

announced in September, 1994—copy of which is available in the Library of Parliament.

These measures have resulted in removal of artificial impediments in the growth of the pharmaceutical industry and have created awareness with regard to the importance of R&D in this sector.

Safi River

3723. SHRI TARIQ ANWAR : Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Central Pollution Board has not been able to check the alarming rise in the percentage level of arsenic and mercury in the Safi River in Bihar;

(b) if so, the reasons thereof; and

(c) the steps proposed to be taken to check the same?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (PROF. SAIFUDDIN SOZ): (a) As per information made available from Bihar State Pollution Control Board, arsenic and mercury pollution in Safi River were within permissible limits.

(b) and (c) Do not arise.

Legislation on Bio Diversity

3724. SHRI ANANT GUDHE : Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether attention of the Government has been drawn to the news report captioned "No consensus on tackling genetic smuggling" appearing in the 'Indian Express', dated February 28, 1997;

(b) if so, the facts thereof and the reaction of the Government thereto;

(c) the action taken/proposed to be taken on the issues raised therein; and

(d) the steps taken during the last four years to bring out comprehensive legislation on safeguarding the bio diversity of the country and present status of the proposal?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (PROF. SAIFUDDIN SOZ): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) to (d) The said news report deals with the subject of regulating access to biological resources of the country. Soon after India ratified the Convention on Biological Diversity in February 1994 and became a Party to the Convention, the Ministry of Environment and Forests initiated steps to design a comprehensive legislation on biodiversity. One of the main objectives of this legislation would be to

regulate access to biological resources of the country. Biodiversity being a wide subject, consultations with various stake holders, related departments and Ministries, State Governments, experts, etc., were required, and initiated. Analysis and examination of all existing regulations having any linkage with biodiversity was also required and has now been done. Taking note of the time required to complete this exercise, the Ministry of Environment and Forests simultaneously worked on developing an interim measure to regulate export of biological resources of India under the Foreign Trade (Development & Regulation) Act 1992. This exercise was done through an inter-ministerial Group which also had NGOs and experts as its members. The draft Public Notice made by this Group has finally not been found suitable because of its implications for trade and difficulties in its implementation. Following inter-ministerial consultations on the subject in January 1997, the work on a comprehensive legislation has been speeded up.

Crimes on National Highway

3725. SHRI MANGAL RAM PREMI :
SHRI S.D.N.R. WADIYAR :

Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether robberies and kidnappings on the Delhi-Rishikesh national highway has increased during the last one year;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) the number of persons arrested in this connection; and

(d) the measures taken or proposed to be taken to check robberies and kidnappings on the highway ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI MOHD. MAQBOOL DAR): (a) to (d) The information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House.

Hunger Free Nation

3726. SHRI K. PRADHANI :
SHRIMATI VASUNDHARA RAJE :

Will the Minister of FOOD be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government have a proposal to make the nation hunger free;

(b) if so, the strategy adopted and the target date fixed for the purpose;

(c) the fund provision made in this connection for 1997-98;

(d) whether some drought affected areas still exist in the country from where starvation deaths are still reported due to inadequate corrective measures taken by the Government; and

(e) if so, the steps taken by the Government to rectify the deficiencies and make the entire nation hunger free?

THE MINISTER OF FOOD AND MINISTER OF CIVIL SUPPLIES, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI DEVENDRA PRASAD YADAV) : (a) and (b) The basic strategy to provide food security and to free the population from hunger consists of :—

- (i) better availability of foodgrains through increased production,
- (ii) maintenance of buffer stocks of foodgrains and distribution through Public Distribution System all over the country,
- (iii) to improve the purchasing power of the vulnerable sections of the society through poverty alleviation programmes.

(c) The following outlays have been proposed in the BE 1997-98:

(i) for the Ministry of Rural Areas and Employment :	Rs. 9096 crores
(ii) For subsidy on food and sugar :	Rs. 7500 crores
Total	Rs. 16596 crores

(d) and (e) According to the information received from the State Governments, drought conditions in varying degrees prevail in parts of Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Orissa. No confirmed reports of any starvation deaths have yet been received from these State Governments. The Ministry of Agriculture has however requested the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) to investigate the *reported starvation deaths* in some parts of Orissa. No report has been received from the NHRC in the matter.

[*Translation*]

Medicinal Plants

3727. SHRI LAKSHMAN SINGH : Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) the scheme of the Government to promote cultivation of the medicinal plants in the country;

(b) the types of medicinal plants and the locations thereof, State-wise; and

(c) the steps proposed to be taken by the Government to make up the shortage of medicinal plants such as Anmul, Satavari, Musali, Chiraita and Gugul, etc.?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (PROF. SAIFUDDIN SOZ): (a) Cultivation of medicinal plants is promoted by the Central Government and the State Governments. The two major schemes of the Central Government for cultivation of medicinal plants are as follows :

Name of the Ministry	Name of the Scheme	Objectives of the Scheme
Health & Family Welfare (Department of Indian System of Medicine and Homeopathy)	Central Assistance for Development of Agro-Techniques and cultivation of Medicinal Plants earlier known as Central Scheme for Development and Cultivation of medicinal plants.	The Scheme encourages development of agro-technologies for cultivation of medicinal plants and provides assistance for cultivation of medicinal plants to Government and Semi-Government organisations and institutions.
Environment & Forests (National Afforestation & Eco-Development Board)	Conservation and Development of Non-timber Forest Produce including Medicinal Plants.	The scheme provides funds to the State Governments for raising plantations including medicinal plants on degraded forest areas and adjoining areas.