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Title: Regarding need to continue to permit research work on embryonic stem cells in the country and provide adequate funds for the purpose.

SHRI DINESH TRIVEDI (BARRACKPUR): The National Guidelines for Stem Cell Research, as revised in 2013, mentions that stem cell therapy other than for haematological disorders shall be treated as investigational and conducted only in the form of a clinical trial after obtaining necessary regulatory approvals. Use of stem cells for any other purpose outside the domain of clinical trial has been considered unethical and hence is not permissible under the revised guidelines.

The aforementioned guidelines also restrict the research on embryonic stem cells. Stem cells, directed to differentiate into specific cell types, offer the possibility of a renewable source of replacement cells and tissues to treat diseases including muscular degeneration, spinal cord injury, stroke, burns, heart disease, diabetes, etc. Furthermore, cells derived from embryos are truly totipotent, which means that these are capable of giving rise to any kind of tissues. This makes embryonic stem cells a prospect for treatment of a wide range of diseases.

In the light of the importance of embryonic stem cells, and their superiority over adult stem cells, I would request the Government to continue to allow basic research on embryonic stem cells. Given the know-how, and the expertise of our scientific minds, India is one of the few countries in the world which can become a pioneer in this field. The abrupt ban of this research has resulted in a lot of hard work and funds going down the drain. I would also urge the Government to promote it through the Department of Biotechnology by means of increased allocations of funds for projects in this field.