

dated the 31st January, 1976, issued by the President in relation to the State of Tamil Nadu.

(ii) Statement giving reasons for the delay in laying the Report mentioned at (i) above.

[Placed in Library. See No. LT-11549/76 for (i) and (ii).]

LEAVE OF ABSENCE TO SHRI SURESH NARAIN MULLA

MR. CHAIRMAN: I have to inform that the following letter dated the 7th November, 1976, has been received from Shri Suresh Narain Mulla:—

"In confirmation of the telegram already sent, this is to inform you that as I have been taken ill, and the doctors have advised me not to move out of the station, I will not be in a position to attend the 98th Session of the Rajya Sabha.

In the above circumstances, I request that the House may be pleased to condone my absence during this Session."

Is it the pleasure of the House that permission be granted to Shri Suresh Narain Mulla for remaining absent from all meetings of the House during the 98th Session of Rajya Sabha?

(No hon. Member dissented)

MR. CHAIRMAN: Permission to remain absent is granted.

REFERENCE TO INCREASE IN EXPORT DUTY ON COFFEE

SHRI U. K. LAKSHMANA GOWDA (Karnataka): Sir, with your permission. I would like to raise a matter of grave concern which has arisen in the case of the coffee industry. Sir, a few days back, I sought your permission to raise this matter. At that time, the House was considering the Constitution (Forty-fourth Amendment) Bill. Therefore, permission was not granted. Now, I take this opportunity to raise

this matter. Last Saturday, that is, on the 6th of this month, the export duty on coffee was suddenly raised from Rs. 3,000 per tonne to Rs. 13,000 per tonne. In my view, this is a very crippling and savage duty to be levied at one stroke. As you know, in the case of the coffee industry, the majority of the coffee producers are small growers. Sir, you come from the Karnataka State and you know the position very well. You have been the Chief Minister as well as the Finance Minister of Karnataka and you know the position. About 97 per cent of the holdings are below 25 acres. Now, the production from these holdings amounts to about 53 per cent. This duty which has been levied directly affects the producers and it is a very crippling one. Prices of coffee have gone up and the exports have also gone up. I have no objection if there is a graded increase in the export duty. This was done in February last by raising it from Rs. 50 to Rs. 300 a quintal, that is, Rs. 3,000 per tonne. From Rs. 3,000, this sudden jump to Rs. 13,000 is very crippling. I brought this to the notice of Mr. Subramaniam as well as Mr. Pranab Mukherjee. I would like the hon. leader of the House to convey the feelings to them so that some immediate relief could be given.

Sir, one more word. This levy has been made on the basis of the sales of the small quantity which was remaining from the crop of last year. Prices went up from Rs. 22,000 to Rs. 26,000 per tonne in the international market at this tail end of the season. Suddenly, Rs. 13,000 has been levied as export duty. But Sir, that new coffee crop comes into the market only in January. Normally, when the new crop comes into the market, prices come down both here and in the international market. If this levy is continued, the grower, I am afraid, will not be in a position to realise even the cost of production. This is borne out by the figures which have been submitted by the Coffee Board itself. The Coffee Board is not my organisation. It is directly run by an execu-