

versions) of the Twenty-fourth and Twenty-fifth Reports of the Standing Committee on Science and Technology, Environment and Forests on the Demands for Grants (1995-96) of the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research and Electronics, respectively.

20.55% hrs.

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS

(i) Potato Wart Disease in West Bengal

[English]

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI BALRAM JAKHAR) : I beg to lay a Statement on the Table of the House.

STATEMENT

Sir, I seek leave of the House to make a Statement on the Potato Wart Disease in West Bengal.

Potato Wart Disease caused by *Synchytrium endobioticum* was first detected in Darjeeling District during 1953. Survey conducted in 1957 and 1958 confirmed the persistence of the disease in the area. Since it was an exotic disease, it was felt necessary to contain its further spread and accordingly a notification imposing restrictions on the movement of potatoes grown in the State of West Bengal was issued on 8.10.1959.

Directorate of Plant Protection, Quarantine and Storage, Central Potato Research Institute, Shimla and State Agriculture Department of West Bengal have conducted six joint surveys since 1963 to assess the intensity of the potato wart disease. The survey reports have established that the disease is on the decline, but, it still persists in Darjeeling and adjoining potato growing areas. Potato wart is a soil borne disease and it persists in infected fields for a period of 25-30 years.

Keeping in view the increasing production of potato in West Bengal, a fresh joint survey to assess the disease situation in the affected district was conducted in May, 1993. There are 7 hilly blocks in the Darjeeling district, out of which only two blocks namely; Sukhiapokhri and Bijanbari could be surveyed. Potato wart disease was observed to persist in Bijanbari block. Surveys conducted by ICAR during 1985 and 1993 have also revealed that even in plots where wart immune varieties of potatoes developed by Central Potato Research Institute, Shimla are grown, viable spores of wart fungus are still prevalent.

It has now been decided to conduct a joint survey during May-June, 1995 to assess the status of wart disease in the hilly areas of Darjeeling district. The survey will be conducted by the officers of the Directorate of Plant Protection, Quarantine and Storage, Ministry of Agriculture, Central Potato Research Institute, Shimla and the officers of the Agriculture Department of West Bengal. An officer of the Directorate of Plant Protection,

Quarantine and Storage has already been nominated as a Co-ordinator for this joint survey. The survey report is expected to be available by middle of July, 1995. A decision regarding withdrawal or suitable modification of Notification No. 6-11/59-PPS dated 8.10.1959 which *inter-alia* bans the movement of potatoes from West Bengal will be taken after examining the report.

I wish to assure the Hon'ble Members of the House that a joint survey in this regard will be conducted before a final view is taken in the matter.

(ii) Present Position of Supply of Diesel and Petrol in the Northern Region

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (CAPT. SATISH KUMAR SHARMA) : I beg to lay Statement on the Table of the House.

STATEMENT

Sharing my concern with Hon'ble Members of the House about the difficulties of farmers and consumers about the availability of diesel and petrol in some States of Northern Region in the past few weeks, in my statement in this House on 4th May, 1995. I had explained the reasons for this problem. Besides the underlying important constraints of railway movement, port handling and power inadequacy, increasingly felt by the Oil Industry, the emergency shutdown of different Units of Mathura Refinery for more than 3 weeks in March-April, 1995, high demand of diesel in Northern States during the current harvesting season and operational constraints in import and movement of diesel by Railways into Northern Region had created a difficult situation and a challenge of meeting the requirement of petroleum products for Northern Region by quick mobilisation of Railways and other resources to move the products from alternate sources and arrange their equitable distribution in the whole area.

In my earlier statement, I had spelt out emergency steps that had been taken to meet the peak season demand during April-May, 1995. By identifying effective measures and taking a number of urgent steps, Oil Industry has progressively overcome the initial constraints and the position regarding production, import and movement of more diesel into Northern Region has shown a steady improvement. The refinery production has been increased at Mathura, Koyali and Barauni and, therefore, greater amount of product is available now in Koyali and Mathura Refineries for feeding Northern Region. Ministry of Surface Transport has been extremely cooperative by providing priority berthing to the oil tankers at Kandla and maximum possible imports have been handled on a warfooting. Oil Industry has also taken a number of steps to increase the throughput at Kandla Terminal. Apart from deploying vessels with higher pumping rate, the discharge mechanism has also been altered, resulting in more than 20% increase