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Title: Shortage of fertilizers and foodgrains in Kerala due to decision of Railways to increase penal demurrage charge by 6 times.

SHRI M.B. RAJESH (PALAKKAD): Madam Chairperson, I would like to draw the attention of the House and the Government to an anti-people, particularly an anti-farmer decision taken by the Railway authorities. Railways have increased the penal demurrage charges imposed on goods brought to Kerala through Palakkad railway station. It is a huge increase, by six times, over the existing rate. This exorbitant rate of penal demurrage charge will cause escalation of prices of rice, wheat, fertilizer, cement, etc., and this will cause an acute shortage of these items. This has happened in the past when the penal demurrage charges were increased. This time the increase is six times. Farmers and consumers will be affected badly by this. Farmers are already in distress and the phenomenon of farmers' suicide has started revisiting our State. Consumers are already facing a very difficult situation due to relentless price rise. This decision of Railways' will aggravate the situation. This shows the utter disregard the railway authorities have for the concerns of the people.

I seek urgent intervention from the hon. Minister of Railways to withdraw the irrational and unjustifiable hike in the penal demurrage charges imposed.

MADAM CHAIRMAN : Hon. Members Shri P.K. Biju and Shri A. Sampath are allowed to associate themselves with the issue.