

(a) whether the Ministry has taken note of the growing paucity of workforce for pursuing agricultural works in the fields and has found the same to be attributable to diversion of the agricultural workforce to jobs under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS);

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) whether the Ministry has suggested revision of MGNREGS, especially to ensure that engagement for 100 days employment of rural workforce does not overlap with agricultural seasons, with a view to ensure availability of adequate manpower for fields?

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SHARAD PAWAR): (a) and (b) Agro Economic Research Centres under Ministry of Agriculture, have conducted State level studies for assessing impact of MGNREGA on wage rate, food security and migration. Initial studies conducted in Karnataka, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh, Gujarat, Haryana and Punjab reveal that MGNREGA has put an upward pressure on general wage level in rural areas, and that there is shortage of labour for critical agricultural labour intensive operations like sowing and harvesting.

Suggestions have been received from stakeholders, notably farmers, to plan NREGA works in such a manner such that it does not lead to labour shortage during period of critical agricultural operations.

(c) Yes, Sir.

Introduction of coaches based on German technology

*76. SHRI T.M. SELVAGANAPATHI: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Railways are considering to switch over from indigenous ICF coaches to German technology based coaches in all mail and express trains within the next five years;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether it is a fact that German coaches would help to minimize damage and reduce the loss of lives in accidents; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF RAILWAYS (SHRI DINESH TRIVEDI): (a) to (d) No, Sir. Indian Railways plan to progressively increase the new manufacture of LHB (Linke Hoffmann Busch) design coaches. These coaches will be selectively inducted in Mail/Express Trains as and when their population grows.

Conventional ICF (Integral Coach Factory) design coaches shall still remain to service some Mail/Express trains.

LHB coaches are designed to have superior anti-climbing and crashworthy features. These features ensure train integrity to a far greater degree particularly at higher speed, and even dissipation of energy minimizing the damage to coaches and risks to occupants in the event of an accident.

National Horticulture Mission

*77. DR. K.V.P. RAMACHANDRA RAO: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

- (a) whether it is a fact that the Ministry is implementing National Horticulture Mission for holistic development of horticulture;
- (b) if so, the major objectives of the scheme;
- (c) whether it is also a fact that one of the objectives of the scheme is creation of market infrastructure for fruits and vegetables; and
- (d) if so, the targets fixed and achieved during the last five years?

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SHARAD PAWAR): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. The Ministry of Agriculture is implementing the National Horticulture Mission (NHM) for the holistic development of horticulture in the country with the following major objectives:—

- (i) Provide holistic growth of horticulture sector through area based regionally differentiated strategies, which include research, technology promotion, extension, post harvest management, processing and marketing, in consonance with comparative advantage of each State/region and its diverse agro-climatic features;
- (ii) Enhance horticulture production, improve nutritional security and income support to farm households;
- (iii) Establish convergence and synergy among on-going and plan programmes, for horticulture development;
- (iv) Promote, develop and disseminate technologies for horticulture development, through seamless blending of traditional wisdom and modern scientific knowledge; and
- (v) Create employment generation opportunities for skilled and unskilled persons, especially unemployed youth.

(c) and (d) One of the objectives of the scheme is creation of market infrastructure for marketing of horticulture produce including fruits and vegetables. During last five years (2006-07 to 2010-11), 225 Rural Markets, 100 Wholesale Markets and 7 Terminal Markets were targeted in