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Title: Need to set up a Cashew Board in Kollam District of Kerala.

SHRI KODIKKUNNIL SURESH (MAVELIKKARA): Sir, through you, I would like to bring to notice of the Government a very important issue, which has been a long pending issue before the Government of India.

Sir, the Government of India has accepted in principle to set up a Cashew Board for the welfare of the cashew industry in India. There are so many Boards like Rubber Board, Coir Board and Coconut Board in our country. But, as far as cashew industry is concerned, there is no Board in the Government of India under any Department. Cashew Board is highly essential for the overall growth of cashew industry.

There is a proposal that the Cashew Board can be constituted under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry. The Planning Commission of India has also cleared this proposal. There are about three lakh cashew workers, who are engaged in various factories in Government sector as well as private sector. In Kerala, the main centre of cashew industry is in Kollam. More than 250 cashew factories are there in Kollam. Out of three lakh cashew workers, 80 per cent of them are women. So far there is no comprehensive scheme for the welfare of poor cashew workers. There is no housing scheme, there is no education scheme and there is no any other welfare scheme for the cashew workers. So, every year the cashew workers are getting employment for only below 100 days. Therefore, if the Government of India constitutes a Cashew Board, the interest of the workers as well as interests of the farmers can be protected. This is a long pending demand before the Government of India.

MR. CHAIRMAN : Please take your demand.

SHRI KODIKKUNNIL SURESH : Sir, this is a very important issue because 90 per cent of the women workers, who are working in the cashew industry, most of them belong to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. That is why I am seriously raising this issue before the Government of India. The Government of India is earning foreign exchange because of the cashew workers, who have been working in this industry. In rubber sector, in coconut sector, in spices sector and in all other sectors there are boards under different Departments of the Government, but so far as cashew workers and cashew industry is concerned, there is no board or corporation. This is my request that Government of India should come forward immediately for the formation of the Cashew Board at the earliest for the welfare of cashew workers.