

Privatisation of ports and harbours

6. SHRI C. PERUMAL: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether fishermen would be affected by privatisation of ports and harbours; and

(b) if so, how fishermen would be protected?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI TASLIMUDDIN): (a) and (b) The information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House.

Suicides by farmers

7. DR. M.A.M. RAMASWAMY: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether a number of farmers have committed suicides in different parts of the country and more particularly in southern States;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor;

(c) whether it is a fact that some bio-tech companies are accused of unfair trade practices leading to cotton growers on the verge of suicides; and

(d) if so, the action taken by Government to protect the farmers?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI KANTILAL BHURIA): (a) and (b) Cases of suicide by farmers have been mainly reported from the States of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Maharashtra and Kerala. Such instances have also been reported from the States of Punjab, Gujarat and Orissa. The main causes identified by the State Governments for committing suicide by farmers, *inter-alia*, include indebtedness, crops failure, non-payment of loan taken from private money lenders at high rate of interest.

(c) and (d) As per available information, farmers in certain districts of Andhra Pradesh have suffered losses on account of Bt. Cotton hybrid seeds of Mahyco. A few complaints have been received in the Monopolies and Restrictive Trade Practices Commission which is a quasi-judicial body, against Mehycos Monsanto Biotech Ltd., a biotech company involved in production and distribution of Bt. cotton seeds.

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RAJYA SABHA

The authority of taking punitive action against the companies/agencies selling spurious seeds vests with the State Governments. The Central Government have, from time to time, advised the Bt. Cotton growing States to take punitive action against suppliers/vendors of spurious Bt. Cotton seeds.

Research facilities in agricultural bio-technology

†8. SHRI MANGANI LAL MANDAL: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that agriculture related research and extension programmes are facing neglect;

(b) whether it is also a fact that international research facilities are required to be developed in the field of bio-technology; and

(c) if so, the details of Government's initiatives in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI KANTILAL BHURIA): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Yes, Sir.

(c) The Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) has taken several initiatives for developing research facilities like infrastructure, equipment and training, in its different institutes and the State Agricultural Universities for enhancing the productivity and production of crops, livestock and fish through biotechnological interventions. Development of human resource through training in specific areas in the world class national and international laboratories, international collaborations, identification of priorities and action plan through meetings/workshops etc., development of network programmes are already being undertaken. In addition to the biotechnological work being undertaken at various ICAR institutes, a National Research Centre for Plant Biotechnology, New Delhi and a National Research Centre on DNA Fingerprinting, New Delhi are already working on the aspect. Recently, action has been initiated to develop Indo-US collaborative research programmes focusing biotechnology as major field of research collaboration. A scheme 'National Fund for Basic and strategic Research' has also been sanctioned.

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.