

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI VASUNDHARA RAJE):

(a) There is no specific proposal under Government's consideration at present for a change in the policies governing the issue of passports and visas.

(b) Does not arise.

Support Price for Fruits/Vegetables

150. SHRI RAMESHWAR PATIDAR : Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government have proposal to fix the support price of apples, potatoes, other fruits and vegetables;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the amount allocated for the fruits producers of hilly States during this year?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SOMPAL): (a) and (b) The Government announces Minimum Support Prices (MSPs) for major agricultural produce to ensure the remunerative prices to the growers with a view to encourage investment in agriculture. The Government decides on MSP for various agricultural commodities taking into account the recommendations of the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP) and views of the State Governments and Central Ministries. The horticultural produce like apples, potatoes, fruits, vegetables and other minor crops which have localised production and are perishable in nature are covered under the Market Intervention Scheme (MIS). Under MIS, the State Governments send specific proposals as and when they feel the prices are falling below the remunerative levels. The MIS is implemented for a particular period to procure specific quantity at a pre-determined price. The losses, if any, are shared mostly on 50:50 basis between the Centre and the State Governments.

(c) There is no State-wise allocation of amount for implementation of the MIS. The scheme is implemented on the basis of the proposals received from the States and agreed by the Centre.

[English]

Marketing and Storage Facility for Farmers

151. PROF. AJIT KUMAR MEHTA : Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state :

(a) whether there was a record production of potato in Bihar last year but it was allowed to rot in the absence of better marketing facilities/storage;

(b) whether the Government have assessed the loss incurred to the farmers of Bihar;

(c) if so, the details thereof and the steps taken to prevent such losses;

(d) whether the Union Government intends to chalk out a plan for providing proper storage facilities and better marketing facilities to farmers; and

(e) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SOMPAL) : (a) and (b) Yes Sir, Losses were estimated to be 5-7 percent due to shortage of storage/marketing facilities.

(c) To prevent such losses in future, licence for 11 new cold storage have been given, besides liberalising the procedure for setting up of cold storage.

(d) and (e) Government of India through the schemes of National Horticulture Board, National Cooperative Development Corporation & Agricultural & Processed Food Products Export Development Authority are providing assistance for the construction of cold storages and better marketing facilities to the farmers.

Misuse of MPLADS

152. SHRI JANG BAHADUR SINGH PATEL : Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state :

(a) whether there has been utter misuse of MPs Local Area Development Scheme;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the action taken by the Government to ensure that the funds are utilised for developmental works only?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS, MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS AND MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PLANNING AND PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION (SHRI RAM NAIK): (a) No case of utter misuse of MPs Local Area Development Scheme has come to the notice of the Government.

(b) Does not arise?

(c) Revised guidelines on MPLADS were issued in Feb. 1997 for the effective implementation of the schemes. As per the revised guidelines works developmental in nature based on locally-felt needs and which create durable assets are to be implemented only under the Scheme.

[Translation]

Food Production

153. SHRI RAGHUVANSH PRASAD SINGH : Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Indian Council for Agriculture Research has formulated a plan to increase the food production; and

(b) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SOMPAL) : (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) ICAR has formulated a plan to increase the food production keeping in view the following priorities and programmes :

Exploration of under explored and unexplored regions of genetic diversity for collection, ex situ-in-situ conservation, characterization and evaluation of plant-genetic resources. Consolidation of the harvestable component of the potential yield in currently available high-yielding varieties of major crops under irrigated ecology by insulating them with desired level of resistance to biotic and abiotic stresses.

Development and application of molecular techniques/tools in crop breeding, with emphasis on engineering of crop-plants with novel genes for improvement of productivity, stability, improved quality and protection from biotic and abiotic stresses.

Production and supply of nucleus-breeder seed with added emphasis on hybrid crops.

Besides, agriculture-based commodities can broadly be grouped into two categories; one, where domestic production is chronically short of domestic demand; and two, where production is fluctuating in different successive years. For the country's agricultural sustainability, the National Agricultural Research System (NARS) has to take care of both these areas. It is thus necessary that all encouragement and funding support is made available in the endeavour of NARS to bridge up the critical gaps in basic, strategies and applied researches; as far as possible. Important areas are listed below :

- (i) The priority areas of consideration would essentially be pulses, oilseeds, coarse grains (maize, sorghum, pearl millet) and sugarcane where separate technology missions would essentially be required to have tangible results on a time-targeted scale, besides concerted efforts for increased production and stability in wheat, rice, fodder and other crops.
- (ii) For breaking the yield barriers, hybrids would have tremendous potential irrespective of mode, mechanism and system of pollination. Hence, a concerted effort would be required in hybrid research and development. In the past, we have capitalized on the new plant types in crops like rice and wheat, but far more avenues are available across the board in most of the crops where input-oriented production technologies are required to

show impact on the productivity front in various cropping systems.

(iii) Advent of biotechnology as a powerful tool has opened new vistas in breaking genetic barriers, and hence, gene transfer across the board is possible. This could be capitalized through development of transgenics with special reference to biotic and abiotic pressures, which are seemingly becoming insurmountable due to limited emphasis on biotechnology-led crop improvement.

(iv) New crops and new plant types befitting various requirements of intensified agriculture to capture their potential as catch crop, relay crop, inter-crop and pair/utera crop are of considerable importance for horizontal spread of agricultural production. Hence varietal improvements befitting these requirements would be in the best national interest.

- Development of improved varieties/hybrids of fruits, vegetables, plantation crops, medicinal and aromatic plants with high production potential, biotic and abiotic resistance.
- Research on efficient water management including micro-irrigation and fertigation.
- Post harvest technology including value-addition and product diversification of important fruits and vegetables.
- Developing rapid tools, biotechniques and technologies for genetic manipulations for introducing desirable traits of yield, quality and stress tolerance. Micropropagation of important horticultural crops for mass multiplication of quality planting materials.
- Advanced research on national disease problems such as mango malformation, guava wilt, citrus, spongy tissue in mango, root wilt in coconut, Phytophthora diseases of different horticultural crops.
- Integrated management of nutrients, diseases and pests of important horticultural crops to reduce input costs, environmental pollution and to avoid pesticide-residue problems.
- Inventory, characterization, evaluation and conservation of biophysical resources (soil, water, climate, flora and fauna) in different agro-ecological segments.
- Evolving technologies for resource conservation and harnessing area-specific advantages of high-rainfall, rainfed areas, problems areas (flood-prone area, acid soils and degraded lands) and fragile ecosystems (mountainous, coastal and island ecosystems).

- Development of sustainable land-utilization system in farming system frame using modern tools and techniques for different agro-ecological regions/sub-regions/zones, considering not only biophysical aspects but also socio-economic aspects.
- Integrated nutrient management with a focus on the use of organics.
- Assessment of environmental consequences as related to resource management and amelioration of negative impacts.
- Human resource development in frontier areas of modern technologies such as GIS, remote sensing, simulation modelling for nutrient and water management, crop-weather model and decision support systems.
- Design and development of equipment for cotton and fruit and vegetable mechanization; agronomic studies on man-machine system to increase safety and comfort of farm-workers including women; selective mechanization of hill agriculture; development of power operated equipment for dryland agriculture; development of sugarcane planting, interculture, spraying and harvesting equipment.
- Establishment of network projects on rice mechanization, use of wind energy for fish pond, developing energy scenario and working out energy co-efficient for production on various agricultural commodities.
- Modelling of hydrologic processes leading to establishment of runoff potential for small watersheds and its application in drainage design, establishment of commercially viable drainage spacing for subsurface drainage; development of software for computer-aided drainage design; study of pollution hazard due to leachate disposal in the surrounding; modelling of drainage performance for predicting and land reclamation strategies; hardware development for micro-irrigation; and testing facilities for irrigation equipment.

Genetic resource enhancement of cattle, buffalo, sheep, goat, pig, camel through selection/crossbreeding/embryo biotechnology for milk, meat, draft, fibre, egg and broiler and development of transgenic animals.

Improving quality of feeds and fodders, search for newer feeds and preparation of complete feeds. Micronutrients in animal production. Crop-based animal production systems and establishment of food analytical laboratory. Animal draft power, its quantification and

improvement. Embryo biotechnology in augmentation of reproduction.

- Development of newer generation of diagnostics, diagnostic techniques/methodologies, immuno biologicals against important livestock and poultry diseases. Strengthening of monitoring and surveillance system to generate animal disease data-base, etc.
- Development of innovative techniques such as cage culture, pen culture, running water aquaculture, integrated farming systems with recycling of organic wastes for sustainable fish farming.
- To give emphasis on technology assessment, refinement and transfer on participatory mode and institutionalizing vocational training for developing entrepreneurship in various agriculture enterprises.
- To remove regional imbalance by establishing new KVKs, remandating the existing appropriate institutions to meet needs of frontline extension in backward hilly, rainfed and tribal areas in addition to strengthening the existing KVKs.
- Trainers Training Centres will further be re-structured and strengthened to provide effective technical backstopping to the KVKs both in terms of technology as well as methodology.
- The above strategies will be implemented based on the availability of additional funds to ICAR.

[English]

Indo-Srilanka Ties

154. SHRI TATHAGATA SATPATHY : Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state :

(a) whether Government have a proposal to review its diplomatic relation with Srilanka; and

(b) if so, the steps taken in this regard and particularly to establish better Indo-Srilanka ties?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI VASUNDHARA RAJE) : (a) and (b) India-Sri Lanka relations continue to be friendly, close and cooperative. Government is keen to consolidate and expand the wide ranging cooperation that exists between India and Sri Lanka. This was reaffirmed at the highest levels to the Sri Lankan Foreign Minister, who visited India as the Special Envoy of the Sri Lankan President in March 1997.