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Title: Need for safer clinical trials of drugs.

SHRI B. MAHTAB (CUTTACK): Sir, today, India is emerging as a hub of clinical trials of drugs. Therefore, there is a need for tougher norms which cannot be overlooked. There is a need to tighten the regulatory mechanism. Environmentalists are showing concern over the increasing use of animals in clinical tests and call for alternatives. In our country, we have made the registration of clinical trials with ICMR compulsory since last year to root out unethical practices prevalent in clinical trials. Yet unsafe and illegal drug testing has been a matter of concern lately. The shocking revelation of a death of an infant in Bangalore and of 49 babies in the All India Institute of Medical Sciences over two and half years have been grave reminders of how we are becoming guinea pigs.

I want to draw the attention of this House to a very fundamental question. Is it not true that clinical trials have grown at a rapid rate? Is it not true that India stands third among the destinations for clinical trials after the United States of America and China? Is it not true that by 2011, the country will be carrying out fifteen per cent of the total number of clinical trials? Is it not true that India has emerged as a favoured destination because large number of people are available?

Therefore, there is a need to have stringent laws to punish violators. Poverty and illiteracy pose a major challenge to ensure implementation of parameters necessary for clinical trials. But it cannot be an excuse for violation of rights, especially of vulnerable sections. All attempts should be made to root out unethical practices.

I would be happy if the Government responds to this issue instantly.