

(4) Damages are being levied for belated payments under section 85B of the ESI Act.

(c) The delays in settlement of the claims of the workers are mainly due to following reasons:—

(1) Defects in the claims;

(2) Delays in investigation of the cases of employment injury/examination of cases of employment injury/Examination of cases by the Medical Boards;

(3) Non-receipt of contributory record from the employers, which is necessary for determining the eligibility and the rate of benefit.

Beedi Workers

1941. SHRIMATI ELA RAMESH BHATT: Will the Minister of LABOUR be pleased to state:

(a) what is the State-wise number of women and men beedi workers in India;

(b) out of the total beedi workers how many women beedi workers

have received Identity Cards and Maternity Benefit in the country;

(c) how many beedi workers (Male/Female) have received the Provident Fund after the latest Supreme Court's Order to that effect;

(d) whether Government are aware of the contract system and sale-purchase system adopted by the employers to evade legal obligations, if so, what steps are being taken by Government in this regard;

(e) whether Government are thinking of fixing a national minimum wage for the beedi workers of all the State if so, by when it is likely to come into force; and

(f) whether Government are aware that the beedi workers' cooperative promoted by this Ministry are facing serious problem in the matter of sales; if so, what steps are being taken to solve their problem?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF LABOUR (SHRI P. A. SANGMA): (a) The following is the total number of Beedi Workers (men and women) in the various States. No separate figures for men and women are available:

(in lakhs)

Name of State	Number of Beedi Workers
1. Andhra Pradesh	2.50
2. Bihar	3.50
3. Gujarat	0.50
4. Karnataka	3.00
5. Kerala	1.50
6. Madhya Pradesh	5.65
7. Maharashtra	2.50
8. Orissa	1.60
9. Rajasthan	1.00
10. Tamil Nadu	2.00
11. Uttar Pradesh	4.50
12. West Bengal, Assam, Tripura and Meghalaya	4.50
TOTAL:	32.75

(b) The exact number of women beedi workers who have been issued identity cards is not readily available. Enforcement of the provision regarding maternity benefits in the Beedi and Cigar Workers (Conditions of Employment) Act, 1966 is the responsibility of the State Governments.

(c) Supreme Court had given a judgement in September, 1985 upholding the coverage of beedi industry under the Employees Provident Fund Act. Since then, Employees Provident Fund Organisation is taking steps to enforce the provisions of the Employees Provident Fund Act in the beedi industry. The information regarding the number of beedi workers who have received provident Fund, is not available.

(d) Yes, Sir. Under the Beedi and Cigar Workers (Conditions of Employment) Act 1966 the definition of the term "employees" is very wide and it covers contract workers as well as any person not employed by an employer or a contractor but working with the permission of or under agreement with, the employer or contractor. State Governments who are responsible for the enforcement of this Act are advised from time to time to strictly enforce the Act.

(e) No, Sir.

(f) No Beedi Workers' cooperatives have been promoted by Labour Ministry.

Spices Development Board

†1942. SHRI VALAMPURI JOHN: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government have a proposal under their consideration to set up a Spices Development Board; and

†Previously Unstarred Question 1698, transferred from the 8th August, 1986.

(b) if so, whether Tamil Nadu has also been chosen as a member State for spices development?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI BRAHM DUTT): (a) and (b) Parliament has enacted the Spices Board Act 1986 for promotion of exports of various spices from the country. The Spices Board would be constituted under the provisions of this Act. The Board will have, among others, three members to represent major spice producing States.

Representation from the All India Carpet Manufacturers' Association

1943. SHRIMATI SUDHA VIJAY JOSHI: Will the Minister of TEXTILES be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the All India Carpet Manufacturers' Association has made a representation to Government that India hand-made carpet industry's export effort is seriously handicapped due to lower prices offered by other exporting countries like China, Pakistan, Iran, etc; and

(b) if so, what steps Government propose to take to help the hand-made carpet industry?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF TEXTILES (SHRI KHURSHID ALAM KHAN): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) To increase the competitiveness of Indian handknotted carpets in the international market, the following steps have been taken:

(1) The scheme of duty free import of wool against REP has been liberalised.

(2) Duty on import of wool has been reduced from 40 per cent to 20 per cent with effect from 1st March, 1986.