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Title: Need to set up a Cashew Board with headquarters in Kochi, Kerala.

DR. SEBASTIAN PAUL (ERNAKULAM): Steps for the establishment of Cashew Board under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, with headquarters in Kochi, may be expedited or, as an alternative, a Cashew Export Development Authority may be established by merging the Directorate of Cashew & Cocoa Development and the Cashew Export Promotion Council, both situated in Kochi. Kerala is a major producer of raw cashew nuts and more than 90% of the cashew exports and raw cashew imports is through Cochin Port. If domestic production of raw cashew nuts could be increased to the level of 10 lakh tonnes per year, it will fetch a minimum foreign exchange earning equivalent to Rs 2,600 crores. Though our export earnings from cashew kernels and allied products during 2006-07 was Rs 2,465 crores, the net foreign exchange earnings stood at Rs 653 crores because of import of raw cashew nuts valued at Rs 1,812.

**14.55 hrs.**