

[Shri Virdhi Chander Jain]

war-footing and drinking water is made available there without delay. Also, the Railways should not charge any freight for fodder sent from other States so that the cattle could be saved.

[English]

- (ii) Need to restore ESI benefits to cashew workers

**SHRI S. KRISHNA KUMAR (Quilon)** : Cashew is a vitally important traditional industry in Kerala and one and a half lakhs cashew workers, 98 per cent of whom are women get only a maximum of 90 to 100 days work in a year due to various problems besetting the industry. The cashew workers had so far been eligible for ESI benefits if they had worked for at least one day in 13 independent weeks in a six month period i.e. if 13 stamps or joint contributions of workers and employees were put in a half-year.

Now by reason of the amendment brought about by the Employees State Insurance (Amendment) Act, 1984 the entire cashew workers are being denied this already existing benefit. The Amendment stipulates that there should be work for 91 days in a six-month period for ESI benefit to be available—a condition impossible to attain in cashew industry. This denial of an existing right of cashew workers has apparently crept into the amendment inadvertently due to lack of proper consultation with the Kerala State Government.

It is imperative that the Government of India immediately corrects this anomaly and restores the ESI benefits to the cashew workers, who represent one of the most deprived and disadvantaged section of workers in India, by restoring *status quo* or providing for a minimum of 45 days of work as against the amended stipulation of 91 days in six months in section 47 of the amended Act. This has been strongly recommended by the

Kerala State Government. The Government of India may be pleased to move an amendment immediately for the purpose and redress this genuine grievance which with otherwise remain a black mark on the progressive and pro-labour policies of this Government.

- (ii) Need to take immediate steps to check pollution of atmosphere and water caused by the chemical and gas based industries in and around Vadodra

**SHRI RANJIT SINGH GAEKWAD (Baroda)** : The City of Vadodra, has a large concentration of chemical and gas based industries in and around it, creating air, land and water pollution in the surrounding neighbourhood. Crops from surrounding lands are constantly damaged year after year. Water, which was drinkable is not so any more due to seepage of chemical water into these water resources. The air has become polluted but absolutely no action has been taken by any authority to stop this.

The recent tragedy of Bhopal which took so many lives and made so many more helpless and blind, has created a panic amongst the people of Vadodra. Immediate action is necessary to stop pollution with the constitution of a high powered committee to look into the grievances and hardships of the affected people and a permanent monitoring cell should be set up to stop further pollution, before the whole matter gets out of hand and a similar Bhopal tragedy takes place. A proper inquiry with immediate steps is what will put the minds of the people of the neighbourhood at peace.

- (iv) Exploitation of migrant workers at work site of Vizag Steel Plant in Andhra Pradesh and need to provide better facilities and wages to these workers

**SHRI SOMNATH RATH (Aska)** : The migrant workers engaged at the