

also decided to hold consultations with a view to further liberalising the visa and travel regimes and to appoint a two-member committee at Ministerial level to examine humanitarian issues relating to civilian detainees and missing PoWs.

Various humanitarian issues have already been taken up during a meeting held at the official level on 5-6 March 1999 in Islamabad. As a result of these talks, it was agreed that India would release 43 Pakistani civilian prisoners and Pakistan would release 18 Indian civilian prisoners within three weeks. The two sides also finalized a draft mechanism on improved procedures for handling civilian prisoners for submission to the Ministerial Committee. Issues relating to fishermen, visa procedures and PoWs were also touched upon during these discussions. It is Government's earnest hope to build on the opportunities that are available on account of the Prime Minister's historic initiative. Government intend to seriously implement the understandings contained in the various documents agreed upon during the Summit and expect that the Government of Pakistan will reciprocate.

The international community, including the Governments of USA and Japan, has warmly welcomed the historic initiative taken by the Prime Minister, as also the Lahore Declaration, the Memorandum of Understanding and the Joint Statement.

Spurious Seeds

*303. SHRIMATI LAKSHMI PANABAKA :

SHRI M. BAGA REDDY :

Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether the farmers are being supplied inferior quality of seeds;

(b) whether the cotton seeds, onion seeds and now chilli seeds have been found defective and have affected the crop yield;

(c) if so, the details thereof; and

(d) the stern measures taken by the Union Government to check the sale of spurious seeds?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AND MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF WATER RESOURCES (SHRI SOMPAL) :
(a) Yes, Sir. Some instances of supply of inferior quality seeds have been reported.

(b) and (c) The Government of Andhra Pradesh reported that cotton cultivars, viz. Navratna, Moti, Manik, Ajeet-II, White Gold and Bio-seed-6569 have not performed well under certain field conditions like water-logging due to excessive rains in Warangal and Guntur Districts and have affected the crop yield in 37,762 acres

and 1,500 acres respectively. Onion seeds distributed by Andhra Pradesh State Seed Development Corporation (APSSDC) for 200 acres were found defective and the seeds have been replaced. No report has been received about supply of defective Chilli seeds from any State.

(d) Seeds Act, 1966 and Seeds (Control) Order, 1983 are the two legal instruments to check the sale of spurious seeds.

In order to ensure availability of quality seeds to farmers, seed has been declared as an essential commodity under the Essential Commodities Act, 1955.

The responsibility of Seed Law Enforcement is vested with the State Governments. Seed Inspectors notified under relevant provisions are authorised to draw samples from seed sellers. Action is taken against the sellers of sub-standard seeds as per the provisions specified in the Seeds Act and Seeds (Control) Order.

Crop Insurance Scheme

*304. SHRI HARIN PATHAK :

SHRI H. P. SINGH :

Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government propose to make it compulsory for farmers to insure their groundnut crops;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether the farmers who have taken loan from banks are only to be covered under crop insurance scheme; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AND MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF WATER RESOURCES (SHRI SOMPAL) : (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) and (d) Under the Comprehensive Crop Insurance Scheme (CCIS), now under implementation in the country, insurance cover is available only to farmers availing the loan facility from the financial institutions. Under the Modified Comprehensive Crop Insurance Scheme (MCCIS) proposed to be introduced, non-loanee farmers are also intended to be covered on an optional basis.

Bus Service to China

*305. SHRI SATYA PAL JAIN :

SHRI SADASHIVRAO DADOBA MANDLIK :