

'loans' from those with stocks till their own supplies are made good by MMTC, the sole importer. The fear among the fertiliser manufacturers is that there may be a shortage of phosphatic fertilisers when the farmers do want them and the consequent rigging of prices.

The shortages created by circumstances beyond the control of MMTC have been compounded by a development which is of MMTC's own making. For the past four months or so, over 40,000 tonnes of sulphur were lying in stream off Bombay docks because of berthing difficulties and the MMTC, it is alleged, was unwilling to lighter the cargo and give it to the users only because it was not sure who would bear the lighterage charges. In this 'waiting game', MMTC would rather pay demurrages in foreign exchange than pay lighterage in rupees and pass them on to the Indian users. The users say the extra costs have to be willy-nilly borne by them as now it is not the cost of the raw material which bothers them, but keeping their production going. In fact this is what one or two users have done in claiming about 20,000 tonnes of this cargo on stream by bearing the lighterage charges. The situation now is that even when the other users are prepared to repeat the process, the decision is yet to be taken by MMTC.

Even if a decision is taken to obtain sulphur from somewhere now it may take over six weeks for the steamers to reach Indian shores and as usual 60 to 100 days to find berths for them in Bombay. Are the industries from fertilisers to textiles to dyestuffs and other chemicals to wait so long and bring their production to a halt?

The Minister is requested to take urgent measures so that the stipulated requirements of sulphur are obtained and supplied to the different sulphur-based industries, particularly fertilisers. All the three Ministers have to reply and I want an immediate reply.

(ii) REPORTED STEEP FALL IN THE PRICES OF POTATOES THEREBY CAUSING HARDSHIP TO POTATO GROWERS

SHRI BHAGAT RAM (Phillaur): Sir, under Rule 377 I want to raise the following matter of urgent public importance. The potato grower peasants are facing a grave crisis due to steep fall in the prices of the potatoes. The potato growers are not getting even the cost price. These are being purchased even below Rs. 30 per quintal. The NAFED failed to guarantee even the support price of Rs. 50 per quintal. The small and marginal peasants are complaining against the partisan attitude of the NAFED officials. The peasantry is being ruined as it has been denied fair price of sugarcane, cotton and now of potatoes. There is prevailing great resentment among the peasantry against this gross injustice. They are agitating to get justice. Hundreds of them courted arrest themselves at Jullundur.

I request the Minister to make a statement to assure the potato growers a support price of Rs. 50 of their whole marketable produce.

(iii) KERALA STATE CASHEW DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

SHRI K. A. RAJAN (Trichur): Sir, under Rule 377 I want to raise the following matter of urgent public importance. Cashew Industry is one of the traditional industries of Kerala, export oriented, providing employment to more than two lakhs of workers mostly women.

This Industry was always depending on the imports of raw cashew nuts from the East African countries, as the local raw units were sufficient only to meet 1/3rd of the total requirement. During the past few years the import from these countries have dwindled down as they are processing their own nuts.

In view of this the Kerala Government is making concerted efforts for