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Title : Regarding need to review the functioning of Department of Agriculture, Andaman and Nicobar Islands with a view to protect the interests of Farmers in the region.

SHRI MANORANJAN BHAKTA (ANDAMAN AND NICOBAR ISLANDS): Mr. Chairman, Sir, the Department of Agriculture which is responsible for the welfare of the farming community in Andaman and Nicobar Islands through production and productivity, improvement of the crops etc., is not satisfactorily doing its job. Unfortunately, the Department failed miserably in all sectors like crop husbandry, soil and water conservation and minor irrigation.

Considering the potential of horticultural crops of these Islands, Government of India, as per the recommendations of the Island Development Authority, approved high-value agriculture programme for an estimated lay out of Rs.50.06 crore. The Department of Agriculture is responsible for these programmes through an agency, High Value Agriculture Development Agency. Many farmers took up the programme as per the guidance of the Field Officers involving PRIS. Not a single farmer is benefited out of this scheme so far. Moreover, many farmers have invested on the advice of the Field Officers with the hope of getting assistance as per Government of India's norms. The farmers are totally dissatisfied with the functioning of the Agriculture Department. Let me add here that 70 per cent population in Andaman District and 100 per cent population in Nicobar District are the farmers who totally depend on agricultural products.

Further, the imposition of ban on extraction of timber from forest was the major blow on the economic development and employment opportunity. To mitigate this grievance, non-timber forest produce like medicinal, aromatic and

* Not Recorded.

dye plants development was proposed by the Sekhar Singh Commission. Accordingly, Andaman and Nicobar Medicinal Plants Board was created for promoting cultivation, collection, processing and marketing, etc. The Government of India has funded for the same but the Islanders are not benefited.

I, therefore, urge upon the Government of India to look into the grievances of the farmers from these Islands and accordingly firm decision is required urgently to set right the Agriculture Department of Andaman and Nicobar Administration.