

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE
LOK SABHA**

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:3108
ANSWERED ON:13.08.2003
ARTIFICIAL RIPENING OF FRUITS AND VEGETABLES
S. SAIDUZZAMAN

Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the Government are aware that fruits and vegetable merchants, shopkeepers etc. are regularly using calcium carbide to produce acetylene gas for ripening of fruits and vegetables in the country;
- (b) if so, whether this has any deleterious effect on consumers of raw fruits;
- (c) if so, the details thereof;
- (d) whether agencies like CCFS, CFTRI etc. have made any studies on the subject;
- (e) if so, the details thereof; and
- (f) the corrective steps taken/proposed to be taken by the Government to eliminate the use of Calcium Carbide?

Answer

MINISTER OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE AND PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS (SMT. SUSHMA SWARAJ)

(a)to(d): There are reports of illegal use of carbide gas for ripening fruits by certain unscrupulous fruit merchants. Carbide gas is usually generated from Calcium carbide. During this process, gases like Hydrogen Sulphide and Phospine are probably produced in small amounts. These gases are known to produce gastrointestinal side effects like nausea, vomiting as well as headache. There is, however, little information regarding the residual amount of these gases in the fruit at the time of consumption.

(e)&(f): The Prevention of Food Adulteration Rules, 1955 already prohibit use of carbide gas in ripening of fruits.

All Food (Health) Authorities of States/UT Governments have been asked from time to time to keep a vigil on use of Calcium Carbide in ripening of fruits and take legal action for violation of the provisions.