

Companies for manufacture of tractors;

(b) if so, the number of licences issued and the kind of tractors being manufactured by this group; and

(c) how these tractors are sold in the market?

The Deputy Minister in the Ministry of Steel and Heavy Industries (Shri P. C. Sethi): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Two licences under the Industries (Development and Regulation) Act, 1951, have been granted to the firm for manufacture of 'Eicher' tractors in 12-18 DBHP and 20-30 DBHP ranges.

(c) The tractors are sold through a net work of dealers appointed by the manufacturers.

Steel Equalisation Fund

*960. **Dr. L. M. Singhvi:** Will the Minister of Steel and Heavy Industries be pleased to state:

(a) the total accumulations in the Steel Equalization Fund to date;

(b) whether it is proposed to utilize the accumulations to bring down the prices of steel; and

(c) if so, whether Government have formulated any specific proposals and a time-table for doing so?

The Deputy Minister in the Ministry of Steel and Heavy Industries (Shri P. C. Sethi): (a) Rs. 64.06 crores as on 31-3-1963.

(b) and (c). No, Sir. The primary function of the Equalisation Fund at present is to meet freight charges so that steel is supplied at all rail heads in the country at a uniform price.

Exports of Handlooms

*961 { **Shri Ramanathan Chettiar:**
Shri P. C. Boroah:

Will the Minister of Commerce and Industry be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is any decline in our exports of handlooms;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(c) the steps being taken to step up the exports?

The Minister of International Trade in the Ministry of Commerce and Industry (Shri Manubhai Shah): (a) to (c). The exports of handloom fabrics have improved during the period April 1962—February 1963 and are of the order of Rs. 12.4 crores as compared to Rs. 11.1 crores in 1961-62 and Rs. 10.2 crores for the corresponding period April 1961 to February 1962.

2. While there was some decline in the export of handloom goods to traditional markets during the year 1962, there was a very significant increase in the exports to the non-traditional markets viz. USA and the continental countries. The decline in exports to traditional markets is partly due to the development of textile industries in these areas as also competition from Japan and Hong Kong which produce cheaper quality of imitation cloth. The situation is being closely watched and whenever necessary, action at government level is taken, as for instance discussions with Ceylon.

3. The All India Handloom Fabrics Marketing Co-operative Society, Bombay has appointed a number of commercial travellers with a view to step up our export handloom goods to new areas in addition to the emporia already in existence in Aden, Colombo, Kullalumpur, Singapore and Jaffna.

4. Exports of handloom fabrics of the variety popularly known as Bleeding Madras have been of the order of about Rs. 2.00 crores to U.S.A. during 1962.

5. Pre-shipment inspection and quality marketing schemes have been introduced in respect of handloom fabrics. This is compulsory in the case of exports of Bleeding Madras and Etawah Bedspreads.

6. Government are trying to include specific quotas for handloom fabrics in bilateral Trade Agreements.

7. An Export Promotion Advisory Committee for handloom goods was set up on 15th October, 1962 to deal with problems relating to exports of handloom goods. This Committee has met a number of times since then and offered useful suggestions for stepping up exports.

Large-sized Machine Tools Factory at Ranchi

*962. { Shri P. C. Borooah:
Shri Raghunath Singh:
Shri Yashpal Singh:
Shri R. S. Pandey:
Shri Vidya Charan Shukla:

Will the Minister of Steel and Heavy Industries be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have placed an order with Japan for medium-sized machine tools, in connection with a plan to build a factory to produce large-sized Machine Tools in India at Ranchi;

(b) if so, the size of the order; and

(c) the progress made so far in the direction of setting up of the factory?

The Deputy Minister in the Ministry of Steel and Heavy Industries (Shri P. C. Sethi): (a) and (b). No, Sir.

(c) The Detailed Project Report for the Heavy Machine Tool Plant at Ranchi received from Messrs. Techno-export, Prague has been considered and accepted in principle by the Government. Contracts for supply of plant and machinery, consultancy services, erection supervision are expected to be entered into very shortly with the Czechs.

Asian Common Market

*963. { Shri P. R. Chakraverti:
Shri Sidheshwar Prasad:
Shri Maheswar Naik:
Shri Indrajit Gupta:

Will the Minister of Commerce and Industry be pleased to state:

(a) whether the ECAFE Conference at its recent meeting in Manila un-

animously approved of the resolution for a proposed Asian Common Market;

(b) whether India was one of the co-sponsors of the resolution; and

(c) the main features of the proposed Common Market for Asia?

The Minister of International Trade in the Ministry of Commerce and Industry (Shri Manubhai Shah): (a) No, Sir; but a resolution urging the countries of the region to intensify their efforts towards greater regional co-operation and calling upon the Executive Secretary of the ECAFE to convene a meeting of high level representatives of the Governments of the Region to review the progress achieved so far and to formulate and adopt more positive measures for concerted regional action, was passed unanimously at the Manila Session. A copy of this resolution is placed on the Table of the House. [Placed in the Library, see No. LT-1168/63].

(b) India was one of the Co-sponsors of the resolution referred to at (a) above.

(c) Does not arise.

Soda Ash Factory in Rajasthan

*964. **Dr. L. M. Singhvi:** Will the Minister of Commerce and Industry be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that certain foreign consultants were engaged to design and/or advise on the establishment of a Soda Ash Factory in Rajasthan;

(b) if so, the names of the consultants and the fee paid or payable to them; and

(c) the reasons for engaging foreign consultants?

The Minister of Industry in the Ministry of Commerce and Industry (Shri Kanungo): (a) Yes, Sir. A firm of foreign consultants were engaged to undertake a project survey and examine the feasibility of setting up a Soda Ash plant near the Sambhar Lake based on the lake salt.