

Meeting with farmer's bodies of GM mustard growers

* 85. DR. PRADEEP KUMAR BALMUCHU: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government has decided to again meet the farmer's bodies of GM mustard growers who have been opposing the introduction of genetically modified mustard's production and if so, the details thereof;

(b) whether the Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee (GEAC) has given clearance to GM mustard and if so, the details thereof; and

(c) Government's stand in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE (DR. HARSH VARDHAN): (a) No Sir.

(b) and (c) The Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee (GEAC), the Apex Regulatory Committee constituted under the Rules for the Manufacture, Use, Import, Export and Storage of Hazardous microorganisms /Genetically engineered organisms or cells (Rules 1989) in its 133rd meeting held on 11.05.2017, recommended the proposal for environmental release of Genetically Engineered (GE) Mustard submitted by Centre for Genetic Manipulation of Crop Plants (CGMCP), University of Delhi, South Campus to the Government of India for its final decision. The matter is under consideration of the Government.

WHO guidelines on arsenic limit in drinking water

*86 SHRI DILIP KUMAR TIRKEY: Will the Minister of DRINKING WATER AND SANITATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether, as per WHO guidelines, the permissible limit of arsenic in drinking water is 10 ppb while the Central Government permissible limit is 50 ppb and if so, the reasons for such a stark difference between the two limits; and

(b) whether it is a fact that arsenic poisoning in ground water is rising alarmingly in large parts of the country, if so, the details thereof and the action taken by Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF DRINKING WATER AND SANITATION (SHRI NARENDRA SINGH TOMAR): (a) As per WHO Guidelines, provisional value for arsenic in drinking

water is 0.01mg/litre (10ppb). The Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS), Government of India has considered these guidelines and amended the Indian Standard, IS-10500 for Drinking Water Specifications with effect from 1st June, 2015 reducing the permissible limit for arsenic in drinking water from 0.05mg/L (50 ppb) to 0.01mg/L (10 ppb). This Indian Standard is now accepted by the Central and State Governments.

(b) As reported by the States into Integrated Management Information System (IMIS) of the Ministry, arsenic contamination in the ground water has increased recently in certain States.

Arsenic contamination is mainly found in the States of West Bengal, Assam and Bihar though this is prevailing in 8 States.

Although rural drinking water supply is a state subject, this Ministry supplements the efforts of the states by providing them with technical and financial assistance through the centrally sponsored National Rural Drinking Water Programme (NRDWP) for improving the coverage of safe drinking water to rural population. Up to 67% of funds provided to the States under NRDWP can be utilized for coverage and tackling water quality problems with priority to arsenic and fluoride affected habitation.

In addition to this, Ministry has launched a National Water Quality Sub-Mission on 22nd March 2017 to give focused funding for schemes covering arsenic and fluoride affected habitations. States had also been provided an amount of ₹ 1000 crores in March, 2016 by Government of India on the recommendation of NITI Aayog to provide at least 8-10 litres per capita per day of safe drinking water in arsenic and fluoride affected habitations.

Simplification in approval of mega irrigation projects

†87. SHRI DIGVIJAYA SINGH: Will the Minister of WATER RESOURCES, RIVER DEVELOPMENT AND GANGA REJUVENATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government is formulating any plan to simplify the process of according approval to mega irrigation projects by the Central Water Commission and the Ministry;

(b) whether, for Central assistance, the requirement of investment approval by the Central water Commission and NITI Aayog has been dispensed with; and

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.