

(iv) RAILWAY TRANSPORT FACILITIES FOR BLACK BETEL LEAVES FROM PALGHAR AND BASSEIN TALUKS OF MAHARASHTRA.

SHRI RAVINDRA VARMA (Bombay North): The Palghar and Bassein Taluks of Maharashtra are areas that grow and export black betel leaves. Hundreds of baskets of these betel leaves are sent daily from these taluks to other countries and to Gujarat and U.P. Since betel leaves are perishable, the livelihood and income of the cultivators in this area depend entirely on the facilities that the Railways provide for the transport of these leaves. In the last two years, the demand for these leaves has increased, nearly doubled; but the facilities that were available in the Railways have not been increased, in fact, they have been drastically reduced. The goods bogie that used to be attached at Bassein; is no longer attached at Bassein; it has been reportedly diverted to Amalsad. The result is that the goods bogies in the Dehra Dun Express in which the baskets are sent to U.P. arrive full at Palghar, and sometimes even at Bassein, and the day's quota of baskets are not booked and carried on the train. Of late, this has been a frequent occurrence at Palghar—with the result that these perishable goods are not carried in the train, resulting in heavy losses and the refusal of merchants to buy the produce from the growers when they bring the leaves to the market. This has led to serious situations, of tension, and led to an unprovoked and brutal lathi charge on the cultivators at Kelve Mahim near Palghar. The difficulties of these cultivators can be met only if the Railway restores the goods bogie that used to be attached at Bassein or makes alternative arrangements for space in the bogies for goods to be loaded at Bassein and Palghar; revises the classification and classifies betel leaves (*pan*) as a perishable commodity in the tariff schedule; and provides tin sheds to

protect baskets of this perishable commodity that await loading at Palghar and Bassein. The gravity of the situation calls for the immediate attention of the Railway Ministry.

(v) CENTRAL APPROVAL FOR KERALA LAND REFORMS BILL, 1979

SHRI A. K. BALAN (Ottapalam): I would like to bring before the Government a grave and serious situation which has arisen in Kerala because the Government of Kerala could not distribute the surplus land to the agricultural labourers and poor peasants.

As per the legislation passed by the Legislative Assembly of Kerala, lakhs and lakhs of acres of land are to become surplus, which is now kept in the hands of land-owners on the strength of the previous Land Reforms Amendment Act, 1979.

It was considered that the new provision recognising a fresh class of tenancy created after 1st April, 1964 against the prohibition contained in section 74 of the Act is unnecessary and that the original position should be restored. The Kerala Assembly passed the Kerala Land Reforms (Amendment) Bill, 1980 which deletes section 6C.

The Amendment Bill as passed was sent to the Government of India on April 30, 1980, with a request that their approval may be communicated early.

It is understood that the Ministry of Agriculture, Department of Rural Reconstruction, and the Planning Commission have opposed the amendment.

The agricultural workers and poor peasants are going to demonstrate and stage a satyagraha before the Central Government offices in the first week of August.

Therefore, I pray that immediate steps be taken for giving assent to the Land Reforms Amendment Act, 1980.