्ष का विलंब हुआ, तो तीन साल और विलंब सही, लेकिन गहराई से इसकी छानबीन होती। उस कमेटी में सब केरल के सदस्य रहते जिससे वहाँ किसान की क्या हालत है, उनके प्रोटेक्शन के लिए भी कुछ उपाय होता। कई लोगों ने इस बिल का समर्थन किया है, लेकिन मुझे इसमें संदेह है। स्टैंडिंग कमेटी से परहेज होना, किसान का कहीं जिक्र नहीं होना, रबर बोर्ड बनाना या खर्चा बढ़ाना आदि सब कुछ है, लेकिन किसानों का कहीं कोई जिक्र नहीं है। उत्पादनकर्ता कहीं है ही नहीं। इसमें विनिर्माणकर्ता यानी मैनुफैक्चर्स, फिर प्रोसेसर्स यानी प्रसंस्करणकर्ता, फिर एक्सपोर्टकर्ता जो माल बाहर भेजेगा, तो उत्पादनदाता कहां चला गया? उनका कहीं कोई जिक्र नहीं है इसलिए मंत्री जी सभी बातों का जवाब दें। जब यह बिल 62 वर्ष देर से आया, तो इस बिल को लाने में क्या जल्दबाजी है? इस बिल को स्टैंडिंग कमेटी में भेजने से क्या दिक्कत है? दो-तीन महीने में स्टैंडिंग कमेटी में जांच हो जाती है। इससे यह बात साफ हो जाती और सरकार भी दावा करती कि यह बिल स्टैंडिंग कमेटी में गया है। हमने उनकी कुछ अनुशंसाओं को माना और कुछ को नहीं माना, लेकिन यह ...(व्यवधान) सीएजी का जब ऑडिट ऑब्जेक्शन होगा तब क्या आप सुधारेंगे? क्या आपको खुद समझ में नहीं आता। इसलिए जब इन सभी बातों पर निर्णय हो, तब विधेयक पास होना चाहिए। आप छोटे किसान की परिभाषा को साफ करिये। केरल में जमीन की कितनी हाईस्ट सीलिंग है? 25 एकड़ से कम वाला छोटा किसान है, तो 25 एकड़ से ज्यादा वाले भी क्या वहाँ किसान हैं? क्या सवाल है? ...(व्यवधान) प्लांटेशन है, तो उसमें कुछ पेड़ लगायेंगे। हम केरल में जानना चाहते हैं क्योंकि स्टेट ने सीलिंग एक्ट लागू किया होगा। कम्युनिस्ट लोग हैं, तो उन्होंने जरूर कुछ घटाया होगा। वे बहुत दिन शासन में रहे इसलिए वहाँ क्या सीलिंग है? क्या फ्री है? ...(व्यवधान)

MR. CHAIRMAN : Please address the Chair. Members should not discuss among themselves. If they are willing, I can allow them to speak.

...(व्यवधान)

डॉ. रघुवंश प्रसाद सिंह : जमीन रखने की मैक्सिमम इजाजत कितनी है? होल्लिंग कितनी है? ...(व्यवधान) मैं सभी सवालों को उठाकर कहना चाहता हूँ कि सबका हल होना चाहिए, तब विधेयक पास होना चाहिए।

श्री विष्णु पद राय (अंडमान और निकोबार द्वीपसमूह): सभापति महोदय, मैं मंत्री महोदय जी जब विधेयक के बारे में बोल रहे थे तब मैं उनको सुन रहा था। सबसे पहले मैं उनको धन्यवाद ज्ञापित करता हूँ कि 62 वर्ष बाद भी उन्होंने इस पर चिंता की और यह विधेयक लेकर आये। मंत्री जी जवान हैं और सरकार की चिंता जवानों को लेकर भी है। मैं खासकर उन्हें अंडमान निकोबार द्वीप समूह में ले जाना चाहता हूँ। थाईलैंड, मलेशिया के बगल में एक द्वीप समूह है जिसे अण्डमान-निकोबार द्वीप समूह कहते हैं जो सीधे भारत सरकार के अधीन है। वर्ष 1964 में भारत सरकार ने अण्डमान-निकोबार की सुरक्षा की दृष्टि से बांग्लादेश, बर्मा, श्रीलंका से इंडियन ओरीजिन के लोगों को लाकर वहाँ बसाया। रबर बोर्ड की कहानी शुरू हुई वर्ष 1964 से। श्रीलंका और बर्मा के रिपैट्रिएट्स, जो ओरीजिनली इंडियन्स थे, उनको लाकर पोर्ट ब्लेयर के वृंदावन पंचायत में एक न्यूक्लियस रबर स्टेट एंड ट्रेनिंग सेंटर बनाया गया। बाद में अण्डमान एडमिनिस्ट्रेशन के हाथ में आया और वर्ष

1975 में वह रबर बोर्ड के हाथ में गया। वहां प्रशासन ने 206 हेक्टेअर जमीन दी थी, जिसमें से 190 हेक्टेअर जमीन पर रबर प्लांटेशन की गयी। आज रबर बोर्ड की हालत क्या है उसकी ओर मैं मंत्री जी का ध्यान आकृष्ट करूंगा। वर्ष 1965 से 1968 के बीच में वहां पर रबर के पेड़ लगाए गए जो आज 40-42 साल से भी ज्यादा पुराने हो गए हैं। वे रबर के पेड़ बूढ़े हो गए, लेकिन वहां रिप्लांटिंग नहीं हो रही है। केवल इतना ही नहीं, इसके कारण प्रोडक्शन भी कम हो गया है। वर्ष 2002-03 में जहां प्रोडक्शन 63 मीट्रिक टन था, वहीं वर्ष 2007-08 में प्रोडक्शन केवल 41 मीट्रिक टन ही रहा क्योंकि पेड़े बूढ़े हो रहे हैं जिससे उनमें लैटेक्स (दूध) कम हो रहा है और रिप्लांटिंग नहीं हो रही है। यही स्थिति काछाल द्वीप की है। इस हालत को कैसे देखता है रबर बोर्ड। वृंदावन में, न्यूक्लियस रबर स्टेट में 74 मजदूर काम करते हैं, उनके पदनाम हैं - सीनियर मजदूर, हेड मजदूर और जूनियर मजदूर। हेड मजदूर ने 25 से 40 साल काम किया है, लेकिन आज उनकी सैलरी क्या है? उनको एक दिन काम करने पर 190 रूपए मिलते हैं और एक मामूली मजदूर को 180 रूपए मिलते हैं। मजदूर भूखे मर रहे हैं। 40 साल काम करने के बाद एक परमानेंट मजदूर की कुल वेतन 156 रूपए मिनिमम वेजेज पर एलाउंस मिलाकर 190 रूपए होते हैं। लेकिन वहीं पर रबर बोर्ड के स्टाफ और ऑफिसर्स को सिक्स्थ पे-कमीशन के बेनिफिट्स मिल रहे हैं, उनकी सैलरी बढ़ी 40 प्रतिशत वृद्धि हुई। उनको वैरिअबल डीए भी मिल रहा है। मैं एक उदाहरण देना चाहूंगा। एक मामूली सिक्योरिटी गार्ड को भी सिक्स्थ पे-कमीशन बेनिफिट्स मिले, लेकिन मजदूर को कुछ नहीं मिला। मैं अनुरोध करूंगा कि 30 से 40 साल काम करने के बाद उस बूढ़े मजदूर को ग्रेच्युटी नहीं मिल रही है। वहां मजदूरों की बहुत खराब हालत है। जायसवाल जी यहां बैठे हुए हैं। सुनामी के समय माननीय प्रधानमंत्री जी, सोनिया गांधी जी और जायसवाल जी वहां गए थे और कहकर आए थे कि हम न्यु अण्डमान बनाएंगे जो सिंगापुर जैसा होगा। पैसे की कमी नहीं होगी, दुख-तकलीफ दूर हो जाएगी। लेकिन आज वहां हालत बहुत खराब है। अण्डमान-निकोबार में जो रबर बोर्ड चल रहा है, वहां जो मजदूर काम कर रहे हैं, 25-30 साल काम करने के बाद भी उनकी मजदूरी 190 रूपए प्रतिदिन है।

मुझे लगता है कि सरकार के लिए और संसद के लिए यह शोभाजनक नहीं है। आदरणीय प्रधान मंत्री मनमोहन सिंह जी ने जो कहा था, उसे देखते हुए मैं अनुरोध करूंगा कि जैसे वहां स्टाफ को पे स्केल दिए गए हैं, उसी तरह से रबड़ के काम में लगे मजदूरों को भी दिए जाएं। इसके अलावा जो रबड़ के पेड़ अपनी आयु पूरी कर चुके हैं, बूढ़े हो चुके हैं, उनकी जगह नया प्लांटेशन किया जाए, ताकि रबड़ की आपूर्ति सुनिश्चित की जा सके। इन सब कामों के लिए पैसे की जरूरत होगी और वह केन्द्र सरकार को देना चाहिए। हम जब प्रधान मंत्री जी से मिले थे तो हमने उनसे कहा था कि अंडमान-निकोबार द्वीप समूह बहुत बड़ा है। वहां काफी रबड़ पैदा होता है, लेकिन उसका जो बोर्ड है, वह केरल में कोट्टायम में है। इसलिए भारत सरकार को न्यूक्लियस रबड़ स्टेट एंड ट्रेनिंग सेंटर, वृंदावन में मजदूरों की तनख्वाह बढ़ाने के लिए, नए रबड़ के पेड़ लगाने के लिए और इंफ्रास्ट्रक्चर के लिए सात-आठ करोड़ रुपए का पैकेज देना चाहिए।

अंडमान-निकोबार द्वीप समूह में सबसे बड़ी समस्या रबड़ शीट के ट्रंसपोर्टेशन की है। उसे दूर किया जाना चाहिए। जब भी हमारे यहां से कोई व्यक्ति भारत आता है तो उसे कहा जाता है कि यह काला पानी से आया है। मैं कहना चाहता हूं कि काला पानी से आए लोगों के प्रति भी यहां के लोगों के मन में प्रेम-मोहब्बत होनी चाहिए। हमारे यहां रबड़ पैदा होता है, लेकिन वहां फिनिश गुड्स तैयार करने के लिए कोई फैक्टरी इत्यादि नहीं है इसलिए वह मुख्य भूमि में जाता है, जहां उससे जरूरत का सामान बनाया जाता है। उसके लिए ट्रंसपोर्टेशन की, लोडिंग-अनलोडिंग की काफी प्रॉब्लम है इसलिए हमें इसमें 100 प्रतिशत सब्सिडी देनी चाहिए। अगर वह पूरी सब्सिडी मिल जाए तो अंडमान-निकोबार द्वीप समूह भी काफी तरक्की कर सकता है।

हमारे यहां कुछ छोटे किसानों ने अपनी बगीचों में रबड़ के पेड़ लगाए हैं और वे रबड़ निकाल कर उसकी शीट बनाते हैं, जो मुख्य भूमि जाती है। उन लोगों को इस काम के लिए और उत्साहित करने की जरूरत है। इसके लिए भारत सरकार को चाहिए कि वह उन्हें सब्सिडी दे। वे लोग जो रबड़ शीट बनाते हैं, उसके ट्रंसपोर्टेशन के लिए सरकार को 100 प्रतिशत सब्सिडी देनी चाहिए। इसके अलावा जो 74 मजदूर 25-30 सालों से काम कर रहे हैं, उनके वेतन के बारे में सोचना चाहिए, क्योंकि सिर्फ 5,000 रूपए महीने में उनके घर का खर्चा चलना बहुत मुश्किल है। हमारे यहां सामान की कीमतें काफी ज्यादा हैं। दिल्ली में जो सामान तीन रुपए में मिलता है, वह अंडमान-निकोबार में 12 रुपए में मिलता है। दिल्ली में दो रुपए में अंडा

मिलता है, लेकिन वहां आठ रुपए में मिलता है। इसलिए 190 रुपए रोज की मजदूरी में वहां के मजदूर कैसे घर चला सकते हैं, इस पर सरकार को ध्यान देना चाहिए। हमने अपने युवा मंत्री जी से मुलाकात की थी और उनसे निवेदन किया था कि उनके मंत्रालय से एक टीम अंडमान-निकोबार द्वीप समूह जाए, जो मजदूरों से और मजदूर यूनियन से भी बात करे, जिससे समस्या का समाधान हो सके।

मंत्री जी ने जो यह विधेयक पेश किया है, काफी समय बाद आया है। देश को आजाद हुए 62 साल बीत गए हैं, अब जाकर सरकार ने रबड़ उत्पादन में काम कर रहे मजदूरों के बारे में सोचा, यह अच्छी बात है। सरकार ने सुनामी के बाद नया अंडमान-निकोबार द्वीप समूह का स्लोगन दिया था, उसे पूरा किया जाए। राजीव गांधी जी ने सपना देखा था कि अंडमान-निकोबार द्वीप समूह का विकास किया जाएगा, उसे सरकार को पूरा करना चाहिए। हमारे यहां इंदिरा पाइंट पर इंदिरा गांधी जी का स्टेच्यू है और अंडमान-निकोबार द्वीप समूह की केपिटल पोर्टब्लेयर में राजीव गांधी जी का स्टेच्यू है, बीच में रबड़ के पेड़ हैं। इसलिए अंडमान-निकोबार द्वीप समूह के विकास को ध्यान में रखते हुए आईडीए को ध्यान में रखते हुए मैंने जो तीन-चार मांगें सरकार के सामने रखी हैं, मुझे उम्मीद है कि मंत्री जी उन पर ध्यान देंगे और समस्या को दूर करेंगे।

*SHRI PRASANTA KUMAR MAJUMDAR (BALURGHAT) : Hon. Chairman Sir, I take the floor to support the Rubber (Amendment) Bill, 2009. The Bill should have been sent to the Standing Committee first to do away with the irregularities which are there in this Bill. I support the Bill but I would like to move certain amendments here.

First, the phrase 'marginal cultivators' should be added in the Bill along with the phrases 'big cultivators' and 'small cultivators'. The marginal growers, who have 2 acres or 3 acres of land, what facilities do they get? In Kerala, there are 11 lakh small and marginal cultivators and only 283 big rubber growers who enjoy all the privileges. The Rubber Board is the nodal agency which provides facilities to the big players. Since, the number of small growers are limited, the proposed amendments should cater to their needs.

Secondly, rubber is grown not only in Kerala, Tripura, Orissa, Mysore but also in parts of Northern India. Then why only Kerala is going to represent? Three representatives are chosen from Kerala. Democratically this is not proper. The smaller growers should also be given a chance to represent themselves. Eastern India like Assam, Tripura Orissa must have their representatives to voice their grievances. This is my opinion. Thirdly, while tapping natural rubber, the labourers are often affected by Chikungunia, fever or Snake bite. There are various medical facilities for the workers of the tea gardens. Similar medical benefits should be provided to the rubber plantation workers also.

Financial assistance should be extended to them as in the case of tea estate labourers. These provisions need to be included in the Bill.

The allocation of cess or tax should be earmarked properly for the big, small and marginal rubber planters. In what manner the money can be used for development purpose need to be chalked out. Infact, the standing committee could have easily identified these small loopholes. This Bill has been introduced after 62 years but

nevertheless, it is a welcome step and is acceptable too, because, the figures of 2009 show that India is the third largest producer of rubber in the world. It exports as well as imports rubber. Thus we need to focus more on rubber plantation. More and more subsidy should be given to the small growers.

I can cite a small example here. If the crops of rich cultivators perish, they get Rs.19,000 as compensation. But the small planters are not getting that much compensation. So all the privileges are grabbed by the bigger players while more than 11 lakh small planters suffer a lot. They survive on rubber cultivation only. Thus, they contribute about 35% of the total rubber production of this country. But the quality of the rubber is not up to the mark. In Kerala, the labourers get more wages but in other parts of the country they cannot compete with the big planters. They are always facing problems of less wages and more diseases as a result of which quality production suffers. The Government has to come forward with more subsidy and regulate the market along with proper credit facilities.

Section 17 sub section II should be immediately omitted from the Bill as it may thwart the developmental prospects of rubber estates. Thus, I repeat that the Bill should have been scrutinized by the Standing Committee. Moreover, use of imported synthetic rubber is harming our indigenous factories which are incurring heavy losses. We need to take care of this aspect. Environmental pollution is also on the rise due to the use of synthetic rubber. We all know about the ill-effects of pollution. So there should be a provision for pollution control also in this Bill.

With these words and with the hope that in future the Bills will not be allowed to bypass the scrutiny of the Standing Committee, I conclude my speech.

SHRI P.T. THOMAS (IDUKKI): Mr. Chairman, Sir, I would like to congratulate the hon. Minister Shri Jyotiraditya Scindia for introducing this Bill in this august House.

Sir, Kerala is producing more than 90 per cent of the total rubber production of our country and 93 per cent of the planted area in our country is cultivated by small plantation growers. Rubber is the backbone of Kerala's economy. Rubber is part and parcel of Keralites' day-to-day life.

I would like to raise only two or three important issues here. I would like to say that clause 17 (1) of this Bill is not protecting the interests of rubber growers, especially the small growers of Kerala. It will create some bad apprehensions to small farmers. In this clause, it is mentioned that an officer authorized by the Chairman may, at any reasonable time, inspect rubber purchased or sold by the dealer for the purpose of ensuring compliance of the standards. We welcome any measure introduced to ensure the quality of rubber products. But why is this provision included in the Bill? I would like to point out that it will be misused by interested parties and it will affect small farmers because whenever a small farmer brings 100 kilograms of rubber to the dealer, immediately the dealer will say that this is not up to the mark.

Then, he can control the price also. I am requesting the Government to reconsider Clause 17 (1) of the Bill.

Secondly, this Amendment Bill proposes to induct three more Government representatives. It is an injustice because three members are representing 283 big farmers now in the Board whereas only three members are representing more than 10 lakh small scale farmers. I am requesting the Government to increase the number of representatives of the small scale farmers from three to six in the Rubber Board. Otherwise, it will be a grave injustice to the small scale farmers.

Sir, I would like to mention one more point that an amendment proposed in Section 13 of the Rubber Act will also not help the interest of the farmers. Originally, it was mandatory for the Government to fix a minimum fair price. Due to this amendment, it is discretionary by the Government now. It will not help the farmers. I am requesting the Government to reconsider all these things.

Further I would like to mention two or three small points. There was a famous slogan 'No taxation without representation'. There are 2,000 Rubber Producing Societies in Kerala. It is a cooperative movement. There is no representative from them in the Rubber Board. Not only that but they are not even considering it. Tens and thousands of labourers are working in the rubber cultivation but there is no representative from them in the Rubber Board. I am requesting the Government to consider having one representative from the Rubber Producing Societies and one representative from the side of labourers.

There is no insurance coverage to the farmers now. Whenever some natural calamity occurs, the rubber cultivators are suffering very much. So, I am requesting the Government to give adequate insurance coverage to the rubber cultivators, small scale farmers and also the labourers. I am also requesting the Government to increase the educational facilities and also to provide scholarships to the children of the labourers, rubber cultivators and farmers.

Sir, I would like to conclude my speech by congratulating the hon. Ministers – Shri Anand Sharma ji, and Shri Jyotiraditya M. Scindia. At the time of the discussion on the ASEAN agreement, it was because of the sincere effort of our hon. Ministers rubber was included in the 'Negative List'.

Suppose, it was not included in the Negative List, then it would have badly affected the economy of our country, especially the economy of our State Kerala. But the right decision has been taken by the hon. Minister not to import rubber from the ASEAN countries.

But Sir, some people were not prepared to admit this fact. They are making baseless propandas. Without knowing the fact they are on warpath like forming human chains in our State... (*Interruptions*) Whenever the Government is introducing any new idea, our Left friends are opposing it.

On this aspect, I would like to congratulate the hon. Minister for giving the right direction in the ASEAN Agreement, which will certainly help the farmers of Kerala, especially the rubber planters.

Finally, I would request the hon. Minister to consider my proposals. I am wholeheartedly supporting this Amendment Bill.

SHRI P.C. CHACKO (THRISSUR): Hon. Chairperson, I stand here to support the Bill moved by Shri Jyotiraditya M. Scindia, which is an Amendment to the Act passed by this Parliament in 1947. So, after 62 years, for the first time a discussion is coming before this House on this Act. This is an opportunity for us to introspect and also discuss on the issues faced by the small rubber growers and the rubber industry as a whole.

Sir, I would like to congratulate the hon. Minister in continuation of what my friend Mr. Thomas has said because recently India has entered into an Agreement with the ASEAN countries and probably, one product that could have been imported to India is rubber; and the Agreement is with Indonesia and Malaysia, who are all large producers of natural rubber.

It is the longsighted vision of the Ministry of Commerce, especially of our young Minister that this item of rubber is in the Negative List in the ASEAN Agreement. My friend Mr. Thomas said that some of our Left friends are taking up agitations and criticizing the Government for the ASEAN Agreement. I wish they, including Mr. Karunakaran, who spoke a while ago, congratulate our young Minister and the Government for including this particular item of rubber in the Negative List.

Sir, when we are entering into an Agreement with countries, what they are producing is likely to be imported to our country. But what is the position today? India's production of natural rubber and India's requirement of natural rubber are almost equal. May be, the production is a little less. So, in this kind of a scenario, under any circumstances, if rubber is to imported to India, that would badly affect the entire production of rubber in this country. Today, our farmers are getting good price but for that, nobody can come to the conclusion that it would always be like this.

Sir, I am also a small rubber grower. There were times when the rubber growers were chopping up, cutting up their trees; they were not at all interested in doing the re-plantation as the rubber plantations were on the verge of destruction, because its price was unremunerative. There would always be a powerful tyre lobby always trying to reduce the price of rubber.

Here, after 62 years, we are discussing and making some amendments in the Bill. I would request the hon. Minister that is it not the appropriate time to think that there has to be a Price Stabilization Fund. Even if a small quantity of rubber is coming to India, more than altering the demand and supply position, then the whole quantity, which we have produced will suffer. There are frequent ups and downs in the rubber market.

The fact is that they are getting good price now. You know, there were times when the rubber growers were faced with very low unremunerative prices also. In that kind of a situation, the safeguards were taken by the Government of India for including this item in the Negative List and thereby protecting the farmers. Even the worst critic of the ASEAN Agreement should be thankful and grateful to the Government that this Government has taken the bold decision. This is no mean achievement because many people were saying that there is no Negative List, rubber is not there like that. This may be good for many people to fuel their propaganda and their

agitational approach but the fact remains that we negotiated so stringently with our other friends in the ASEAN countries that we could include this in the Negative List.

Regarding this achievement by the Government, I would like to congratulate it on behalf of the rubber growers because we are grateful to them that this is now in the Negative List.

Some amendments in this Bill are really necessary and are not at all controversial. They are not with two opinions. My friend, Mr. Yadav *ji* was saying that this has not come before the Standing Committee. So, this should not be discussed in this House and it should go to the Standing Committee again. I think we are getting enough time here. Normally, it is very difficult for him to conclude his speech but today he had exhausted much earlier. That means, we are getting enough time here. Every Member or every Party is getting enough time to discuss this. So, there is no need for referring this to the Standing Committee.

We are referring to the Standing Committee any Bill or any legislation when we are not getting enough time to discuss in this House. We have got enough time to discuss this Bill. I think there is unanimity in this House among all the Parties that the discussion on this Bill has taken place in the full sense and we can definitely pass this Bill with the consent of everybody.

Here, some amendments are made in this Bill. One thing is that 50 hectares of holding, which was the ceiling for the small growers, is reduced to 25 hectares. But Shri Raghuvansh Prasad *ji* has misunderstood it that we are not caring for the small farmers. The level of ceiling from 50 is reduced to 25. Even then, he thinks that this is against the small farmers. No, it is not 25. It is from one cent to 25 acres. Till today, the definition of a small farmer is that a farmer who is having up to 50 acres of holding. Now, it is 10 hectares, that means, 25 acres. It is 25 acres and below. But the fact is that this being a plantation crop which does not come under the Land Ceiling Act, any area can be held by an individual. So, the amendment is that it is 25 acres which is the ceiling.

I come from a State where there are 10 lakhs of small growers. Some of them are having five cents, 10 cents, half acre, one acre and two acres. So, the maximum number for their holdings is 25 acres limit or 10 hectares limit, which is quite welcome. So, it is an innocuous amendment which can cater more to the small farmers or which can give more benefit to the small farmers, and there need not be any misunderstanding on that.

I hope Shri Raghuvansh Prasad *ji* will understand this issue and this is no matter which needs to be discussed in the Standing Committee.

At the same time, this entire House should appreciate and congratulate the small farmers of this country. In many areas, whether it is cash crop or food crop, the productivity in this country is low and in some crops, it is the lowest in the world. We are producing cardamom but when we compare our per hectare production of cardamom with Guatemala, we are one-fourth of the Guatemalans' production. Regarding our pepper production in India, our production is only a half of what Indonesia is producing from unit area. So, the productivity in this country is the major drawback as far as many other crops are concerned. But for rubber, our productivity is one of the highest in the world, and for this we have to compliment our small farmers. When rubber is fetching good price or when rubber is not fetching good price also, this small farmer, who is toiling in the field, is giving the maximum productivity.

Today with pride we can tell the whole world that at least in one commodity, one cash crop, we are the country which stands number-one in the whole world. And the credit goes to the ordinary farmer – whether there is good price, whether there is incentive, whether there is subsidy or not, they are producing – and their toil gives credit to this country. That is very important.

There are some amendments regarding rubber development which are explained by the Hon. Minister. In different names, different Funds are there. It is going to be made into one Rubber Development Fund which can cater to many of the welfare steps being taken in that area. The cess which is to be collected is one of the reasons why we are discussing this Bill today. It was a very cumbersome procedure. There is a general hue and cry against liberalisation. I am not a votary or a supporter of liberalisation *en bloc*. But, here, we are simplifying the procedure. All the cess collection procedures like different statements to be filed, all are being simplified. Now we are introducing a self-declaration and self-assessment procedure. How nice it is! This is something which we can all welcome. Instead of filing, instead of anybody going for inspection or counter-inspection, this is self-assessment and on that basis the cess can be collected.

Some of the procedures like registration, licensing and filing of the returns, were very very cumbersome and very difficult for the ordinary farmer to comply with. To avail replantation subsidy from the Rubber Board probably, you have to register your plantation. It is difficult for an ordinary farmer having half an acre to one and a half acre of land to prepare a survey plan and get all documents from the village, from the taluk and go and register. All these things are being simplified. That is one of the plus points which is brought in this Bill.

Quality standard is one issue being mentioned by some of our friends. I think from Shri Anant Kumar Hegde to Shri P.T. Thomas, from various sections of the House, all of them have explained that this quality control should in no way affect the ordinary farmer. We are not against quality. The quality of Indian rubber is not inferior to the international rubber. But, being conscious and careful about the quality is always good. But I wish that all the rubber produced in this country, at least 90 per cent of it, can be good quality rubber. Now, at least 40 per cent of the total rubber produced in this country is lot rubber. Lot rubber means, it does not come under RSS category 1, 2, 3 or 4. Lot rubber is the lowest quality rubber. The ordinary farmer does not have the wherewithal or facilities to make good grade or quality rubber. I think that is one of the responsibilities of the Rubber Board or whichever agency is in charge to see that whatever the ordinary rubber growers are producing is converted into quality rubber. For that, awareness is to be created. Facilities are to be created. I do not think that the steps taken are sufficient for that. These steps are inadequate. I am selling my rubber at Rs.60 a kilo when the first quality rubber is fetching Rs.110 or Rs.120 a kilo. An ordinary farmer is losing Rs.50 or so per kilo because he cannot convert his rubber into good quality rubber. For this, there can be cooperative effort.

Now the rubber producing societies are functioning very effectively, as Shri Anto Antony has mentioned, especially in the State from where I am coming. Nearly two thousand and odd rubber producing societies are doing a great service to the farmers. I do not think that we have given sufficient encouragement to the rubber producing societies like the representation in the Rubber Board. Hon. Minister has suggested that they are going to increase the size of the Rubber Board. But the fact remains that the most important component in the whole industry – from grower to the industry in the whole scenario – the rubber producing societies are not represented in the Rubber Board by name. I think that it is time the Hon. Minister will consider this suggestion – a worthy

and valuable suggestion – being raised by many friends that the rubber producing societies also may be given due representation in the Rubber Board.

Sir, about the Committee report on reducing the number of officers in the Board and various other things, those have already been said. I do not want to go into those details. Rubber is not produced by the Board officers. Rubber is produced in the field by the ordinary farmer. So, the Rubber Board should be a farmer-oriented Board, a grower-oriented Board. The farmer should be the fulcrum, he should be the centre-point. You fill up the Board with all the bureaucrats and then for namesake you put three persons here and three persons there.

Sir, the representation of 8.10 lakh small growers is only three. I think it is very unfair. In 1947, probably, 60 or 65 per cent of the rubber area was large plantation. Then the large plantations were having three representatives and the small farmers were having three representatives. Today after 62 years, the small farmers are much more than the large farmers in number. Their representation is quite inadequate in the Board. At the time when we are discussing this and the hon. Minister can, of course, give us some satisfactory explanation to us, I am sure that he is very much concerned about the contributions of this society and various people connected with this.

There is this violation of the cess and the provisions for compounding penalties. It is very good that all these so-called penalties can be compounded and that provision is made in this. On the quality standards, I mentioned but I want to again say that any kind of quality inspection should not be a discouraging factor for the grower. Today the lot rubber is purchased by the trader. Tomorrow onwards, whether there is inspection or no inspection, when there is a provision of inspection in these things, we have seen in our country how these things are being misused and all kinds of corruption is breeding using these kinds of provisions. When the very word inspection comes in, then immediately that sends the terror signal. When the ordinary farmer is taking his produce to the trader, the trader will say – ‘no, I am subject to inspection; the inspection is going to come and so I will not purchase your product’. The ordinary farmer, who is at the lowest ebb, should not be troubled and he should not suffer from this kind of inspection.

If the quality improvement, awareness creation as well as crating facilities are done in a large scale, probably the quality can be improved. Quality of rubber cannot be improved by passing an Act in Parliament. Quality can be improved not by Act but by action. That action has to take place at the lowest level. When the farmer is taking the latex from the tree, from that stage onwards he should think how I can convert my latex into good quality rubber sheet, good curing is done and good quality can be achieved. For that there has to be enough facilities created at the appropriate level.

This issue of minimum and maximum price fixation is there. Some anxieties are being expressed in this regard. The maximum price fixation is something unheard of in the parlance of any commodity. Who is going to fix the maximum price and who has got the right to fix the maximum price? I think the Supreme Court has passed some order. If the Supreme Court has passed that order, it is the duty of the Government to go for an appeal. When the rubber producers were getting only 30 rupees per kilo who was there to rescue them? The rubber tyre lobby is saying that – ‘no, there should be some maximum ceiling’. Who is that tyre lobby to decide the maximum ceiling? Nobody can decide the maximum price for rubber.

Here is a situation and I know that the hon. Minister knows the implication of that and he is quite capable of taking adequate steps to safeguard the interests of the farmers. But this maximum price thing is something which is worrying me. I can understand minimum price. Even the minimum price also did not save the farmers. In many things there are minimum prices declared. This is not an agricultural commodity; this is a cash crop. If it is an agricultural commodity, the Agricultural the Agricultural Costs and Prices Commission will calculate and will come to the conclusion as to what is the cost price and then they decide a support price.

Sir, do you know what is happening in some other commodities? Take coconut, which is the backbone of Kerala's economy. Today we are selling coconut at a distress price of three rupees a coconut. The hon. Minister of Agriculture has announced a support price and according to the support price we should get Rs. 6.75 per coconut. Kerala is producing Rs. 400 crore worth of coconut.

17.00 hrs.

How much is our loss? We are losing Rs. 1,500 crore. For whom are we losing it? It is for the ordinary farmer. Who is there to support the farmer? The minimum price mechanism is not functioning in this country, even after announcing the support price. To add to the worries of the farmer, some State Government are quite irresponsible. I do not want to name any State.

I come from a State where the farmers are desperately selling their products. The support price is there, but they are not getting it because procurement is not done. The people responsible for procurement are not procuring it. As a matter of fact, the producer is resorting to desperate selling. This is happening. When even announcement of the Minimum Support Price is not saving the farmer, then where has this maximum price mechanism come from? I feel that the hon. Minister will understand the intricacies of this problem and save us from the clutches of tyre lobby. This concept of Maximum Support Price is not fair. Even when we were selling our produce for less than the cost, nobody came to our rescue. It is the demand-supply mechanism which is working all over the world. When demand is more than supply, the prices increase. When the tyre industry, when the Chinese industry in many countries started consuming more natural rubber, naturally the prices went up. It is the good luck of the farmers which saved them and not any governmental intervention or mechanism. I do not think that this concept of maximum price fixation is going to help the real farmer. I think, it may be a little unfair to the farmer. I expect an explanation or a satisfactory explanation about this from our hon. Minister.

What is the future of the rubber? Some of the plantations in Malaysia have vanished. There is no tap available. Now, Chicken Gunea and various other diseases are spreading like wild fire in the rubber plantations of Kerala. If the farmers are affected, they are incapacitated and suffering from diseases for three months, six months or up to one year and there is nobody to take care of them. Even doctors are not available.

Now, we are spending a huge amount of money through the Rubber Board. Have we found any new method of tapping from the trees? You have to extract latex from the trees. How do we extract it? This is the traditional old method of rubber tapping which you are still resorting to. When the Britishers had started the rubbers plantations in India, what was the form of rubber tapping they were doing? Even after hundreds of years

now, we are still resorting to that. So, to extract maximum latex from the trees, what can be the latest technology by which we can do more tapping? I do not know whether the Rubber Board has done any research on that. The young Minister, who is a very imaginative person, can catch this point. I wish that he advises the Rubber Board to do some basic research on how the rubber tapping can be improved, how the output can be improved and how the productivity can be improved. If this is not done, what is the point in spending on research? We are spending on research, but the research should be people oriented and people should get the benefit. I am afraid that some of the areas are being neglected.

My friend, Shri Antony has mentioned about value addition. Five Thousand years ago, we used to export pepper and spices to the Arabian countries. What are we doing? We are producing and packing everything in gunny bags and sending them to other countries by ship, but the farmer is not getting anything. Where is the real value addition happening? Value addition is a point where the farmer is benefited. But even now, we are just exporting the raw rubber, which we are manufacturing here, as it is. The value addition is taking place at some other point. I would like to ask whether the Government or Rubber Board has ever thought of the question how you can do value addition in the rubber industry. We have been following the same practice, which we were following 5,000 years ago, for exporting pepper even today.

What about rubber-based industry? Today China is far ahead of India in the rubber-based industry. We are manufacturing natural rubber. There is no substitute for natural rubber. Any artificial rubber cannot replace natural rubber as it is. There has to be a ratio of natural rubber and artificial rubber for manufacturing tyres. There are many new usages which we can find out for the natural rubber, but at the same time, this cannot be replaced by artificial rubber. In that kind of a situation, this natural rubber should be protected. Here is a situation where probably we are not doing enough. Therefore, the rubber-based industry in this country is to be encouraged, and it cannot be left to the discretion of some other Ministry or some other Department. The poor farmers are producing valuable rubber. Today, if we are the fifth largest producer in the world and if today our productivity is the highest in the world, then the credit goes to the farmers. Should he not get a better price? Should he not get the total advantage out of this? However, the value addition is done elsewhere as it is just being exported in the raw form. These are all vagaries of the industry. I feel that some attention has to be given to this point also.

We are happy that the amendments are brought here, and we are all very happy to pass this Bill also. But while passing this Bill, we have a request to the dynamic and young Minister that he has to come to our rescue. The rubber farmers deserve more from the Government, and more from the Rubber Board. There cannot be a callous or indifferent attitude towards these problems.

As regards health problems, all kinds of bacteria and viruses -- about which we have not even heard -- are coming to India. If the tapper community, as a whole, is affected with this viral attack or this new breed of various kinds of diseases, etc., then there is no social insurance for them. Why cannot we find some social insurance in this Bill? I am asking this because today you can insure a person giving Rs. 30 premium, and you can go for a treatment of at least Rs. 30,000 in a year. The public sector insurance companies are there and private sector insurance companies are there, and we can have a total insurance scheme in collaboration with the

insurance sector. Today, the Government -- in which our hon. Minister is a representative -- is for the welfare of the people, and it is in our interest that the downtrodden section of the society is looked after.

The tappers are the kingpin and the real people, and they are not covered by any insurance scheme. I wish to hear about some welfare schemes being taken up for the tappers when this House is discussing such legislation in detail. All the tappers of this country can be insured without any difficulty. We are spending so much amount of money on various things. Hence, you can formulate an insurance scheme by which you can cover the entire tapper community, and a social group insurance can be provided to them. Now, after 62 years, we are making some amendments, and it should not be in a half-hearted way. Let there be something good for the workers also. It can happen, and probably in his generous reply -- the imaginative person as he is -- he can give us some more assurances.

Today, when the Rubber Bill is being discussed in this august House, lakhs of people all around the country -- whether they are in Andamans, Kerala or Tripura -- are listening to it to know whether something good is happening to them. I wish that something good happens to the common man who is at the other end, and who is producing the full requirement of rubber of the Indian rubber industry.

The potential of the Indian rubber industry is still very great, but it is not being utilised. We are exporting raw rubber, and we are importing rubber-based products. The technology for it is very simple, and it is not a very complicated or sophisticated one. For a State that is producing rubber, we have no rubber industry at all. There is one unit of a tyre factory somewhere in Kerala. But what is happening there? The entire lot that we are producing is going somewhere. We do not even have a balloon factory in Kerala. What do we do? The raw material is available with us; the technology is very simple; and yet we are not able to convert our raw material. This is the area where we can really develop. Therefore, this potential is to be developed. The guidance that we are giving to the small growers is also an important factor.

I am grateful to you for giving me this time to speak. I wish that the discussion on this Bill is something that is not helping somebody to come into the Board or it is helping the tyre lobby to see that the maximum price fixation is now a part of the Act. They should not get the relief, but the relief should be given to the people at the lower level. Now, they should feel that there is a Government in Delhi that is moving it, and it is there to protect them. From the tapper to the farmer to everyone associated with this industry should feel that this is something for their welfare, this is something for the betterment of their lives. With these words, I conclude.

SHRI O.S. MANIAN (MAYILADUTHURAI): Mr. Chairman, Sir, I wish to make the following few suggestions on the Rubber (Amendment) Bill, on behalf of the AIADMK Party.

Ninety-three per cent of rubber production in the country is being produced by small farmers, and only seven per cent of rubber is being produced by the big farmers. Yet, the small farmers who are producing 93 per cent of rubber are being neglected. The Government have nominated only three Directors out of 29 Directors to represent the small farmers, who are producing 93 per cent of rubber, in the Rubber Board.

Due to lack of storage facilities and proper godowns to store the produce, the small farmers are facing huge problems. I would request the Government to provide proper storage facilities for the small farmers.

The Government should come forward to fix the Minimum Support Price for the produce. The Government should take action to increase the export of rubber, besides financial subsidy may be provided to the farmers to increase rubber production. Thank you.

श्री पन्ना लाल पुनिया (बाराबंकी): सभापति महोदय, मैं आपका आभारी हूँ कि आपने मुझे इस महत्वपूर्ण विषय पर बोलने का अवसर दिया। मैं इस बिल का समर्थन करने के लिए खड़ा हुआ हूँ।

बिल की रूपरेखा के बारे में, इसकी आवश्यकता के बारे में बहुत विस्तार से माननीय राज्यमंत्री, वाणिज्य और उद्योग के द्वारा बताया गया है और हमारे अन्य साथियों ने भी इस पर विस्तार से प्रकाश डाला है।

मैं उत्तर प्रदेश का रहने वाला हूँ, वहाँ से सांसद हूँ। वहाँ पर रबर की खेती नहीं होती है, लेकिन मेरा मानना है कि रबर की खेती, रबर उगाने वाले काशतकारों की दशा सुधारने के लिए प्रयास अवश्य होना चाहिए और इस संशोधन विधेयक के माध्यम से इसका प्रयास वास्तव में किया गया है। छोटे किसानों की परिभाषा में संशोधन करके 50 एकड़ की बजाए 10 हेक्टेअर किया गया है। इसके माध्यम से मैं समझता हूँ कि वास्तव में जिन काशतकारों को आवश्यकता है, उन तक यह लाभ पहुंच सकेगा। आजकल सीमित साधन हैं और वे सीमित साधन वास्तव में जिनको आवश्यकता है, वहाँ तक पहुंच सकेंगे। बताया जाता है कि देश में कुल रबर उत्पादन का 93 प्रतिशत केरल से आता है। उसके अलावा तमिलनाडु, अण्डमान-निकोबार आदि क्षेत्र हैं, जहाँ पर रबर की खेती की जाती है। इन सभी क्षेत्रों का सामयिक विकास होना चाहिए और उसके लिए हमें चिन्ता करनी चाहिए। जो संशोधन किए गए हैं, उनमें क्वालिटी कंट्रोल के लिए भी व्यवस्था की गयी है। यह बहुत आवश्यक है कि हमारे काशतकार यह समझ सकें कि उनकी रबर किस क्वालिटी की है, उसकी क्या कीमत होगी जिससे कीमत के निर्धारण में उनको सुविधा होगी।

17.14 hrs.

(Shri P.C. Chaeko *in the chair*)

इस बिल के माध्यम से जो संशोधन किए गए हैं, उसमें रबर बोर्ड के पुनर्गठन की व्यवस्था है जिसमें कहा गया है कि दो डायरेक्टर्स कामर्स मिनिस्ट्री से होंगे, एक-एक डायरेक्टर एग्रीकल्चर और कोआपरेटिव से होंगे। मेरा सुझाव है कि बोर्ड का गठन कॉमर्स मिनिस्ट्री द्वारा अपने विवेक से किया जाना चाहिए। खास तौर से इसमें रबड़ के काश्तकारों को अवश्य प्रतिनिधित्व देना चाहिए। चाहे केरल के काश्तकार हों, तमिलनाडु के हों या अंडमान-निकोबार द्वीप समूह के हों, जहां-जहां भी रबड़ का उत्पादन होता है, उन राज्यों से कम से कम एक किसान को अवश्य प्रतिनिधित्व देना चाहिए।

मंत्री जी द्वारा जो यह संशोधन बिल पेश किया गया है, यह किसानों के हित में है, किसानों को जो कठिनाइयां आ रही हैं, उन्हें हल करने के लिए यह सहायक सिद्ध होगा। वैसे भी यूपीए सरकार ने हमेशा किसानों के हित में काम किया है। इस बात से सभी लोग अवगत हैं कि यूपीए सरकार ने किसानों के कर्ज माफ करने का काम किया था। उसमें केरल के भी काश्तकार हैं और पूरे हिन्दुस्तान में करीब 4.5 करोड़ किसान परिवार के 72,000 करोड़ रुपये के कर्ज माफ किए गए। ऐसा क्रंतिकारी कदम पहले हिन्दुस्तान ही नहीं, विश्व में भी किसी देश की सरकार ने नहीं उठाया है, लेकिन यह यूपीए सरकार के अंतर्गत ही हुआ। पहले भी अनेक सरकारें देश में बनीं। अपने आपको किसानों के नेता कहलाने वाले भी प्रधान मंत्री बने, लेकिन किसी के दिमाग में यह बात नहीं आई कि वह किसानों के दुख-दर्द और तकलीफ को समझकर उसका समाधान करे।

आज रबी की बुवाई हो रही है। उसके लिए केन्द्र सरकार से अलग-अलग खाद डीपीए, यूरिया आदि उपलब्ध कराया जा रहा है। लेकिन हमने मौके पर जाकर देखा कि खाद के भंडारों पर किसानों की लम्बी-लम्बी लाइनें लगी हुई हैं और वे रात भर लाइन में खड़े रहते हैं, लेकिन उन्हें खाद नहीं मिलती। वहां पर पुलिस तैनात कर दी गई है और वह किसानों पर डंडे भी बरसाती है। यह हालत तो सरकारी गोदामों और डिपोज़ की है, जहां खाद उपलब्ध नहीं है। दूसरी तरफ बगल में ही खाद के प्राइवेट गोदाम हैं, वहां ब्लैक में खाद बेची जा रही है और पर्याप्त मात्रा में उपलब्ध है। सरकार को इस तरफ ध्यान देकर कदम उठाना चाहिए। जो राज्य सरकारें इस पर ध्यान नहीं दे रही हैं, उन पर अंकुश लगाया जाए और उन्हें निर्देश देना चाहिए कि किसानों को समय पर और उचित मात्रा में खाद मिल पाए। इसके लिए आवश्यक कार्रवाई केन्द्र सरकार को अवश्य करनी चाहिए। अगर किसान को खाद नहीं मिली, तो सारी मेहनत व्यर्थ हो जाएगी। यूपीए सरकार की जो मंशा है कि किसानों को, मजदूरों को मदद देकर आगे बढ़ाने की, उसमें बाधा आए, तो उसे दूर करना चाहिए।

यह जो संशोधन विधेयक वाणिज्य राज्य मंत्री जी द्वारा सदन में पेश किया गया है, उसके लिए मैं उन्हें बधाई देता हूं। सन् 1947 के बाद से लेकर अब तक इसकी काफी जरूरत थी, लेकिन किसी भी सरकार ने ध्यान नहीं दिया। आज यूपीए सरकार द्वारा इस पर ध्यान दिया गया है। मुझे पूरी उम्मीद है कि इस संशोधन विधेयक के पास होने के बाद किसानों को अवश्य लाभ मिलेगा और उनकी जो कठिनाइयां हैं, उनका समाधान होगा।

मैं पुनः अपील करना चाहूंगा कि रबड़ बोर्ड में रबड़ उत्पादन करने वाले राज्यों से किसानों का अवश्य प्रतिनिधित्व होना चाहिए। इसी के साथ मैं अपनी बात समाप्त करता हूं और माननीय मंत्री जी को इसके लिए धन्यवाद देते हुए इस संशोधन विधेयक का समर्थन करता हूं।

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI JYOTIRADITYA M. SCINDIA): Thank you Mr. Chairman, Sir. At the outset, let me thank all the hon. Members here for a very detailed and a long discussion into what I believe is one of the founding pillars of our domestic

farmers. The plantation sector is one of the most important sectors of our domestic economy. It is a sector to which the commitment of the UPA Government in its first *Avtar* and today in its second *Avtar* is steadfast, is continuing and we will be committed not only to resolve issues that have been raised but also look at the productive and progressive outlook for our plantation sector. So, let me first thank all the Members present here including yourself Mr. Chairman, Sir, for a very very detailed and elucidatory comment on the rubber sector.

As I said, the plantation sector is a sector which covers close to 14 lakh labourers and farmers across the length and breadth of this country. It is a sector which is the foundation of our agrarian economy at one end. Rubber particularly has close to four lakh farmers. We have talked about the composition of the rubber sector.

In the early 1950s and 1960s the composition was skewed much more towards the larger farmers - 67 per cent represented by large farmers and only close to about 30 per cent represented by the small growers. Over the past sixty years that composition has changed fundamentally. Today that composition is, 93 per cent producers are small farmers; 90 per cent of growing area under production is of small farmers; and only ten per cent is of the large farmers. Therefore, we have to take steps in consonance with that change.

Government, I believe, must not be a reactive Government. Government, I believe, must be a proactive Government. Government must be one that sets the vision and the path forward for the sector to follow. I believe that the UPA Government, under the able stewardship of Prime Minister Manmohan Singhji and Sonia Gandhiji, has been doing just that across the length and breadth of our agrarian economy that encompasses close to about 60 per cent of the workforce of this country and 13 per cent of GDP.

I would like to take this opportunity to in particular thank two of our Members – Mr. Chairman, Sir, yourself and Mr. Thomas – for referring to the ASEAN Agreement. There is a lot of vapour that is built around that ASEAN Agreement. You were absolutely right, Mr. Chairman, Sir, when you mentioned the fact that as far as rubber is concerned we have made every single effort to ensure that it is excluded from that list and it is now part of that negative list. 489 items have been excluded from tariff concessions. 590 items have been excluded from tariff elimination. This is a historic agreement which no other country has adhered to except for India in this purpose.

There are also many protection measures that are built in this. There is the rules of origin - that any commodity or any product that has been exported must have at least 35 per cent value addition in its country of domicile. There is also no-early-harvest programme, unlike other countries had put in place in their agreements. Lastly and most importantly, there is also the issue of safeguard mechanisms, that India has the possibility to fall back on in case there are huge amounts of imports.

That being said, a lot of talk has been centred around by Members here saying that this is the first time that after sixty years the Government is looking at amending the Rubber Act. If I have given that perception, let me apologise at the outset. This is the fourth amendment to the Rubber Act. The first, second and third were done in 1999, 2002 and 2005. This is today a comprehensive amendment and it is the fourth amendment.

Along with that let me go back to your comment, Mr. Chairman, Sir, which has left a very prolific mark on me, the very fact that it must be Act and action together at the same time. Let me say this that the Rubber Act and

its amendments do not encompass all the efforts by the Government of India to take care of this important plantation sector. We do have a Rubber Board. We do have schemes underneath the Rubber Board. Every scheme is not detailed underneath the Rubber Act. This is a proactive exercise, it is an exercise that is an ongoing exercise where we talk with all stakeholders across the board – small growers, large growers, manufacturers, exporters - and more importantly, understandably also, specifically the small growers.

Within the Rubber Board there are five or six schemes which we have actually targeted to look at all the issues that have been raised today, all pertinent issues, all important issues, all issues that have got the requisite amount of focus and attention from us. Let me say this on the floor of this House that if there is any improvement that we can bring about in those schemes, this Government and especially this Ministry is open all the time to look at proactive suggestions in terms of how to address those concerns even better.

There are four or five schemes that we are looking at. Our budget outlay in the Tenth Plan was only Rs.415 crore. That has been hiked in the Eleventh Plan to close to Rs.580 crore, a hike of almost 45 per cent over the two plan periods. There are six schemes in particular that look at all the issues that have been raised today by hon. Members. First of all there is a Rubber Plantation Development Scheme of Rs.240 crore which looks specifically at replanting, new planting and enhancement of productivity for small growers.

Along with that, there is a Rubber Research Scheme, which has a corpus of close to Rs.60 crore, which looks at increasing productivity and disease tolerance, and location-specific loans. We all know that technology is a very important incentive that needs to be looked at to be able to increase productivity and that is the reason why I proudly can say as an Indian that India is the number one country in terms of productivity in the world as far as rubber is concerned at 1,896 kilos per hectare across the board.

The third is the Process Quality Increase and the Product Diversification Scheme with a corpus of Rs.44 crore that looks at, as you mentioned, Mr. Chairman, Sir, modern processing techniques, new strategies, looking at assisting cooperatives, the RPSS that you mentioned - those form a very important fulcrum of the rubber industry. We, in the Ministry realise that and we engage with that. We have a scheme that looks at improving the status of cooperatives within the Ministry.

The fourth is the Market Development and Export Promotion Scheme. Mr. Chairman, Sir, you talked upon a very important point. Today, if we look at the plantation sector in this country, I firmly believe - as all of us do believe in this House, and I think we are in unison on that that the plantation sector in this country is one sector which can emerge as a core competitive sector across the world from an Indian stage. Whether we talk of tea; whether we talk of spices; whether we talk about rubber – these are commodities that have been not only pre-eminent in India but have also been pre-eminent over the last two thousand years, and, therefore, these are areas where we must emerge as a world-wide competitor on the world stage. The Market Development and Export Promotion Scheme of Rs.44 crore is looking at building five new godowns of 100 MT; it is looking at participating in international fairs. There must be a connection as you mentioned between the front-end and the back-end. Value addition is a very important part of their puzzle, along with technological know-how, which is why we are looking at developing new clones, which is why we are looking at exploring on the front end in

terms of packaging, in terms of productization so that we can go up the value chain and get more value for the rubber growers at the back end.

The fifth is the HRD scheme that has also been talked about by Shri Mahtab, and many other Members here and it is a very valid concern as to whether it has got to do with insurance; as to whether it has got to do with health incentives. We have close to about Rs.42 crore package here which looks at labour workforce training; 24,055 people have already been beneficiaries under this scheme.

The sixth is a concerted effort to look at augmentation of rubber development in the North-East. Senior hon. Members, and friends have always talked about the fact that we need to lay special emphasis on the North-East. Fifty per cent of India's tea is produced from the North-East. There is also a huge rubber cultivation, small grower lobby, as far as rubber is concerned in terms of farmers in the North-East. There is a Rs.150 crore package that is looking at the corpus specifically at developing rubber production in the North-East in terms of new plantation. We have put in a target of close to 11,963 hectares to go under new plantation in the rubber areas as well as all round development of that area.

Now, I would like to deal with specific issues that have come up. I shall try to do it in brevity because I was told that we have up to 5.30 p.m. for this interaction but I shall deal with all the issues that were brought up by the hon. Members. The first issue that was brought up by a number of Members including Dr. Raghuvansh Prasad Singh, in his normal and very energetic voice which I very much respect - हम सब उनकी आवाज की बुलंदगी का मान और सम्मान करते हैं। पिछली सरकार में भी जब वे जनता के मुद्दों पर आवाज उठाते थे, तो बहुत बुलंदगी से उठाते थे और आज भी उठा रहे हैं। इन्होंने मुद्दा उठाया था कि - what is the reason and why this Bill has been brought into Parliament directly? Along with him, a number of other Members that has brought this up, including Shri Hegde, Shri Anto Antony asked this question as I am supposed to send it to the Standing Committee and then bring it here. Let me say this that here is a Clause that allows Bills to be brought into Parliament directly without going to the Standing Committee, and by-passing it, if it is of urgent importance. I believe, and our Ministry does believe that this Bill is of urgent importance. There is an audit objection that is in place due to an obsolete provision that is part of the Bill, which we are changing, which has to deal with the level of cess, that had not been collected between the 1st of April, 1961 and 1st of August, 2003. I will try and address every single issue. Please give me some time.

To deal with that issue of cess in terms of 'from retrospective effect' to make it 'zero' so that the audit objection that is put by the CAG is removed. That is the reason why this Bill has been brought here in an urgent basis before this House.

I hope that the Members understand the reason behind this; this is an important Bill; this is a Bill that talks about many mechanisms that are being removed, which are hindrances to small growers; as times have changed, we must also move; we must have moved away from the licence raj to the area of industrialization. We have to move away from licence raj and registration raj, even in the area of plantation. We must keep in mind the foremost intention which is for a small grower.

The second issue that has been raised by the hon. Member, Shri Hegde, I wish he was here to hear my response on that, but nevertheless, he raised the issue of cess; he asked me as to where is this money going to be spent, and what is the Ministry going to do with this money.

Let me say very clearly here that the cess, as in many other Departments, collected goes directly to the Consolidated Fund of India, which is represented by our Finance Minister in this House. The Rubber Board does get money from Plan expenditure, as does every other Department, and that money is spent on research, extension activities, etc. I firmly believe and I do not believe this only in this Government, but the Government in its earlier *avatar*, because this is a successive Government, I had seen Shri Kamal Nath Ji sitting over here, the incentives and the processes that we have brought in place, in extension and in technological innovation, have led to our position emerging as number one on the world stage, in terms of productivity.

So, in short, it is money well-spent, money well-targeted, but more-focus is required; I would welcome any suggestions in this regard; I have noted a lot of them in terms of what has been discussed here today.

Another issue had been brought up with regard to membership of the Board. Let me say this. I had mentioned briefly in my opening remarks, that the membership of the Board today is 26. Ten members are from the Central Government; eight from Kerala, three large growers, three small growers, two from the Government of Kerala; two are from Tamil Nadu – one large and one small grower; three Members of Parliament – two from the Lok Sabha, one from the Rajya Sabha; two *ex-officio* members; so, it is a total of 26. Let me give this commitment here on the Floor of this House today that we will definitely be considering involving a large number of smaller growers as representatives on the Rubber Board. This will also be considered which will be done by Executive Order. The small growers are already numbering three; but I do believe and I understand the sentiments expressed here and we shall definitely do our best to ensure that many more small growers are included in the Board.

The Prabhu Committee also said that the small growers should be better represented; we have already committed that we will be abiding by this recommendation, through Executive Order, on reconstitution of the Board. Also let me say this that the three officials that we are bringing on Board are not at the cost of the small growers. So, we are enlarging it; we are not restricting it. This is point number one. Point number two is that today we have only one representative from the Government of India on the Board, and that is the Chairman. The Board is a Board which needs inputs consistently from the Ministry of Commerce; it is a Board which needs inputs consistently from the Ministry of Agriculture; that is why also, we have this; I stand corrected – I believe that I mentioned that there will be two Additional Members on the Board, but it is three – two from the Ministry of Commerce and one from the Ministry of Agriculture. This is exactly on the same pattern that has been followed on the Spice Board, the Tea Board. So, it is analogous – it is to make sure that the whole plantation sector gets that technological absorption, get that advice from the Ministries; and there is no water that runs between the fingers in terms of putting the projects together and taking them forward.

A point had been made with regard to health insurance. Let me say this as far as health insurance is concerned. It is something that we are already considering and it is already covered through different schemes of the Board. If there are any suggestions in terms of how to broaden its nature or how to deepen its depth, we are

more than happy to have views from the hon. Members from various constituencies so that we can look at them once again.

Three main issues had come up which I think I must address at the outset. The first is the issue regarding inspection and quality control. Let me emphasise hon. Members that there is nothing that is being introduced in the amendments to this Act; (a) nothing draconian, (b) nothing bureaucratic and (c) nothing that will be a hindrance to small growers. As part of this Government I give that commitment on the floor of this House. The Clauses that are being introduced are only a reflection of what is only in the Act.

Let me take that point with regard to quality control. Quality control is something that is already framed in Clause 21 of the Rubber Act and it says:

“Any person authorized in this behalf by the Central Government or by the Board or any member authorized by the Chairman in writing or any office of the Board may at any reasonable time inspect any place of business of a dealer (it is not something that we have included it today, it is already there) or any factory or other premises of a manufacturer, for the purpose of verifying any statement or return submitted under this Act or for any other purposes of this Act.”

In fact, we are narrowing the scope.

Let me place four things on the Table here. Here, we are not looking at inspecting farmers. Some of the hon. Members mentioned that. Farmers are not going to be inspected. I emphasise that only dealers are going to be inspected.

Point number two, as I mentioned, is not something that is new. It is something that is already part of the clause 21 of the existing Act.

Point Number three is something that will be facilitatory. Please understand that our view is to make sure that we grow in terms of our product quality, our technology and, therefore, take people up to value curve. So, this is something that is being put in place to assist the industry and not something to control the industry. That mindset has to be removed from the Government of India, which it already has. We are today competing on the world stage as the world economy. Our outlook has changed. We are trying to take everyone along and improving that. The Government role is the facilitator in that regard. I urge you to consider this clause in that respect.

Fourth and most importantly let me also put this commitment on the Table that while framing this clause we will keep in mind the concerns and the sentiments that have been expressed by many Members across the board in this House this evening. That would be definitely kept in mind. That was part one.

Part two was the clause with regard to the Minimum Support Price. As times change, the wording of the clause changes. Let me also emphasise here that this again is part of clause 13. If you look at clause 13, it says:

“The power to fix maximum and minimum prices for sale of rubber.”

Therefore, this clause that talks about changing it from “the Government may by order” to “may if it deems necessary” is actually keeping in mind the interest of the small growers because that control in terms of not setting the maximum price must rest with the Government so that the small grower is assisted in the long term. That is purely our only focus as far as that amendment – adding ‘if it deems necessary’ - to that clause is concerned.

The third point that I would like to talk about is the issue of technology and value addition which Chairman, Sir, you had brought up in your address. Let me say that this is something which occupies our mind in terms of taking people up the value curve, as I mentioned, taking technology downstream and taking value addition upstream. That is the key to success across the board whether you look at industry, manufacturing or agriculture.

Today I believe, for example, in the area of agriculture the most important area that we need in addition to another Green Revolution is the area of value added processing in terms of food processing in our country. We have close to 90 million tonnes of milk produced in our country. We are the number one producer of milk in the world. We are the number two producer of fruits and vegetables in the world at 150 million tonnes. We are the number three producer of food grains in the world at 218 million tonnes. But today only close to 10 per cent of it is being processed which is why the Food Processing Ministry has actually set up not only a Task Force but also is looking very seriously and putting in place the next building blocks to put the farmers up the value curve and I completely echo your sentiments, Mr. Chairman, Sir and other hon. Members of the House, whether it is Shri Mahtab, whether it is Mr. Anto Antony, whether it is Shri Hegde who was present here, we have ensure that the maximum part of the value chain must go to the small grower, must go to the farmer, whether it is agriculture, or whether it is plantation. That must be the key thrust of Government intervention and let me say that is our commitment under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry as far as the plantation sector is concerned.

Mr. Chairman, Sir, you brought up the point of a tapping device. Let me also say this on the floor of the House that research is on as we speak by the Rubber Research Institute under the Board to develop a Rubber Tapping Machine which is indigenous in nature.

Sir, on the issue of research on value addition, a Rubber Technology Centre, as you are aware, has been opened recently by the Rubber Board, which will take into account the research needs of the manufacture of rubber branded goods although this is something, which is in conjunction with the Industry Ministry.

श्री रघुवंश प्रसाद सिंह जी ने कहा था कि छोटे किसान का पचास हैक्टेअर से दस हैक्टेअर तक हम कर रहे हैं। मैं बताना चाहता हूँ कि उसके पीछे कारण है, क्योंकि जो राशि और योजना है, जैसे मैंने आपको समझाया कि जहां 65 प्रतिशत लार्ज ग्रोअर होते थे, आज 90 प्रतिशत स्माल ग्रोअर्स हैं। आपको मालूम ही है, क्योंकि ग्रामीण विकास मंत्रालय में आपने कार्यभार संभाला है और आप जानते हैं कि ज्यादातर आधे हैक्टेअर के हमारे स्माल ग्रोअर्स हैं। हमें जो 580 करोड़ रुपये राशि दी गई है, वह ज्यादातर हम केन्द्रित करेंगे। We must pay attention to the schemes that actually go into the pocket of the small grower that give him value. Therefore, this definition should be able to focus even more at the small grower and not at the larger grower.

A very important point had been raised, which I have noted that we must set up training schools along with the cooperative movement. I think, that is a very valuable suggestion which shall be taken into account.

A point had been raised by Mr. Anto Antony which said that target has been set for export of 50,000 tonnes of rubber and how we are going to achieve that. Let me also put this information on the floor of the House that today as we speak in fiscal 2008-09 India has already exported 46,926 tonnes of rubber. We have imported 77,616 tonnes of rubber. Another question had been raised as to why we are exporting rubber when we actually have little supply. Let me say this that import of rubber is taking place today our production is 8,64,500 tonnes, our consumption in India today, we are the third largest consumer of rubber, is 8,71,000. So, 9,000 tonnes rough odd is still a deficit in terms of our production versus our consumption in India. So, we are still a net importer. But less exports are taking place compared to the imports coming because the domestic price is greater than the import price which is good news for our small growers. Our constituency mainly is the small grower.

Another point had been raised with regard to re-plantation, which I believe is a very important issue which needs to be addressed. We have a new scheme that is place under the Ministry for Rubber Re-Plantation. One of the hon. Members also said and I believe, it was Mr. Antony that the small growers are not interested because there are good prices and it takes seven years and it is exactly the same mirror problem in the tea plantation sector. Just like health and education if we do not invest in human capital in this country, then we are compromising our long term.

That investment in education must take place today and that investment in health must take place today. Analysis to that argument is exactly the argument to the plantation sector. If we are to look long term, if we have to think about not only the survival but the good fortune also of our small growers in this sector in the long term, replantation has to take place today. Only then, we will able to reap the rewards of that several years down the road. It is a scheme which is being monitored by us. We must think long term versus short term and it is a scheme that is being monitored by us. Timely replacement and rejuvenation are essential to the long term effects of this industry.

A point has been raised as to why we are exporting when there is a demand in this country. I think there is a very obvious answer to this. Today, the world is one stage. If we have to prove our mettle on the international stage, it is imperative for any country that deems this area to be an area for competence to have a market share on the world stage. It is important to expose our small growers and farmers on the world stage by being able to export our produce.

Another point has been raised by our hon. Member with regard to this Bill being already referred to the Standing Committee in the Rajya Sabha. This Amendment Bill has not been already referred to the Standing Committee in the Rajya Sabha. It will go to the Rajya Sabha after it is being passed by the Lok Sabha and I would very much urge you all, in the interest of the small growers and in the interest of the plantation sector, to pass this Bill.

Now, let me turn to the concern expressed by the hon. Member, Shri Bishnu Pada Ray, about the interests of Andaman and Nicobar Islands. The Andaman and Nicobar Islands has a very important place in terms of the resolve of the UPA Government. Let me thank you for expressing that in your speech. As far as the plantation

sector is concerned, let me tell you that we are committed. I would very much like to visit the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. Rubber Board had an experimental plantation in Andaman and Nicobar Islands. However, considering the ecological fragility of rubber plantations, we have not extended beyond that. The labourers are paid the minimum wages as per the Plantation Labour Act today but if there are any particular issues in that, I would be more than happy to consider them.

In closing my reply, let me say that our Government is committed to the farming community, the plantation community and it is well evident. Many a time, we are told this and I think, as Legislators, as Government, it is important for us as far as the Indian population is concerned, to be able to walk our talk. The UPA Government has walked its talk. It has a track record of the last seven years and it has the track record that has looked at the social sector, whether it is health or education. It has the track record that has looked at the interests of the farmers, whether it is through IGES scheme or the loan waiver scheme or the ambitious Rs. 1,75,000 crore Bharat Nirman Scheme over the last five years. We are reiterating our commitment not only by our policies but by our action and resolve also. Let me re-emphasise that commitment here.

This Rubber (Amendment) Bill has tremendous value in terms of clauses of freeing up the interests for the small growers, taking back archaic legislations and ushering in a new area of growth for the rubber sector. I would urge all the hon. Members present here today to kindly pass this Bill. We need, as the hon. Chairman himself said, action in the plantation sector. Kindly assist me in providing that action to the much needed to the plantation sector and I give you my resolve that we will act and deliver for the plantation sector for the next five years.

श्री विष्णु पद राय (अंडमान और निकोबार द्वीपसमूह): सभापति जी, मिनिस्टर साहब ने बताया कि प्लांटेशन एक्ट में जो आफिसर्स, सिक्यूरिटी गार्ड, रिकॉर्ड कीपर्स, टैक्नीशियन्स जो सेम लेबरहुड में काम कर रहे हैं, उन्हें 6ठे सेंट्रल पे कमीशन के हिसाब से पेमेंट कर रहे हैं लेकिन जो मजदूर हैं, जो 40 साल से काम कर रहा है, उसे प्लांटेशन एक्ट में 1.90 रुपये मिलते हैं जबकि एक सिक्यूरिटी ड्राइवर और गार्ड को 15 हजार रुपया मिलता है।

वे एक ही फैक्ट्री में काम कर रहे हैं, एक ही बगीचे में काम कर रहे हैं। दोनों में अंतर क्यों होना चाहिए? इसके लिए मैं अनुरोध करता हूं कि स्टॉफ को जो वेतन मिलता है, उसी के मुताबिक मजदूरों को भी बेसिक-पे दी जाए। जब वे एक ही जगह काम कर रहे हैं, लेकिन मजदूर काम कर रहे हैं तो उसे पैसा मिलेगा 190 और स्टॉफ को मिलेगा 15-16 हजार रूपए। मैं यह अनुरोध करता हूं।

श्री ज्योतिरादित्य माधवराव सिंधिया: यह इस अधिनियम का मुख्य भाग नहीं है, लेकिन मेरे माननीय महोदय ने यह प्रश्न उठाया है। मैं इसका जबाव जरूर दूंगा। आपको मालूम है कि जहां तक केंद्र सरकार के कर्मचारी हैं, उनका कवरेज छठे वेतन आयोग के आधार पर है। जहां तक मजदूरों की बात है, उन्हें मिनिमम वेजेज स्टेट लॉ के आधार पर दी जाती है, लेकिन इसमें भी अगर हम कुछ अपनी तरफ से कर पाएं, इसके बाद आप मुझसे मिलिए, मैं जरूर कोशिश करूंगा।

SHRI PRASANTA KUMAR MAJUMDAR (BALURGHAT): I would request the hon. Minister to start rubber cultivation in West Bengal on an experimental basis in Botanical Gardens, Howrah.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Minister, a few more hon. Members want to put questions. Let the hon. Members ask their questions. Then, at the end, you can reply.

SHRI B. MAHTAB (CUTTACK): I raised a question regarding the subsidy that is being provided to non-traditional regions. A subsidy of Rs. 30,000 per hectare is being provided. I would like to know whether more stress is being given to expand the cultivation of rubber in non-traditional regions and whether the subsidy is going to be increased.

SHRI S.S. RAMASUBBU (TIRUNELVELI): My question is regarding the Minimum Support Price. The price of rubber keeps fluctuating. Sometimes these small farmers who are cultivating rubber are getting less remunerative price because of this fluctuation in prices. Sometimes it is very lower. Cost of production is over and above the selling price. So, the Minimum Support Price should be fixed in such a way as to protect these small and marginal farmers. Kindly take some action in this regard.

SHRI P. KARUNAKARAN (KASARGOD): I fully agree with the hon. Minister. He has said that rubber is included in the negative list to save the rubber farmers. But I am sorry to say that tyre and rubber-band are excluded from the negative list. It really affects the rubber farmers of Kerala. May I know, through you, from the hon. Minister, whether he will personally take the initiative to include the tyre and rubber-band also in the negative list?

SHRI P.T. THOMAS (IDUKKI): Will the Government consider, as a policy matter, to introduce rubberised roads all over India?

SHRI ANTO ANTONY (PATHANAMATHITTA): Now, the Rubber Board restricts all benefits for farmers below five hectares. Will you define a "small farmer" as a farmer growing below ten hectares? Why should we restrict the benefits to these farmers?

SHRI PRABODH PANDA (MIDNAPORE): The term "Minimum" in "Minimum Support Price" is understandable. But, why is the term "Maximum" being used? What prompts the Minister to use this term "Maximum"? Why is he using that term? I think this term should be deleted.

SHRI JYOTIRADITYA M. SCINDIA: The hon. Member raised the issue about West Bengal. We can definitely look at and consider something, if he can meet me after this debate.

With regard to subsidy for non-traditional regions, as Shri Mahtab mentioned, it is already in place. It is roughly about Rs. 30,000 per hectare. If there is a scope for increasing it, we would like to have a discussion with you and try and see if there is any possibility of doing that.

With regard to the MSP, the hon. Member raised a point as to why it is maximum. Unfortunately, when this Act was put in place in 1947 – it is not that we are putting it in place today – if you look at Clause 13, it says: "the power to fix maximum and minimum price for sale of rubber". So it is already in place. The reason why we are bringing it in place is to actually protect the farmers from that clause itself.

Then, there is also a decision to double the area under rubber cultivation in the North Eastern States in the next 10 years and a scheme is in place to achieve that end.

As far as the ASEAN FTA is concerned, our Government's commitment is to ensure that rubber is in the Negative List and there will be no tariff reduction as far as that is concerned.

As far as the issue of rubberised roads is concerned, if the hon. Member could meet with me outside the House, after this Bill is passed, then we can definitely talk about it.

With regard to the 10 hectare regulation and the reason as to why we are putting in place schemes for 5 hectares is, there are different schemes for different areas. So, I think, the important point to take away from this, at least from my point of view is, focus is very key and we should be able to actually concentrate on the area that needs the intervention the most and that is very important. That is not to say that the 10 hectare plantations will not be looked at.

MR. CHAIRMAN : The question is:

“That the Bill further to amend the Rubber Act, 1947, be taken into consideration.”

The motion was adopted.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The House will now take up clause-by-clause consideration of the Bill.

The question is:

“That clauses 2 to 18 stand part of the Bill.”

The motion was adopted.

Clauses 2 to 18 were added to the Bill.

Clause 1, the Enacting Formula and the Long Title were added to the Bill.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Now, the hon. Minister may move that the Bill be passed.

SHRI JYOTIRADITYA M. SCINDIA: Sir, I beg to move:

“That the Bill be passed.”

MR. CHAIRMAN: The question is:

“That the Bill be passed.”

The motion was adopted.

