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Title : Need to provide health drinks instead of soft drinks containing hazardous range of pesticides.

SHRI A.V. BELLARMIN (NAGERCOIL): I would like to draw the attention of the Government, through you, to a matter of urgent public importance that is creating panic in the minds of the people of this country. The demand for banning the soft drinks manufactured and marketed by the Coca Cola and Pepsi Cola India is growing everyday from the public, particularly from the student population of India and the academicians. The pesticide residues found in the cola soft drinks are much more than the permissible limits and are deterrent to the health of the users. It is warned that these pesticides present in the soft drinks are slow poisoning agents, and they may prove fatal in the long run. The Centre for Science and Environment (CSE) has also established the findings. The judicial authorities have warned the Government to take cognizance of these fatal elements. Several State Governments have urged the Centre to take steps for banning the sale of the drinks whereas some of the States have banned them partly or totally.

The Government should note the lost nerve of the cottage industry, and small-scale manufacturing units would be revived if the operations of the cola majors are totally banned. Manufacturing and marketing of soft drinks made up of the natural agrarian products like tender coconuts, honey and particular variety of juicy fruits can be encouraged and subsidised by the Government. This will help augmenting employment opportunities in the rural side as well as economic development of the country.

We should not be coerced by the rejoinders of the cola majors and counter affidavits filed in the judicial fora which speak loud of their hollow arguments that they are following the European formula in pesticide residues which itself is banned in Europe and is not permitted by our Government.

So, I urge upon the Government to totally ban these drinks and, in their place, encourage natural drinks.