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Prez recommends Pvt Bill for farmers' fund

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At a time when many States are reeling under severe drought, President Pranab Mukherjee has recommended consideration of a Private Member's Bill that provides for protective measures for farmers of arid, desert and drought-prone areas and a welfare fund with an initial corpus of ₹10,000 crore.

The Farmers of Arid and Desert Areas (Welfare and Other Special Provisions) Bill, 2014 was introduced by senior Congress leader Ahmed Patel in the Rajya Sabha in December 2014.

The Bill, if enacted, will involve expenditure from the Consolidated Fund of India. "It is estimated a sum of ₹20,000 crore may be involved as recurring expenditure per annum. A non-recurring expenditure of ₹5,000 crore may also be involved from the Consolidated Fund of India (CFI). A non-recurring expenditure of ₹5,000 crore may also be involved from the CFI," the Financial Memorandum of the Bill says.

Under the rules, a Bill which, if converted into a law and brought into operation would involve expenditure from the Consolidated Fund of India, cannot be passed by Parliament unless the President has recommended to that House its consideration.

In a letter to the Rajya Sabha Secretary General a few days back, Agriculture Minister Radha Mohan Singh has stated that the President, having been informed about the subject matter of the particular Private Member's Bill has recommended its consideration under Article 117(3) of the Constitution by the Rajya Sabha.

The Upper House has listed the Bill for consideration, which seeks to provide for the establishment of welfare fund for farmers of arid and desert areas with initial corpus of ₹10,000 crore to



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be provided by the Central Government. Clause 6 of the Bill makes it mandatory for the Centre to provide requisite funds to the States concerned while Clause 5 provides for certain welfare measures to be undertaken by appropriate Governments.

In the statement of objects and reasons of the Bill, Patel has noted that Gujarat, in particular Suarashtra and Kutch regions, and major parts of Rajasthan are having arid and desert areas, which face extreme heat in summer and extreme cold in winter and mostly rainfall is scanty and deficient there.

"Similarly, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Jharkhand, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, etc, are frequently affected by unprecedented drought conditions and desert is spreading in many such areas," Ahmed said.

He insisted that a welfare fund should be set up for the farmers of arid and desert areas as they face frequent drought conditions in these regions and generally lose their crops leading to indebtedness and distress among them.

The Bill seeks to provide for "pro-

protective measures and special facilities for the farmers of arid, desert and drought prone areas, who are often affected by natural calamities causing loss of crops, livestock, making them vulnerable to indebtedness, disease and physical infirmities, exploitation of money lenders."

Financial Bills, other than Money Bills, are covered under article 117. Those which, if enacted, and brought into operation, would involve expenditure from the Consolidated Fund of India come under Clause (3) of Article 117.

Such a Bill may be introduced in either House and it does not require the recommendation of the President for its introduction. It cannot, however, be passed by either House unless the President has recommended to that House the consideration thereof.

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