

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: This has been started only a few months back. The practice is that as soon as the mentions are made under rule 377, the Ministers concerned are immediately informed of the entire proceedings of the House so that they can take action within ten days. They are informed immediately and they are expected to take some action within ten days. I suppose, that would satisfy the Members.

PROF. P. G. MAVALANKAR: I am glad that you have clarified the position that the Ministers concerned are informed immediately of these matters, and within ten days action is expected to be taken. But my point is this. In certain cases, such as the one mentioned by Shrimati Parvathi Krishnan, we are entitled to know further in the House itself from the Minister as to what has happened, so that we can pursue the matter more seriously.

SHRIMATI PARVATHI KRISHNAN: At least give the right to the Member who raises it and to read the reply in the House.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: There is also the option to the Minister; if he feels the need, he can come and make the statement in the House.

SHRI SOMNATH CHATTERJEE: The Member who raises it should be informed.

MR. DEPUTY-SPEAKER: The particular Members are informed in any case.

Mr. Mhalgi.

(iv) REPORTED INDEFINITE STRIKE BY THE EMPLOYEES OF HINDUSTAN ANTIBIOTICS LTD., PIMPRI, PUNJAB.

SHRI R. K. MHALGI (Thana): Mr. Deputy-Speaker, Sir, under Rule 377, I draw the attention of the hon. Ministers of Petroleum & Chemicals and of Labour to the following matter:—

Over 2,000 employees of Hindustan Antibiotics, a prestigious public sector

unit at Pimpri, Pune, Maharashtra, very recently converted their earlier tool-down strike into an indefinite strike demanding the withdrawal of dismissal orders against their colleagues. The contention of the Union of employees is that the high-handedness and pressure-tactics of the new management of the last eighteen months had culminated in the strike and a sense of insecurity had been created among the workers.

The production of streptomycin and penicillin as a result of strike has been badly affected. Indeed, it is a national loss.

It is, therefore, the prime duty of the Petroleum and Labour Ministers of the Government of India to find out an early solution to settle the points of dispute between the management and the Union of employees of Hindustan Antibiotics.

I hereby demand a statement soon from the concerned Ministers in this hon. House.

(v) DECISION TO IMPORT AN ADDITIONAL QUANTITY OF NATURAL RUBBER IGNORING THE INTERESTS OF SMALL RUBBER GROWERS.

SHRI GEORGE MATHEW (Muvattupuzha): Mr. Deputy-Speaker, Sir, I would like to bring to the notice of the hon. Minister of Commerce, under rule 377, the following matter of urgent public importance. This is regarding the import of an additional quantity of 15,000 metric tonnes of natural rubber.

The announcement of the Central Government to import an additional 15,000 M.T. of natural rubber, in excess of the 15,000 M.T. already imported in answer to Question No. 3694 on the 15th December 1978, is really deplorable. We had already pointed out to the Minister that, even before the distribution of the 15,000 M.T. of natural rubber imported during September, the prices in the market fell to Rs. 775 in October. This clearly showed that the hue and cry of the manufacturers that there was a shortage of natural rubber was a hoax. The price increase during

[Shri George Mathew]

the off-production season was only due to panic buying.

Even the other day, on the 10th, at a meeting at Palai in Kerala, Shri K. K. Goyal, the concerned State Minister, had categorically assured the growers that the 'Janata Government would protect the interests of the growers'. Now, I would like to know whether the decision to import an additional 15,000 M.T. of natural rubber was taken without consulting the concerned Minister.

Another important factor is whether the Government has in mind the interests of the 1,37,000 small growers in the country or the interests of a minority of factory-owners and their small number of employees. It should be noted that, after about ten years of toil, the natural rubber grower produces the rubber and his whole economic condition is destroyed by such one-sided action by the Government.

The Minister had promised to call a meeting of all the interested parties to arrive at a reasonable price for natural rubber. What was the hurry in announcing the present imports before such a meeting was called? Since the Government has already taken the decision to import an additional quantity of 15,000 M.T. of natural rubber, the only course left to protect the interests of the growers is to see that only through S.T.C. good rubber is imported which can be stored for a long time. The Government should also announce that the rubber thus imported will be released in the market only, when the internal market crosses much above the present Government (STC) selling price of Rs. 1000 per quintal.

I hope the Minister will consider the matter seriously and protect the interests of 1,37,000 small growers in the country.

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND CIVIL SUPPLIES AND CO-OPERATION (SHRI MOHAN DHARIA): This is indeed a very serious matter. When the earlier decision was taken, I had consultations with the Members of Parliament, particularly, members from Kerala. Government is never happy in importing such things, but the ruling price to-day of rubber is somewhere between Rs. 950 and Rs. 1000. I have been requesting the Chief Minister and others concerned to bring down the prices and if the prices are not being brought down, then naturally government has to take care of the prices as also availability of rubber in the market.

With regard to the import of 15000 tonnes of rubber, a decision has been taken that it will be through STC. That I have already assured. A meeting at the officers' level has taken place and we shall be having a meeting with the producers, users and consumers and also representatives of Kerala and other rubber producing States and my Ministry and the Industry Ministry would find out what are the requirements of the country not only for this year but for coming years, how we can take up the production programmes as also rubber plantation programmes, how we can give a reasonable price to the growers—to day it happens that nearly a margin of Rs. 100-200 is taken by the middlemen—how it will be possible to give a fair price to the producers and also make rubber available to the consumers at a reasonable price.

This is how efforts will be made and in the mean time I would request the members through you that they should take care to bring down the prices to a reasonable level. I would also like to extend all possible co-operation to all members and particularly to the growers and small owners.