

Thalidomide treatment for patients suffering from Multiple Myeloma

SHRI AIMADUDDIN AHMED KHAN (Durrut) (Rajasthan): Sir, patients suffering from Multiple Myeloma, a life threatening disease, have not been benefited from chemotherapy; and the other treatment is Thalidomide. It is being done on a trial basis at the AIIMS, after completing all the ethical and legal formalities. However, the German firm, supplying the Thalidomide tablets, free of cost, insists that the AIIMS be declared as a distributing centre, before the medicine could be supplied to them direct. The results of the trial are encouraging. The delay in declaring the AIIMS as a distributing centre has resulted in great inconvenience to patients in procuring the medicine. Patients are likely to suffer irreparable damage to their health, if formal letter to the German firm is not sent immediately, declaring the AIIMS as a distributing centre.

Need to call Chief Ministers' Conference on Problems of Truckers

SHRI BALWANT SINGH RAMOOWALIA (Uttar Pradesh): Sir, about ten million people in India depend for their livelihood on earnings from the surface transport profession, like trucks, buses and other forms of vehicles carrying goods/passengers throughout India. This profession, being hazardous in nature, transporters face multiple problems/ harassment and for safe passage of their vehicles, they are forced to pay money, on flimsy and trivial grounds, to the Traffic Police/Transport Authority personnel, etc. on inter-State routes, despite proper documents. The Government should call a conference of Chief Ministers to devise effective means to curb such rampant corruption amongst public servants and save the transport profession--which is a life-line of the country's economy-- from crumbling.

SHRI RUMANDLA RAMACHANDRAIAH (Andhra Pradesh): Sir, I associate myself with the Special Mention.

Need for discussion on Budget Allocation to Science, Atomic Energy and Space

DR. RAJA RAMANNA (Nominated): Sir, in this Budget, the Government has been liberal in its allocation to science departments. It is essential that the allocations are not reduced by any subsequent reductions. There are indications that cuts up to 52 per cent are possible. The achievements of science in India have been spectacular and any reduction on staff and consumables due to overall cuts can be dangerous for the future. There have been many cases where good research activity has been

throttled for want of recurring grants to keep the facilities in a running condition.

Some of the institutions of higher learning in the country are doing particularly well in the field of education and research. I am referring to the Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore, the Indian Institute of Technology and several other institutions. One of the main reasons for their success is functional autonomy enjoyed by them, whereby, there is hardly any political and bureaucratic interference. This should be extended to all the State Universities and the Central Universities, along with adequate financial resources to provide for quality education.

Identification of critical needs of the country and the funding of research to meet these needs through maximum use of domestic resources will lead to a better use of the funds. The research programmes should aim at not only technology development but deployment, as is being done by certain departments such as the Department of Atomic Energy and the Department of Space.

Energy is one critical need and our requirements are not only very large, but always increasing. Every possible source needs to be exploited. However, while doing this, one must examine the environmental implications of the technology deployed. In the short-term, electricity, based on fossil fuel, is the only way out, but its environmental implications, in terms of carbon emissions and the resultant global warming potential, must be taken into account. Nuclear power is environmentally benign and is economically competitive at locations away from coalmines, transportation of fuel supplies is not a problem, as a small quantity of fuel is capable of meeting the requirements for a long time. Even, near coalmine areas, there is a justification for nuclear power from the point of view of a mix of power sources. It is, therefore, necessary to expand the share of nuclear power. Indigenous efforts to set up a fast breeder reactor should be intensified and a 500 MW prototype fast breeder reactor should be launched immediately. The research and development for exploiting Thorium resources should be given top priority and adequate funds should be made available to the Department of Atomic Energy for this purpose.

[THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI NILOTPAL BASU) in the Chair]

We have made a good progress in creating a base for strategic technologies in the country. There is a need to continue our efforts in this direction and appropriate technological programmes should be

institutionalised to remain ever vigilant to be able to exploit such emerging technologies for strengthening the security of the country.

Current procedures for audit of science departments need review for possible improvement. What is needed is a scientific audit carried out by peers who can identify areas for further intense activity and through that project which has lost significance should be deleted. In this way, it is possible to promote efficiency in the use of funds for scientific research and development.

Sir, lastly, the scientists have been asking this question, "If you can give international salaries to pilots, navy people, why is it that some scientists cannot be attracted this way back into the country?"

DR. C. NARAYANA REDDY (Andhra Pradesh): Sir, I associate myself with the Special Mention raised by Dr. Raja Ramanna.

SHRI N. JOTHI (Tamil Nadu): Sir, I also associate myself with the views of Dr. Raja Ramanna.

Packing of cereals in poisonous Plastic Bags

SHRI SANTOSH BAGRODIA (Rajasthan): Sir, my Special Mention is in regard to packing of cereals in poisonous plastic bags.

I understand that an inter-Ministerial Committee had been constituted for formulating a road map for the progressive dilution of the compulsory packaging norms for foodgrains and sugar under the Jute Packaging Materials Act, 1987, as per D.O. No. 18/10/2000-Jute of 18th October, 2001. Accordingly, the Government have relaxed the provisions of up to a maximum of 20 per cent for each in foodgrains and sugar it will be allowed; and, within five years, it will be completely relaxed. The High Court has rightly stayed your illegal order. I have personally informed, in writing, to the hon. Ministers of Food, Agriculture and Textiles that as per Deputy Director General (Technical), BIS, Indian standard for sacks do not prescribe any requirements for shelf life. The BIS for sacks had not made any study for poisonous effects of foodgrains for packing in plastic bags *vide* their letter No. TXDT-19 of 17th August, 2001, and ECD 21/T of 27th September, 2001. The hon. Food Minister had confirmed, *vide* his letter No. 14(10)/2000/Neeti-III/3019, dated October 17, 2001, that before any decision is taken, all aspects, including effect on the health of consumers will be looked into. It is not possible to have such a study made in such a short period.