

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF STEEL (SHRI JITIN PRASADA): (a) Yes, Sir. India has become a net importer of steel in 2007-08 and this trend continues in 2008-09.

(b) The table below shows import of total finished steel in the country during the last three years and in the current year.

Year	Import of Total Finished Steel (mt)
2005-06	4.31
2006-07	4.93
2007-08	7.03
April-Dec. 2008-09 *	4.50

SOURCE: Joint Plant Committee; * = provisional

(c) The steel consuming sector of the Indian economy has been adversely affected by the meltdown in the global economy and therefore in line with the price trends in the international market, the domestic steel prices have also shown a declining trend since October, 2008.

(d) The prices of commodities like steel are expected to stabilize, once the impact of economic stimulus packages unveiled by various countries, including India, are realized and economic activities like construction and manufacturing pick up.

Shortage of water for agriculture

105. SARDAR TARLOCHAN SINGH: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) the water level in Punjab and Haryana and how much it is receding every year? Give the figure of last three years;

(b) the steps being taken in this regard; and

(c) how much is the shortage of water for agriculture in both the States?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI KANTILAL BHURIA): (a) The ground water level is being monitored by Central Ground Water Board (CGWB) - an organisation of Ministry of Water Resources. The position of water level and declining trend of water level as per the CGWB during the last three years in the State of Punjab and Haryana are:-

Punjab - The depth of water level lies between 0.85 metre below ground level (m bgl) in Muktsar and 31.32 m bgl in Fatehgarh districts during pre-monsoon (May) and during post-monsoon (November) varies from 0.84 m bgl in Muktsar district to 37.36 m bgl in Ludhiana districts. Very shallow water levels, < 2 m bgl i.e. water logging conditions are observed in parts of Ferozpur, Muktsar and in small patches in Gurdaspur and Rupnagar districts. Very deep water levels (>20 m) are observed in parts of Jalandhar, Kapurthala, Moga, Patiala, Sangrur, Nawanshahar and Amritsar districts.

The trend of ground water level decline over last three years varies from less than 10 cm to more than 1 m per year in different parts of the State. The water level decline of more than 1 m per year has been observed at a few places in Fatehgarh, Gurdaspur, Hoshiarpur, Jalandhar, Kapurthala, Ludhiana, Nawanshahr, Patiala, and Sangrur districts.

Haryana - The depth of water level during May varies from 0.35 m bgl in Gurgaon to 47.80 m bgl in Bhiwani district whereas the depth of water level during November varies from 0.42 m bgl to 57.10 m bgl in Gurgaon district. Water logging conditions are observed in the central part of the State covering parts of Bhiwani, Hissar, Jind, Jhajjar, Rohtak and Sonapat districts and in isolated patches in Gurgaon, Panipat and Yamunanagar districts. Very deep water levels (> 40 m) occur in Bhiwani district bordering Rajasthan. The trend of water level decline over last three years varies from less than 10 cm to more than 2 m per year in different parts of the State. Water level decline of more than 1 m per year has been observed at a few places in Ambala, Fatehabad, Gurgaon, Kaithal, Karnal, Kurukshetra, Panchkula, Panipat, Sirsa and Yamunanagar districts.

(b) With a view to prevent water shortage, Government of Punjab has taken the steps like use of Laser Land Leveler, promulgation of 'The Punjab Preservation of Sub Soil Water Ordinance, 2008', diversification from Paddy to less water consuming crops, use of water saving techniques and capacity building & Training, etc.

The Haryana Government has also taken steps like launching of Mass Awareness Programmes for conservation and judicious use of water, introduction of a scheme titled "Accelerated Recharge to Groundwater", provision of subsidy on adoption of Drip/Sprinkler System for irrigation to prevent over exploitation of groundwater, popularizing growing of less water intensive crops in the areas where water table is declining, etc.

(c) As per information received from CGWB, Ground water is being over-exploited in both the States with rate of ground water development at 145 % in Punjab and 109 % in Haryana. The Government of Haryana has reported that requirement of water for agriculture at 62% intensity is about 31.90 Million Acre Feet (MAF), against the total availability from all resources of 18.75 MAF.

Outbreak of Avian Influenza

106. SHRI MAHENDRA MOHAN: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government is aware of outbreak of Avian influenza in West Bengal and North Eastern States recently;

(b) if so, whether a Central team has been sent to the affected States and to ascertain the exact position of the outbreak;

(c) if so, the details of the report furnished by the Central team; and

(d) the steps taken by Government to check spread of Avian influenza in the Country?