

Bt brinjal

SEEN in the context of the ongoing debate on the inherent dangers of Bt brinjal, Union Environment Minister Jairam Ramesh's announcing a moratorium on its release is welcome (Cover Story, March 12).

When India produces enough brinjal round the year to feed the population, where is the need to grow Bt brinjal, which has not been scientifically tested anywhere in the world to see whether it is safe for human consumption? There is no urgency to adopt genetically modified crops on the basis of half-baked technology for large-scale commercial farming when these crops are feared to pose a serious threat to human health.

K.R. SRINIVASAN
SECUNDERABAD

HATS off to all those involved in supporting the campaign against Bt brinjal. There should be a moratorium on its introduction for at least five to seven years. The long-term consequences of GM crops should be properly assessed before the green signal is given. Thanks to the government for saving millions of consumers from a specious product.

VINOD C. DIXIT
AHMEDABAD

THE introduction of Bt brinjal would pave the way for colonisation of the agricultural sector. Indian farmers would then have to depend on MNCs for the supply of seeds. When the farmers begin to cultivate Bt

Republic in retrospect

I AM grateful to you for having reminded me of the Indian National League's Avadi session of January 19, 1955, where socialism was discussed ("Myth of socialism", February 26). The article also referred to the mutiny in the ranks of the Royal Indian Navy. It was this mutiny that shook the roots of the British Raj. Had it not taken place, the British would easily have ruled India for another 10/15 years. But these jawans of the Navy are now totally forgotten.

S.S. RAJU
SILVASSA, DADRA & NAGAR HAVELI

brinjal in their lands, there are chances of soil infertility in the long run because of the toxic content - this has not been disproved yet.

Professor Seralini was commissioned by Greenpeace India to undertake an assessment of the raw data on groups of animals fed GM and non-GM brinjal. He found the following: Bt brinjal produces a protein in vegetable cells that induces antibiotic resistance. This is a major health problem and makes it inappropriate for commercialisation. Bt brinjal appears to have 15 per cent less calories and a different alkaloid content compared with non-GM brinjal. Rats fed Bt brinjal had diarrhoea, increased water consumption and a decrease in liver weight and in liver to body weight.

S. LAKSHMI NARAYANAN
PUVANUR, T.N.

IT was enlightening to read the different articles and interviews on the GM debate with their views for and against GM crops. Safety tests are mandatory, but it will be difficult to come to a conclusion because of the political, scientific, commercial and legal complexities. GM technology is here to stay, and we should debate the science, not the politics behind it.

An informed decision is the need of the hour.

SANJIV GUPTA
PERTH, AUSTRALIA

K.N. Raj

THE biographical sketch of K.N. Raj served to simultaneously recount the historic moments and political happenings during his times ("A planner for people", February 26). The remarkable features of his work and his astounding contributions to formulating the economic direction of independent India will amaze readers. It

was exciting to learn that he preferred teaching to the status of being a Planning Commission member. His clear and conscious resistance to right reactionary voices was significant.

S.V. VENUGOPALAN
CHENNAI

Sri Lanka

MAHINDA RAJAPAKSA is indubitably a towering persona who succeeded in quenching an intense ethnic conflict as impartially as possible ("The landslide", February 26). While accomplishing this, he might have had to take several measures that infuriated a section of people. However, Rajapaksa's knack for statecraft deserves praise.

This was also clearly reflected in the mandate received by his party recently.

SALINI JOHNSON
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The GHNP

THE article "Hidden paradise" (February 12) states that the Great Himalayan National Park is a United Nations Educational, Scientific Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) World Heritage site. This is not correct as the GHNP has only been nominated to be declared a World Heritage Site.

NARAYAN HAR GUPTA
NAINITAL

ANNOUNCEMENT

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