

- (lu) Overhaul of exchange equipments
- (c) (i) There is a downward trend in the number of faults and complaints
- (ii) Percentage of carried over faults beyond 24 hours has reduced

**Using Residence of Indian High Commissioner in U.K for Fund-raising Concert**

5911 SHRI K RAMAMURTHY Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state

(a) whether the official residence of the Indian High Commissioner in UK was used for a fund-raising concert by the Maharashtra Association

(b) the total amount collected in this concert, and

(c) whether the High Commissioner has refused permission for the use of the official residence by other Indian Associations in London?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI S KUNDU) (a) A musical evening was held at the High Commissioner's residence in London on Sunday 22 January 1978. It was not organised by the Maharashtra Association but by three private persons known to the High Commissioner one of whom was at that time (though not at present) an officer-bearer of the Maharashtra Mandal. The concert was not public. Attendance was by invitation. Donations which were voluntary were collected in advance of the concert by the organisers. Presentation of the collection was made at the High Commissioner's residence.

(b) The amount collected (prior to the concert) was £960.00

(c) The residence of the High Commissioner is not available to Indian organisations for fund-raising functions. No such request has been received from Indian organisations.

**Strike by Coir Workers in Kerala**

5912 SHRI VAYALAR RAVI  
SHRI N SREERKANTAN  
NAIR

Will the Minister of PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS AND LABOUR be pleased to state,

(a) whether all the Coir Workers in Kerala went on strike to protest against the policy of the Central Government which threw them out of employment, and

(b) if so, what are the steps taken to meet their demand and protect their employment?

THE MINISTER OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS AND LABOUR (SHRI RAVINDRA VARMA) (a) and (b) According to information made available by the Ministry of Industry, a firm had been issued a licence as far back as 1973 for the import of machinery to manufacture coir products. Recently the export obligation of this firm was increased to 100 per cent of its production. Demonstrations were held by a group of workers by staging a dharna in front of the office of the Coir Board Ernakulam on the 9th of January 1978. The object of the demonstration is reported to be to record their protest against the sanction for mechanisation of the mat sector. It is stated that studies which had been conducted show that the 'mat and the mat weaving sector' of the industry employs about 20,000 workers out of nearly 4,55,000 persons engaged in the coir industry. Out of the 20,000 persons only about 1,750 are engaged in the 'creel mat' variety. While it does not appear that the mechanisation of the production of one variety of mats, purely for export purposes, would displace many workers, the entire question of mechanisation is presently under review by the Ministry of Industry to determine what impact if any, it would have on employment in the non-mechanised sector. A decision would be taken after taking into account all relevant aspects.