

Viewpoint: Monsanto GMO Bt cotton patent case 'shows socialism's hold on Indian politics'

The Delhi High Court has just decreed that Monsanto cannot claim any intellectual property right (IPR) over its Bt cotton seed technology, which means it will be common law property and anyone can use it and sell it and make money out of it without paying a penny to its original inventor Monsanto, a merged unit of Bayer Crop Sciences now.

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It will probably take another few years before the case is resolved at the highest level. However, this new ruling of the Delhi court once again shows how the socialist system is deeply entrenched in the psyche of not only the public but also in the judiciary.

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If India persists with the Delhi High Court decision on Bt cotton, then there is no hope for any competitive improvement in agriculture, as no one will invest in innovation that cannot guarantee returns in the country for want of IPR protection.

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For a government to interject itself in a contract dispute between two parties is a travesty of rule of law and justice. This entire episode with GM crops in India is very telling that socialism is still intact in India, and market liberalisation is just a myth. Foreign companies in life sciences, medicine, biotechnology, and agriculture will now not consider India a good investment destination.

Editor's note: Shanthu Shantharam is a professor of biotechnology at the University of Maryland and a former biotechnology regulator with the USDA

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