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Seed, farm input makers worried by MPDA bill, activists hail move

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Nagpur: The state government's plans to amend the Maharashtra Prevention of Dangerous Activities Act of 1981 to also govern manufacturers of farm inputs has left the industry concerned. Until now, the law only covered criminal elements like bootleggers, slum lords, drug peddlers, video pirates, and sand smugglers.

Representatives of industries making seeds, pesticides, fertilisers and other biochemicals are camping at Nagpur during the winter session, hoping to meet the political leadership before the amendment bill is tabled. There has been no breakthrough so far, said sources.

GROWING PAINS

- MPDA covers elements like bootleggers, slum lords, and other criminal elements
- New law makes sale and manufacture of sub-standards inputs a cognizable offence
- Industry associations oppose bill, calling it draconian

The industrialists say the law is draconian and businessmen should not be brought at par with bootleggers or sand smugglers if there is any defect in the product. A press release by the associations say the proposed law is harsh besides being ambiguous and contrary to central government's initiatives on ease of doing business and de-

criminalization. The view was also put up when the state had invited comments on the bill, they said.

Meanwhile, a section of farm activists have supported the bill, saying the government should bring strict measures to protect farmers' interests. Pesticide Action Network (PAN)-India, an NGO, says the bill is very focused and tries to address a problem which is not new. The amendment simply wants the offences to be non-bailable and PAN India urged that the state government should expand its ambit further.

Vallabh Deshmukh, director, Mahabeej, a state government corporation engaged in seed production, said there is need for a stricter law.