

**Commercial Release of Bt Brinjal**

2034. SHRI SANJAY RAUT: Will the MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that scientists at the recently held conference on 'Biotech crops for food security in India' have appealed to Government to remove all constraints in the research and development work of biotech crops and lift moratorium on commercial release of Bt. Brinjal;

(b) if so, the response of Government thereto; and

(c) by when the Government will consider their appeal?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRIMATI JAYANTHI NATARAJAN): (a) Yes Sir, A Conference on 'Biotech Crops for food security in India' was organized by the Foundation for Biotechnology Awareness & Education (FBAE) in collaboration with the Association for Biotechnology Led Enterprises Agriculture Group (ABLEAG) on 27th February 2012 at Bangalore. The outcome of the Conference has been brought out in the form of "The Bangalore Declaration". The conference has urged government to lift the moratorium on Bt. Brinjal imposed two years ago and to functionalize the Biotechnology Regulatory Authority of India (BRAI) Bill.

(b) and (c) The matter of imposition of moratorium on Bt. Brinjal is now under consideration of Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee (GEAC) of the Ministry which is in consultation with other eminent scientists is reviewing the issue in terms of the need for additional studies to assess the safety of Bt. Brinjal with respect to recent scientific developments and existing international best practices. The issue entails numbers of sensitive apprehensions especially with respect to long term impacts on biodiversity and health on which there is lack of consensus. Therefore, it may not be feasible to expedite the final decision on the matter. As far as BRAI Bill is considered, it is under active consideration of the Government and can be operationalized only after completion of due parliamentary procedures.

**Loss of Forest Cover Due to Globalization and Industrialization**

†2035. SHRI RAGHUNANDAN SHARMA: Will the MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) the extent to which forest covered areas have disappeared due to increase in globalization, industrialization, discovery of coal mines and urban areas; and

(b) the details of the new forest covered areas developed by plantation during the last three years, State-wise?

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† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.