

(c) the main recommendations made by the study Group;

(d) whether these recommendations have been accepted by the Government;

(e) if so, the details thereof; and

(f) the time by which these recommendations are likely to be implemented?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI M.V. CHANDRASHEKHARA MURTHY):
(a) Yes, Sir.

(b) to (f). The recommendations contained in the Report of the Study Group, submitted in October, 1994, are under the consideration of the Government. Decision on the Report will be taken soon.

Child Labour

*450. SHRI CHITTA BASU: Will the Minister of LABOUR be pleased to state :

(a) whether the employment of Child Labour is on the ascendancy since 1991;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor;

(c) whether the Government have since evaluated the social implications of this trend; and

(d) the special measures undertaken to minimise the employment of Child Labour?

THE MINISTER OF LABOUR (SHRI P.A. SANGMA):
(a) and (b). Authentic figures on child labour are generated during decennial census. According to 1981 census, the number of working children was 13.6 million. In the 43rd round of National Sample Survey conducted in 1987-88 the figure of child labour has been estimated to be 17.02 million. The data on child labour as per 1991 census has not yet been released.

(c) and (d). Since children continue to work owing to socio-economic reasons, various welfare schemes have been taken up. The policy of the Government is to progressively eliminate child labour. Under the National Child Labour Policy, 1987, projects have been taken up in areas where child labour is concentrated. Under the Grant-in-aid schemes and the International Programme for Elimination of child Labour (IPEC), action-oriented projects for the benefit of children withdrawn from work have been taken up.

Apart from the prohibitory provisions under the various labour laws like the Factories Act, 1948, Mines Act, 1952, Bidi and Cigar Workers (Conditions of Employment) Act, 1986, child labour is also prohibited in scheduled occupations/processes under the Child Labour (Prohibition & Regulation) Act, 1986. In areas where children are permitted to work, their working conditions are regulated under part III of the Child Labour (Prohibition & Regulation) Act, 1986. The enforcement

of the Provisions of Child Labour (Prohibition & Regulation) Act, 1986 is being monitored by the Central Government. All the State Governments/UTs are also to enforce the child related laws.

In addition to the above, National Authority for the Elimination of child labour (NAECL) has been constituted under the Chairmanship of Union Labour Minister to tackle the problem of child labour. The NAECL has adopted a plan of action titled "Identification, Release and Rehabilitation of Child Labour" to tackle the problem of child labour in the country. Briefly, it calls for a convergence of services and schemes of the Central and State Governments at the implementing level- the District to effectively handle the identification and rehabilitation of child labour, the economic rehabilitation of the family with child labour and stricter enforcement of relevant laws. This plan of action has been sent to all States/UTs for adoption.

Regional Trade Alliance between Northern States

*451. SHRI SHARAD DIGHE:

SHRI SANT KUMAR MANDAL:

Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government are aware that the Chief Ministers of Northern States decided at a meeting organised by the Council of North Indian States for Cooperation and Regional Development to form a regional trade alliance and common market on the lines of the European Union to strengthen regional cooperation, which include ports, highways and agro-industries;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) the reaction of the Government thereon;

(d) whether the proposed alliance envisage any specific plan for improving standards of life in the region?

(e) whether the Zonal Councils constituted by the National Development Council in the past have ceased to be active platforms of a federal system in this regard?

(f) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(g) the steps taken by the Government to revive these platforms?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM) : (a) and (b). It is learnt that in a meeting organised by confederation of Indian Industry (CII) the State Governments of Northern India have agreed to consider the idea of setting-up a Council of North Indian States for Cooperation and Regional Development (CONCORD) to strengthen regional cooperation which include ports, highways and agro-industries.

The broad objectives of CONCORD are to coordinate efforts of the member-states to improve the quality of life in the region equally for all sections of