

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE
LOK SABHA**

STARRED QUESTION NO:191

ANSWERED ON:16.03.2005

PATENTING OF TRADITIONAL HERBAL PLANTS

Ponnuswamy Shri Mohan

Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the Government is aware that even our traditional herbal plants used as medicines for jaundice like 'Keezha nelli' herbal juice are being patented by pharmas of developed countries;
- (b) whether the Government proposes to take remedial measures to protect our traditional right;
- (c) if so, whether the Government proposes to promote these traditional medicines as there is a great increase in the cost of life-saving drugs in the patent regime;
- (d) whether any special drive is proposed to be launched to encourage our traditional system of medicine like Ayurveda and Siddha; and
- (e) if so, the steps taken/proposed to be taken in this regard?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (DR. ANBUMANI RAMADOSS)

(a)to(e): A statement is laid on the Table of the House.

STATEMENT REFERRED TO IN REPLY TO LOK SABHA STARRED QUESTION NO. 191 FOR 16TH MARCH, 2005

(a) The medicinal usage of the plant ' Keezha Nelli', an Indian Medicinal Plant, also known as 'Bhumyamalaki' for jaundice has been patented, as per the information derived after searching the data bases of United States Patent & Trade Mark Office (USPTO), European Patent Office (EPO), Japan Patent Office (JPO) and world wide.

(b) In order to prevent the misappropriation of traditional knowledge relating to medicinal plant, Government is implementing a project called 'Traditional Knowledge Digital Library (TKDL). Under the scheme, the traditional knowledge about the medicinal plants as described in the ancient literature is being transcribed in the five international languages, namely, English, German, French, Japanese and Spanish in digital format so that the traditional knowledge with a non-disclosure agreement could be accessed and verified by the international patent offices at the time of scrutinizing and rejecting the patent applications.

(c) The Government is committed to promote and propagate the traditional systems of medicine i.e Ayurveda, Siddha and Unani, nationally and internationally, considering their popularity, time tested efficacy and global resurgence of interest in the use of natural/plant based medicines. Considering the rich biodiversity and a vast documented scientific literature of traditional systems of medicine, India has the potential to assert its relative strength and advantage to deal with the rest of the world in the patent regime which is likely to increase the cost of patented drugs.

(d)&(e): A number of Central Sector and Centrally Sponsored Schemes are being implemented to promote the traditional systems of medicines i.e. Ayurveda, Siddha and Unani. The schemes for which financial assistance is granted include development of educational institutions; intra and extra mural research; cultivation of medicinal plants; strengthening of pharmacopoeial laboratories; preparation of pharmacopoeias and formularies; incentives for quality control laboratories; publication of text books and manuscripts; international exchange programme; holding of national and international conferences, participation in national and international events; hospitals and dispensaries, drugs quality control, etc.