

**[English]****Purchase of Canvas and Blankets**

2041. SHRIMATISUBHASHINIAL: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is any proposal to purchase canvas and blankets from the public sector textile and woollen mills instead of purchasing these from private sectors for the armed forces;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the reasons for purchasing the canvas and blankets of inferior quality by his Ministry from the private sector when those of superior quality are available from the public sector units?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE (DR. RAJA RAMANNA): (a) and (b). Currently canvas is being procured on open tender basis. Barrack Blankets are, however, procured by the Armed Forces from the Ordnance Equipment Factories to the extent of their capacities and thereafter from the Public Sector National Textiles Corporation/British India Corporation mills and the DGS&D. The policy also provides for their purchase from Khadi & villages Industries Commission and the Association of Corporations and Apex Societies of Handloom.

(c) All purchases are to be as per specifications laid down by the Directorate General of Quality Assurance of the Ministry of Defence and are duly inspected and passed for accepted by that Organisation. The question of procuring inferior quality material therefore does not arise.

**Antarctica Expeditions**

2042. SHRI G.S. BASAVARAJ: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) how many Indian Expeditions have been sent to Antarctica so far;

(b) the work done by each of the expeditions;

(c) the size of the present team in terms of personnel of different categories stationed in Antarctica; and

(d) the expenditure incurred on each of the expeditions and on the maintenance of the present team?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY AND MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION IN THE MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (PROF. M.G.K. MENON):

(a) Ten expeditions have so far been sent to Antarctica, nine annual expeditions to Dakshin Gangotri—Maitri region since 1981, and an exploratory expedition to the Weddell Sea Region in 1989-90.

(b) Scientific activities carried out during these expeditions relate to research in Basic and Environmental Sciences. They broadly include studies of the structure of the Antarctica crust, of the upper atmospheric shells notably ozone and D-layers, of climate, as well as those to elucidate the ecosystems of Antarctica and the surrounding seas. Additionally, researches have also been carried out to develop appropriate materials and engineering systems to support the living and work of scientists under exacting conditions. A brief outline of these activities for each expedition are given in the attached statement. In addition to continually raising the quality and scientific content of research activities at Dakshin Gangotri — Maitri region, a special exploratory expedition was sent in November 1989, to the Weddell Sea Region of Antarctica, as a part of a programme to develop first hand knowledge and understanding of the critical terrains of