

RAJYA SABHA

Friday, the 20th February, 2009/1 Phalguna, 1930 (Saka)

The House met at eleven of the clock,

MR. CHAIRMAN in the Chair.

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

* 81[The questioner (*Dr. T. Subbarami Reddy*) was absent. For answer *vide* page 19 *infra*]

National Mission on Medicinal Plants

*82. PROF. ALKA BALRAM KSHATRIYA:††

SHRIMATI SHOBHANA BHARTIA:

Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government has recently approved a Centrally sponsored National Mission on Medicinal Plants;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether most of the medicinal plants are on the verge of extinction and herbal industry has been affected adversely; and

(d) if so, the facts thereof and the steps taken by Government to encourage farmers to grow more medicinal plants to protect the herbal industry?

THE MINISTER OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (DR. ANBUMANI RAMDOSS): (a) to (d) A Statement is laid on the Table of the House.

Statement

(a) to (d) The Government has recently approved a new Centrally Sponsored Scheme of National Mission on Medicinal Plants with a total outlay of Rs. 630 crores for implementation during the 11th Plan by National Medicinal Plants Board. The scheme aims at supporting market driven cultivation of medicinal plants prioritized on the basis of their demand in the AYUSH and Herbal industry and will be implemented in a mission mode in selected clusters through growers' cooperatives, self help groups, producer companies, etc. with backward and forward linkages for nurseries, post-harvest management, marketing and certification. The activities for which financial assistance is available under the scheme are the following:

- Nurseries in public and private sector for quality planting material
- Cultivation of species that are in demand in AYUSH and Herbal industry
- Support Post Harvest Management infrastructure like warehouses, processing units, setting up/upgradation of herbal mandies
- Market Intelligence
- Marketing Support

††The question was actually asked on the floor of the House by Prof. Alka Balram Kshatriya.

- Organic Certification
- Quality Testing
- Crop Insurance
- Management Support

Under the Scheme, the State Governments are required to formulate Action Plans with approval of State Level Steering Committee before these are considered for approval by the Central Government. During the 11th Five Year Plan, it is proposed to provide financial assistance for coverage of 80,000 – 1,00,000 hect. of area under medicinal plants in the clusters to be identified by the State Governments. The scheme also aims at increasing the share of value added items in the export of medicinal plants and products besides creating 6 crore mandays of employment.

The medicinal plants, like other group of plants and animals, are threatened largely due to degradation of forests owing to various anthropogenic factors. There have been reports received from some industries also regarding non-availability of some medicinal plants in required quantities. There is, however, no information about the medicinal plants being on verge of extinction.

The National Medicinal Plant Board is also implementing a Central Sector Scheme for Rs. 320/- crores under the 11th Five Year Plan under which support is provided to the State governments for conservation and plantation of medicinal plants in forest areas so as to augment availability of medicinal plants which are of conservation concerns and are otherwise in high demand by the herbal industry. The Board has so far sanctioned projects for conservation and plantations covering about 39983 hectare land in forest area and other public lands. In addition, projects have been sanctioned to about 6800 farmers covering approximately 40,000 hectare land for cultivation of identified medicinal plants and thereby augment their availability for the herbal industry.

प्रो. अलका क्षत्रिय: सभापति महोदय, मैं आपके माध्यम से माननीय मंत्री जी से यह जानना चाहती हूँ कि क्या राष्ट्रीय औषधीय पादप बोर्ड का गठन करने के बावजूद भी उसकी कार्यक्षमता बढ़ाने के लिए वैज्ञानिकों की कमी है? सरकार वैज्ञानिकों की उपलब्धता के लिए क्या कार्य कर रही है।

DR. ANBUMANI RAMDOSS: Sir, under the Department of AYUSH, we have started two new programmes. One programme is a Centrally-sponsored scheme called the "National Mission on Medicinal Plants" with a total outlay of Rs.630 crores, and another programme is an on-going programme, a Central sector scheme, under the National Medicinal Plants Board with an outlay of Rs.320 crores. The total is approximately Rs.1,000 crores in the Eleventh Plan. This is to propagate the medicinal plants in the country because we have such a huge potential and India is one of the 17 mega biodiversity countries. We have the Western Ghats, as well as, the North-East. We have a huge potential of medicinal plants in terms of industrial strength. Now, not only to cater to the industry and to go in for a lot of more scientific evidence in India, but also to propagate the Indian system of medicines like Ayurveda, Siddha, Unani and Homoeopathy a lot of manpower and scientists are needed. We have a programme called the "Golden Triangle Programme" where the ICMR, CSIR and the AYUSH Department have a collaboration not only to scientifically validate the

procedure but also to produce a lot more scientists in the country. We have institutes throughout the country. We have the National Institute of Ayurveda in Jaipur, the National Institute of Homoeopathy in Kolkata, the National Institute of Unani Medicines in Bangalore and the National Institute of Siddha in Chennai. In the North-East we are starting a Folk Medicine Institute. In Shillong, we are starting another Institute of Ayurveda and Homoeopathy. The process to start another National Institute of Ayurveda in Delhi itself, in the Eleventh Plan, is on. It would be a highly research-oriented Institute producing a lot more scientists and it would try to have more value-based scientific evidence.

प्रो. अलका क्षत्रिय: सभापति महोदय, मैंने जो सीधा सवाल किया था, उसका जवाब तो मिला नहीं, लेकिन मेरा दूसरा पूरक सवाल यह है कि ...(व्यवधान)...

DR. ANBUMANI RAMDOSS: What more reply does she want? I don't know.

प्रो. अलका क्षत्रिय: मैंने जो सवाल किया था, आप उसी का जवाब दे देते। बाकी जवाब तो आपने उसके अंदर लिखा ही है।

श्री सभापति: आप दूसरा सवाल पूछिये।

प्रो. अलका क्षत्रिय: हिमालय के अंदर जो दुर्लभ जड़ी-बूटियां हैं, उनमें से कुछ जड़ी-बूटियां नाश होने की कगार पर हैं? इसकी वजह से क्या सरकार ने रूस के अंदर इन जड़ी-बूटियों को उगाने के लिए lease पर कोई जमीन ली है और क्या सरकार रूस के माध्यम से यूरोपीय बाजार पर कब्जा करना चाहती है?

DR. ANBUMANI RAMDOSS: Sir, I would like to add to my reply to what she has asked initially. Fifteen posts in various categories including scientists have been created and right now the process is being taken with the UPSC to fill them. The process is going on. Still we are employing scientists on contract basis.

Coming to her second supplementary about the Himalayan herbs, I have already said about the biodiversity. That is precisely why this National Medicinal Plants Board was started. It was started to help the farmers with cultivable land and under the Tribal Scheme with forest land also. Ninety per cent of the medicinal plants in India we get from the wild and ten per cent is cultivated. To harvest and harness all these resources, now we are going on a structured programme of getting, for example, clusters. A cluster could not only be of industries, it could even be of villages, maybe, a cluster of 10 to 20 villages, where there is a potential of growing medicinal plants like in the Himalayan Region. ...*(Interruptions)*... Can you please be a little patient? I am answering your question.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Please go ahead.

DR. ANBUMANI RAMDOSS: This is precisely why we started this with, say, Rs. 630 crore in the Eleventh Plan, that is, for another three years we have to go around. We are getting this from the State Governments. So we are depending on the State Governments for all these processes. The States identify civil societies, voluntary organisations, NGOs, private sector, public sector, etc., all of them and they process this. Earlier, the Medicinal Plants Board was just giving loans or subsidies to

the farmers. Now, this is a comprehensive policy of the National Mission on Medicinal Plants from cultivation to marketing; cultivation, harvesting, warehousing, testing and marketing. So all this has been channelised for this programme. We are supporting the Tribal people in the forests and the farmers. In fact, under the Ministry of Agriculture, National Horticulture Mission, North East has been supported and the Himalayan Region has been supported. So we are going through a comprehensive progress. I would like to know if she has any specific issues in her State or in her area, which we will definitely be happy to take up under the National Mission on Medicinal Plants.

SHRIMATI SHOBHANA BHARTIA: Sir, the international global trade for medicinal plants is almost worth 60 billion dollars and India has a paltry two per cent of that, though we are one of the largest growers. One of the reasons is lack of validation, lack of actually authenticating and having a laboratory for quality control of these plants. I would like to know this from the hon. Minister. Do you have any plans of setting up a state-of-the-art laboratory? Are you taking any steps to ensure that there is a system of certification at the national level so that we can not only contribute to the national market but also start exporting these in a larger quantum?

DR. ANBUMANI RAMDOSS: Sir, the problem in India has been value addition. In fact, globally, the total value of the medicinal plants trade is about 120 billion dollars – it is growing about 7 per cent every year – out of which India's contribution is only about one per cent of value added products. It may even be less than one per cent. The raw material is about 6 to 8 per cent. In terms of value, it is nearly Rs. 1150 crores. But it has got a huge potential. In fact, so far as the global potential is concerned, the experts say, by 2050, the medicinal plant industry in the world is going to be a 5 trillion dollar industry. We have such a huge potential of value addition. That is why this Mission has been started. Also, Sir, under a Centrally Sponsored Scheme, which we have initiated at the end of the 9th plan, we are nearly spending Rs. 1.5 crores each on 29 State drug testing labs, for modernising these labs and scientifically validating these labs. Also the labs of all the national level institutes are being accredited as NABL level labs. Plus we have some issues about heavy metal components abroad and there were issues about quality and standard of Indian products. Since then we have taken cognisance of that and from 2003 onwards, we are strictly following the GMP (Good Manufacturing Practice). Without which we don't give any license to anybody and nobody can manufacture any of these products. Plus it is mandatory that all these products for exports should have a self-testing mechanism. They have to test the products themselves and have to mention on the product that they have heavy metals or any other component within the permissible limits. The ingredients have to be mentioned. That is again mandatory which has to be mentioned on that. We have strengthened 29 drug-testing labs around the country. Again it is mandatory for the manufacturers to get the safety and toxicity studies done of all the products in any NABL Lab or any GLP Lab. These are some of the steps which we have taken.

PROF. M.S. SWAMINATHAN: Mr. Chairman, Sir, I want to congratulate the hon. Minister for starting this National Mission. As has already been mentioned, most of the medicinal plants are in the red data books of the Botanical Survey. That means that they are rare, threatened and endangered.

The supplementary that I want to put to the hon. Minister is this. He has used the word 'National Mission'. It is a subject which was started in the period of the then Prime Minister, Shri Rajiv Gandhi. The first mission was in the field of oilseed production, and it led to a doubling of the oilseed production within five years. It had a clear goal, a clear target, a clear road map for achieving the target, and above all, a Mission Director, who had both the authority and the accountability to achieve it. And, today, as the hon. Minister has said, most of the Ayurveda manufacturing companies are collecting plants from the wild. Now, we need to have cooperation from the two classes of people; one is the tribal families, who have both the knowledge and wisdom and the material and the other is the manufacturers of Ayurveda drugs. I would like to ask the hon. Minister how he proposes to do this in the Mission. Is there going to be a Mission Director who will be accountable for results?

DR. ANBUMANI RAMDOSS: Sir, this is precisely why my Prime Minister had said that it has to be in mission mode. For example, we have the National Rural Health Mission. It is not just like any other National Programme, but he wanted it in Mission mode so that it is a seven-year programme. We have had a huge success of the National Rural Health Mission. Similarly, we have started this National Mission on Medicinal Plants. It has a structure. It has a hierarchy. It has a Board under the Chairmanship of the Union Health and Family Welfare Minister. And it has representatives of other Ministries and Departments like the Secretary of AYUSH, Secretary of Commerce, Secretary of Agriculture, Secretary of Expenditure, Secretary of Tribal Affairs, Secretary of Scientific and Industrial Research. And it has got sub-committees from the Pharmacopial division. So, it is a scientific committee. Then, at the State level, it is under the State Mission Steering Group headed by the State Authority. The State Authority is a technical person appointed by the State Government. The expected outcome of this Mission is that once this Mission is over, we will have nurseries, of nearly 200 numbers, both in the public and the private sector. These will be supported by the Mission to produce these plants. Also, once this Mission is completed, the cultivation of prioritised species would have increased from 80,000 hectares to 1,00,000 hectares. Then, we will have additional coverage area, required infrastructure, post-harvesting management and doubling of the export of value added items of medicinal plants under this.

DR. KARAN SINGH: Mr. Chairman, Sir, I would like to congratulate the hon. Minister and the Government for this very important programme. Forty years ago, we had started it when I was the Health Minister. Now they have really taken it up. I have one particular supplementary to put. Apart from quality control, which is vital, what is the position regarding copyrighting and trade marking of these sorts of products? What is happening is that a lot of products are being sold abroad under certain generic names, and the copyrighting situation is still not clear. Could the hon. Minister throw some light on this?

DR. ANBUMANI RAMDOSS: There has been a lot of misuse of our patents. These products are being used in India for centuries. Now we find that in the United States, for example, some of the products and their copyrights have been misused. Precisely for this, we have started the Traditional Knowledge Digital Library (TKDL). It took us four to five years to compile a lot of data, and the ancient Sanskrit manuscripts to decipher all these processes. And I would like to say that nearly

2,00,000 products have been listed in this TKDL in five languages, and we are having a dialogue with the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO) plus 11 countries. We are going to register this TKDL in those countries so that nobody in the world can misuse our own products or any of these curable combinations or even any of the processes.

SHRIMATI VIPLOVE THAKUR: Sir, the hon. Minister has said that the State Governments are required to formulate an Action Plan. I would like to know how many States have sent their Action Plans, and how much money has been sanctioned for them to take up this medicinal plants project.

DR. ANBUMANI RAMDOSS: Currently, seven States have evinced interest in that. These States are Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Manipur, Bihar and Maharashtra. And we have released a sum of Rs.3.81 crores to Karnataka. In Madhya Pradesh, 5.43 crores; in Tamil Nadu, 6.83 crores; in Kerala, under process, 2.39 crores; in Manipur, under process, 3.68 crores; in Bihar, under process, 1.09 crores; in Maharashtra, under process, 2.39 crores.

Export of Wheat

*83. SHRI MOHD. ALI KHAN: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether United States' Department of Agriculture has gone ahead to project that India may ease nearly two year old ban on wheat shipment in May and even use its large central reserve for exporting the foodgrains after the rabi harvest;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) how it would be useful to our country especially for the farmers of Andhra Pradesh?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI SHARAD PAWAR): (a) to (c) A Statement is laid on the Table of the House.

Statement

(a) to (c) The USDA Foreign Agriculture Service has published the Global Agriculture information Network (GAIN) Report on 14.1.2009. As per this Report the Indian Government may remove export restrictions on wheat and make wheat available from Government stocks for exports after the harvest in May.

As per the USDA Report, because of the high support price of wheat in India, Indian wheat is unlikely to be competitive in the world market without an export subsidy.

Exports could benefit farmers, if price realization from exports is higher than domestic prices. The production of wheat in Andhra Pradesh is not significant.

SHRI MOHD. ALI KHAN: What price are the farmers of Andhra Pradesh getting in terms of export of wheat as compared to rice? What are the details for the current year?

SHRI SHARAD PAWAR: We have practically not booked any wheat in Andhra Pradesh. Andhra