

## WRITTEN ANSWERS TO STARRED QUESTIONS

### Residential schools for tribal girls in Tamil Nadu

\*327. SHRIMATI JAYANTHI NATARAJAN: Will the Minister of TRIBAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether residential schools for tribal girls are functioning in Tamil Nadu;
- (b) if so, the details thereof;
- (c) whether there is any proposal to increase the number of such residential schools in the State with funding from the Central Government; and
- (d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF TRIBAL AFFAIRS (SHRI KANTILAL BHURIA): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. The Ministry of Tribal Affairs has funded the running of a residential School by an NGO in Tamil Nadu in the last three years. Two Model Residential Schools have also been funded. These Schools are for both tribal boys and girls.

(c) and (d) Funding of the running of residential schools in a State in demand driven according to the provisions of the relevant scheme.

### Commercial production of Bt. Brinjal

\*328. SHRI BHARATKUMAR RAUT: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether it is a fact that some of the members of Genetic Engineering Approval Committee have given their dissent to the decision of the Committee that has cleared commercial production of Bt. Brinjal in the country;
- (b) whether the decision of the Committee was manipulated as the required 30 safety tests were not done;
- (c) whether there is no agreement even within Government as the Ministries of Science and Technology and Agriculture have found the production of Bt. Brinjal safe and his Ministry is denying it; and
- (d) what would be its impact on the conventional farming of Brinjal?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH) : (a) Two Members and one Special Invitee of the Genetic Engineering approval Committee (GEAC) out of seventeen members and two special invitees did not support the decision of the GEAC on Bt. Brinjal.

(b) Bt. Brinjal event EE-1 has been developed in compliance with the prevailing regulatory procedures and biosafety guidelines. The decision of the GEAC on the safety of Bt. Brinjal for environmental release is based on (i) review by three high level technical Committees namely; the Review Committee on Genetic Manipulations and two Expert Committees constituted by the GEAC in 2006 and 2009; (ii) scientific facts / data generated during 2002-2009; and (iii) international experience with GM crops. Subsequently, based on the views of various stakeholders during the public consultations organized by the Ministry, moratorium has been imposed on commercialization of Bt. Brinjal until independent scientific studies establish, the safety of the product from the point of view of its long-term impact on human health and environment, including the rich genetic wealth of Brinjal existing in our country.

(c) No Sir. There is a general agreement within the concerned Ministries that biotechnology is an important tool for raising agricultural productivity and ensuring food security. At the same time, it must be ensured that it has no adverse effects on human and animal health, and bio-diversity. The GEAC has been requested to address the concerns for resolving all scientific issues relating to Bt. Brinjal.

(d) Concerns have been expressed that Bt. Brinjal would contaminate conventional crops and reduce the genetic diversity of Brinjal crop due to gene flow. However, environmental safety studies done so far, such as pollen flow, weediness, aggressiveness and crossability demonstrated that introgression of cry 1Ac gene has (i) in no way affected the outcrossing potential and weediness characteristics of *Solanum melongena* (cultivated Brinjal); (ii) confers no advantage to recipient plants in terms of aggressiveness or growth characteristics; and (iii) no instances of natural inter-specific hybridization with wild species have been reported for cultivated Brinjal. Therefore, even if gene flow occurs in exceptional circumstances, it is not expected to have any adverse impact on conventional crop.

#### Availability of judges

†\*329. SHRI BHAGWATI SINGH: Will the Minister of LAW AND JUSTICE be pleased to state:

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†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.