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Title: Demand to take measure for the sustenance of cashew sector in Kerala.

**SHRI KODIKUNNIL SURESH (MAVELIKKARA):** Sir, thank you for giving me an opportunity to raise a very urgent matter.

The cashew sector in Kerala was facing unprecedented challenges and crisis that aggravated further with the onslaught of COVID-19. I would like to bring to the notice of this House the crisis faced by the cashew sector including its workforce and entrepreneurs. Five hundred cashew factories are closed due to several issues and unsupportive policies of both the Central Government as well the State Government. In Kollam district of Kerala, more than two lakh women workers are working in this sector, and due to COVID pandemic, they are facing unemployment and retrenchment. Their stipulated ESI and PF benefits are also diminishing.

The entrepreneurs are now being asked to clear their loans within months when the entire industry is in doldrums due to the existing COVID induced crisis in production and sales. The cashew sector is already the victim of a policy driven challenge wherein cashew import is decimating the domestic cashew industry. The crisis is quite widespread as only around 100 factories are currently functioning out of 836 spread around Kollam and the neighbouring districts.

I would like to urge the Central Government to take urgent steps to call a high level meeting at the earliest for addressing this crisis and recommending long-term measures for the sustenance of cashew sector, so that the workers and the entrepreneurs are protected and the industry is allowed to revive. I would also urge the Government to declare

special package for securing better working conditions to raise the living conditions of cashew workers.