

(a) and (b) Yes, Sir. A treaty "Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and their Destruction" was opened for signature in Ottawa on 2 December 1997. 127 countries have signed this Convention also known as the Ottawa Convention.

(c) The Ottawa Convention calls upon each State Party to undertake (a) not to use, develop, produce, acquire, stockpile or transfer anti-personnel landmines; (b) to destroy or ensure the destruction of all stockpiled anti-personnel landmines in its possession, "as soon as possible but not later than four years after the entry into force" of the convention, and (c) to destroy or ensure the destruction of all APLs emplaced on its territory or on territory under its control "as soon as possible but not later than ten years after the entry into force". The Convention contains a compliance and verification mechanism, including reporting to the UN Secretary General on measures taken for compliance and a system of fact finding missions for verification.

(d) India has not signed the Ottawa convention as it does not adequately address its security concerns. India is, however, a party to the Protocol II of the Inhumane Weapons Convention which deals with APLs and which has been strengthened at the Review Conference held in 1996. India is deeply concerned about the humanitarian tragedy caused by the indiscriminate exports and use of APLs and follows a conscious policy of not exporting APLs. India is actively associated with demining activities undertaken under the aegis of the UN in different affected regions.

[Translation]

Agricultural Cooperative Banks

5166. SHRI RAMSHAKAL : Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state :

(a) the sectors for which loan is provided by the Government through the Agriculture Cooperative Banks;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether the Government are aware of the exploitation of farmers by these banks;

(d) if so, the number of such cases came to the notice of the Government so far; and

(e) the action being taken by the Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SOMPAL) : (a) and (b) Cooperative Banks provide loans as under :

(i) Short term loans for a period not exceeding 18 months for agricultural operations or the marketing of crops or the marketing and distribution of inputs necessary for agriculture or rural development and also loans to sugar factories/spinning mills/industrial cooperative societies, etc.

(ii) Medium term/long term loans are also provided towards investment credit for agriculture and rural development (upto 7 years/15 years respectively). The main purposes for which the loans are issued are minor irrigation, farm mechanisation, land development, poultry, fisheries, horticulture, etc.

(c) to (e) The Cooperative Banks are managed by a Board of Directors generally elected by the shareholders (farmers). While a majority of Banks are having elected Board of Directors, some are managed by Administrators. These Banks have a huge clientele. Complaints relating to the functioning of the management of these banks are dealt with by the State Governments concerned in terms of the regime of the Cooperative Legislation obtaining therein.

[English]

Aquaculture in Assam

5167. SHRI NRIPEN GOSWAMI : Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state :

The steps taken the Government for the supply of quality seed, food and other inputs for creation of adequate infrastructure for storage, transportation, marketing and credit etc. for the expansion of aquaculture in Assam?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SOMPAL) : The Government is providing first year inputs such as seed, feed, fertilizers, manures, etc. to the beneficiaries for taking up freshwater aquaculture under the ongoing Centrally Sponsored Schemes on "Development of Freshwater Aquaculture" through Fish Farmers Development Agencies in Assam. These agencies provide a package of technical, financial and extension support to Fish farmers for aquaculture. Assistance to State Government is also provided for setting up of infrastructural facilities such as, cold storages, ice plants, fish handling sheds, retail marketing outlets, insulated vans for transportation of fish, etc. under another ongoing Centrally Sponsored Scheme on "Strengthening of Infrastructure for Inland Fish Marketing". However, the Government of Assam has not availed the Central assistance under this scheme.