

Article 356

2095. SHRI SATNAM SINGH KAINTH: Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government have received any representation including Punjab in sub-committee of Inter State Council to discuss the issue of Article 356 of the Constitution; and

(b) if so, the steps being taken or proposed to be taken in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI L.K. ADVANI): (a) According to available information, no representation for including Punjab in the Sub-Committee of the Inter-State Council to discuss the issue of article 356 of the Constitution of India has been received.

(b) Does not arise.

Genetically Modified Crop

2096. SHRI BALASAHEB VIKHLE PATIL: Will the Minister of SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether "Genetically-Modified Crop" can offer higher yields from fewer resources and reduce the need for spraying harmful pesticides.

(b) if so, the steps being taken during the last three years to encourage cultivation of Genetically-Modified crops alongwith the names of such crops which are already being cultivated; and

(c) the benefits of cultivating such crops?

THE MINISTER OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT, MINISTER OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY AND MINISTER OF DEPARTMENT OF OCEAN DEVELOPMENT (DR. MURLI MANOHAR JOSHI): (a) Yes Sir, genetic engineering techniques provide the means to create novel species incorporating unique traits for agronomic practices. Over the past couple of years, crops have developed intrinsic pest and pathogen resistance. Plants transformed with BT gene impart resistance to the attack of broad spectrum of insect pests, thereby resulting in higher yields without increasing the area.

(b) In view of above, concerted efforts have been made during the last 3-4 years to generate various plant

species by incorporating BT gene. At the moment no genetically modified crop has been released for commercial use. However, a number of crops like tobacco, rice, cotton, mustard, potato, brinjal and cauliflower are being evaluated under field conditions to generate environmental safety data.

(c) there are ecological and economic benefits from such crops in terms of soil fertility, impact on non-target species, higher yield, savings on pesticides sprays and value addition.

[Translation]

Chief Secretaries' Meeting

2097. SHRI BRAJ MOHAN RAM: Will the Minister of FOOD AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Union Government had convened a meeting of the Chief Secretaries of States to discuss the prices of essential commodities;

(b) if so, the details and outcome of the discussions thereof; and

(c) the steps taken by the Government to check the prices of essential commodities?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FOOD AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS (SHRI SATYAPAL SINGH YADAV): (a) and (b) A Meeting of the Chief Secretaries of all States/Union Territories was convened by the Cabinet Secretary on 7.11.98 at New Delhi to review the price situation of essential commodities in the country. The meeting discussed various aspects of the price rise and reached certain conclusion. A summary of the conclusions arrived at the meeting is given in the enclosed *Statement*.

(c) The Government has accorded the highest priority to the control and stabilisation of prices of essential commodities. Apart from certain long term measures to increase the production of essential goods imports of items which are in short supply like pulses and onions have been placed under OGL at zero percent import duty and duty on the import of edible oils has been reduced to 15 percent from 25 percent in order to augment the total availability of these items. The export of onions was banned from 14.10.98. The ban has been lifted on 9.2.99 subject to a quantitative ceiling of 25,000 MTs per month for the next three months. Some of the essential