

(b) The following steps have been taken to prevent dowry deaths:—

(i) Offences under the Dowry Prohibition Act have been made cognizable and attract more stringent punishment.

(ii) A new Section has been added in the Indian Penal Code making the offences of harassment and cruelty to women by their husbands and in-laws a cognizable offence.

(iii) New sub-sections 113-A and 113-B have been inserted in the Indian Evidence Act providing for presumption by a court as to abetment of suicide/dowry death by a married woman if cruelty or harassment for dowry is proved.

(iv) Short -stay Home has been set up by the Delhi Administration for the use of women in distress

(v) Special Magistrates have been detailed for recording dying declarations

(vi) Public is being educated through the media about the evil of dowry

(vii) Instructions have been issued to get postmortem examination conducted by two surgeons in dowry death cases

(viii) A special Cell for crime against women under the supervision of a woman Deputy Commissioner of Police has been set up.

### **Constitutional Status to Panchayats**

2663. SHRI ARVIND NETAM. Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have a proposal to grant constitutional status to the Panchayats; and

(b) if so, the details in this regard?

THE DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER AND MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI DEVI LAL): (a) and (b). The matter is under consideration of the Government.

### **Abolition of Death Sentence**

2665. SHRIMATI JAYAWANTI NAVINCHANDRA MEHTA: Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state whether there is any proposal to abolish death sentence in the country in view of the worldwide opinion regarding abolition of death sentence?

THE MINISTER OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI MUFTI MOHAMMAD SAYEED): No, Madam.

### **Groundnut Cultivation**

2666. SHRI BALGOPAL MISHRA: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have taken any steps to increase the area under groundnut cultivation in the country;

(b) if so, the steps taken in this regard in Orissa during the Seventh Plan period; and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER AND MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI DEVI LAL): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Two Centrally Sponsored Schemes, namely, National Oilseeds Development Project (NODP) and Oilseeds Production Thrust Project (OPTP) are in operation in Orissa during the Seventh Plan period for increasing the area and production of groundnut.