

advantage of your friendship. Thank you very much, Sir.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI TRILOKI NATH CHATURVEDI): Shri A.: Vijaya Raghavan. There is message from the Lok Sabha.

MESSAGE FROM THE LOK SABHA

- (I) The Employees' Provident Funds and Miscellaneous Provisions (Amendment) Bill, 1998.
- (II) The Payment of Gratuity (Amendment) Bill, 1998.

SECRETARY-GENERAL: I have to report to the House the following messages received from the Lok Sabha, signed by the Secretary-General of the Lok Sabha:—

(I)

"In accordance with the provisions of rule 120 of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in Lok Sabha, I am directed to inform you that Lok Sabha, at its sitting held on the 10th June, 1998, agreed without any amendment to the Employees' Provident Funds and Miscellaneous Provisions (Amendment) Bill, 1998, which was passed by Rajya Sabha at its sitting held on the 1st June, 1998."

(II)

"In accordance with the provisions of rule 120 of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in Lok Sabha, I am directed to inform you that Lok Sabha, at its sitting held on the 10th June, 1998, agreed without any amendment to the Payment of Gratuity (Amendment) Bill, 1998, which was passed by Rajya Sabha at its sitting held on the 2nd June, 1998."

THE BUDGET (GENERAL), 1998-99 (CONTD).

SHRI A. VIJAYA RAGHAVAN (Kerala): Thank you, Sir, for giving me this opportunity to speak. This is my maiden speech in this august House. But, unfortunately, I am not in a position to congratulate the Finance Minister, I am from Kerala. On a Kerala angle I could not support this Budget. I am working among the agricultural workers and on the angle of the class to which I belong I could not support this Budget. Sir, in Kerala, we have a great tradition of changing cultivation from food crops to cash crops. Already, my colleagues from Kerala who participated in this discussion spoke about the tragic fate of the cash crop farmers in our State. You see, rightly or wrongly, Kerala has the biggest rubber cultivation in the country.

This itself became a matter of agony for the State. The price of natural rubber has plunged down from Rs. 75 to Rs. 25. The rubber farmers are expecting some assistance from the Finance Minister. But there is nothing in the Budget speech of the Finance Minister to assist the rubber farmers of our State.

My second point is about coconut. The name my State, Kerala, is derived from *a*, coconut. And you see the sad plight of coconut farmers! The Price is going down year after year. There has been a request for support price As far as my information goes, there was committee to look into support price for coconut. The committee has given its report for a minimum support price for coconut. The report was given in 1997 itself. But even after seven months the Government has not found it prudent to announce the support price of coconut. That is not here in this Budget.

Then the farmers of Kerala are mainly using urea. You have increased its price by fifty paise. There was a talk about Nellore and Palghat which are the main centres of paddy production in South India. Now, there was a bonus announced for farmers of wheat. A bonus

of Rs. 55 has been given. But for paddy farmers there is no assistance in this Budget. In that sense, it is against the interests of Kerala. This Budget has nothing to support the people of Kerala. There is a levy of customs duty on copper scrap imported for manufacture of pesticides and chemicals used in agriculture. This is also adversely affecting the farmers of Kerala. In that way, at all levels the Budget is against the interests of the people of Kerala.

So far as industry is concerned, my colleagues have already mentioned about FACT. Regarding caprolactam there was a duty of 70%, which has been reduced to 30%. This has been again reduced to 20%. Naturally, this industry will be forced to close down. It is against the interests of the people of Kerala. This Budget is totally against the interests of the people of Kerala.

As an activist, working amongst the agricultural workers, how can I support this Budget? Time and again, this august House discussed the Agricultural Workers Bill. It is a shame for this Parliament, it is a shame for this country and it is also a shame for the parliamentarians that even after fifty years there is no legislation for agricultural workers. You only think about stray dogs in the city of Delhi. If you throw a stone on a stray dog, there will be a legislation to protect it. But is there any legislation for protecting the agricultural workers of this country? Where have they to go? You are discussing this Budget. So many things have been said by the Finance Minister. Is there a single line for the agricultural worker? Can you say?

Now, we have this Economic Survey. There is a sharp fall in the production of wheat this year. What would be the fate of the agricultural worker? The same thing happened in 1995-96. And what happened in this country at that time? In November, 1996, wheat prices rose sharply in the main wheat market of

Punjab, as also in Delhi, from Rs. 790/- to Rs. 950/- per quintal. The prices were up by 23% and 17% respectively over the October levels and by 58% and 39% respectively by previous year's level.

What would be the situation in this year? Naturally, you have to expect a steep hike in the prices of wheat. Is there any precautionary measure in this Budget which is aimed at controlling the prices of wheat? The poor agricultural worker will face all these problems. Last time, the price of affci was increased to Rs. 50/-. This year, it may go beyond that. This House has discussed about suicides of farmers. If you don't take some precautionary measures, then there will be starvation deaths in this country. Whatever was expected of the Finance Minister, is not there in the Budget.

Sir, I have worked among students for a while. This Budget has not given much emphasis on education. The pattern of education is changing in this country. More and more students are going to tutorials. The students in big towns are going to universities and other specialised classes like computers. In this way, the pattern of education is changing. There is no substantial amount for rural schools and colleges mainly of plus-2 stage. The Government has shown concern for vocational education. I have gone through the Budget. There are four paragraphs on vocational education. I also looked at the allocations. Last year, it was Rs. 60 crores, but this year it is Rs. 10 crores. It has been reduced by one-sixth. Is this the approach of the Government towards the students who are hailing from poor families? Then, you look at computer education. It won't help much if you introduce computer education in high-schools of rural areas. Last year, the allocation for Computer education was Rs. 20 crores, but this year it is Rs. 10 crores. Is this Budget pro-poor? This is really a sorry situation.

Sir, I would like to say something about sports. The World Cup is starting today. Is there any Indian team there?

Ours is a country which has done explosions at the border. We have done all these things, but we could not have an Indian team in Paris. This is the situation. No attention is being paid to sports. You see. A small country like Sri Lanka has done a lot in the field of sports. The Sri Lankan Government has promoted a little girl—Sushantika. Sir, Shiny Wilson announced her retirement yesterday and P.T. Usha retired long back. There won't be any more sports star in the near future in this country. Is this the approach of the Government for development of sports?

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI TRILOKI NATH CHATURVEDI): Mr. Raghvan, I must remind you of your next appointment.

AN HON. MEMBER: Sir, This is his Maidan Speech.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI TRILOKI NATH CHATURVEDI): He has mentioned about his next appointment. He is playing host.

SHRI A. VIJAYA RAGHAVAN: Yes, Sir. The Budget is totally against the interest of the common man of this country.

Finally, Sir, I want to mention one point about the airline business. Now, the Government has decided to disinvest the Indian Airlines. This year, it earned a profit of Rs. 50 crores. Is there any private airline which is running better than Indian Airlines? Then, why are they selling it? This is what is going on in this country. First, they told the public sector units to compete with private sector. Some of them competed and succeeded. But, now they are selling it. Who has given them this right? The demolition of public sector units is going on. The *masjid* was demolished. Now, these public sector units which are profit-making—public sector units mean *mandirs* of our country. Now, they are demolishing the *mandirs* Also. This is against the interest of the common man of our country. Who are the owners of these public sector units? It is the

common man who is the owner of these public sector units. Who gave them the right to sell these units? Sir, the people of this country won't permit them to sell these public sector units. They have no right to sell the sweat and blood of the common man in the open market. The people will resist it. With the help of some opportunistic politicians, they could manage the majority in the House, but they cannot manage the majority of the people outside the House. The common man will oppose this Budget. We can see them in streets. Unless they change their policies, this country is going to be in a very difficult situation. So, my request to the rulers is to change your policy; otherwise, we have to face you on the streets on behalf of agricultural workers. I warn you.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI TRILOKI NATH CHATURVEDI): You are now a Member of Parliament. Do not bother about it at this moment. (*Interruptions*)

SHRI A. VIJAYA RAGHAVAN: Unless they come up with a Bill for agricultural workers and some policies favourable to agricultural workers, it will be very difficult. We will come to Delhi and it will be difficult for the people of Connaught Place and surrounding areas. This is the minimum thing I want to say, Sir. I am thankful to you for giving me this opportunity.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI TRILOKI NATH CHATURVEDI): Thank you very much, Vijaya Raghavanji. Now, messages from the Lok Sabha.

MESSAGES FROM THE LOK SABHA

(I) **The Representation of the People Amendment) Bill, 1998**

(II) **The Merchant Shipping (Amendment) Bill, 1998**

SECRETARY-GENERAL: Sir, I have to report to the House the following