

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
RAJYA SABHA
QUESTION NO 07.03.2011
ANSWERED ON
CODE OF CONDUCT FOR SCIENTISTS .

1230

Smt. T. Ratna Bai

Will the Minister of COALSCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state :-

(a) whether the Prime Minister has asked the scientists to develop a code of conduct that defines the limits within which they would work on the application of their discoveries;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the response received, so far?

ANSWER

MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PLANNING; MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS; MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY AND MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EARTH SCIENCES

(ASHWANI KUMAR)

(a) to (c): The Hon`ble Prime Minister, in his inaugural speech during the 98th Session of the Indian Science Congress at SRM University, Chennai on 3rd of January, 2011, expressed concern that important scientific discoveries, which have immense potential for benefiting human kind, are also often put to use for harmful purposes. For example, he referred to the discovery of the phenomenon of splitting of atoms which is not only the source of nuclear power, but also nuclear weapons; the development of synthetic chemistry which not only gives us useful chemicals and pharmaceuticals, but also poison gas; etc. In this context, he urged the scientific community to think about the following: `The question is whether scientists should step beyond their discipline and at least guide the social discourse on the use of scientific knowledge. Should they develop a code of conduct that defines the limits within which they will work on the application of their discoveries? Should there be a collegial process for deciding difficult cases? I leave these questions because the very idea of ethics for science needs further discussion`. These are deep philosophical issues and the Hon`ble Prime Minister`s words are meant to stir the thought process among scientists in this regard and leave them with some suggestions.