

[Translation]

### Agricultural Labour

\*167. DR. P. R. GANGWAR: Will the Minister of LABOUR be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government are aware of the problems faced by the agricultural labourers in regard to minimum wages, working hours and medical facilities;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the steps taken by the Government to resolve the problems?

THE MINISTER OF LABOUR (SHRI P. A. SANGMA):

(a) to (c). The Government is aware of the problems being faced by the agricultural labourers in regard to minimum wages, working hours and medical facilities. Minimum Wages Act, 1948 is the most important legislation concerning agricultural labour, as it provides for fixation and revision of minimum wages, hours of work, payment of overtime wages, rest days, etc. The issues relating to effective implementation of the provisions of the Act were extensively discussed with the State Governments, in the Regional Labour Ministers Conferences of Eastern and North Eastern regions held at Bhubaneswar on 29-30 September, 1994, the Southern region held at Trivandrum on 4th October, 1994 and Central and Northern regions held at Jaipur on 25th October, 1994. A number of decisions have been taken to strengthen the enforcement of the Minimum Wages Act. These include wide publicity to the provisions of the Act through print media, radio broadcast, electronic media, hoardings, etc., enhancement of the penalties for violating the Act, broadening of eligibility criteria for appointment of claims authorities, simplification of claims settlement procedures, etc. Besides, the State Government have also been advised to strengthen the enforcement machinery by taking help of other sister department, to increase the number of inspectors, and to set up District Level Watch Committees etc.

Several other legislations having a direct bearing on the work environment of agricultural workers such as the Equal Remuneration Act, 1976, the Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act, 1976, the Inter-State migrant Workmen Act, 1970 etc. have been enacted. Comprehensive Legislation for agriculture workers has been enacted by the States of Kerala and Tripura in 1973 and 1986 respectively and other States have been advised to take up similar Legislation for which a Model Bill has been circulated. For attaining the goal of "Health for all by the year 2000", coordinated efforts are being made under Rural Health Programmes to provide effective and efficient health services to the people in the rural areas which include agricultural workers. Over 1.31 lakh sub-centres, 21,024 primary health centres and 2293 community health centres set up under the Minimum Needs Programme are functioning as on 30th September, 1993 to provide primary health care in rural areas. In addition, 4.15 lakh village Health Guides (VHG) have been trained out of whom about Rs. 3.25 lakh VHG are on the roll of the State Governments/UTs.

### Foreign Investment

\*168. SHRIMATI DIL KUMARI BHANDARI: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government have received any proposal to lower the ceiling imposed on investment by foreign institutional investors;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether the Government have also been requested to encourage foreign direct investment to fill resource gap in infrastructural sectors like power and telecom;

(d) if so, details thereof; and

(e) the reaction of the Government to these proposals?

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

(a) and (b). The issues raised in the question were the subject matter of discussions in the interactive meeting, organised by the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) during the visit of Russel 20-20, an informal Group of International Financial Organisations. No revision in the existing ceilings on Foreign Institutional Investors holding in individual Companies is, however, being contemplated by the Government.

(c) to (e). In recognition of the importance of infrastructure in promoting growth and all round development, Government have initiated major initiatives for investment in infrastructure, particularly power and tele-communications. These include, for the power sector, a concessional tax regime and permission for foreign equity participation upto 100%. The telecom sector reforms cover, the announcement of a national telecom policy envisaging private sector participation on basic and value added services, expansion in telecom network, resources from private financing institutions through lease financing and deferred payment terms.

[Translation]

### NRE Accounts

\*169. SHRI ARVIND TRIVEDI:

SHRI RAJVEER SINGH:

Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether cases of illegal business in foreign exchange through NRE Accounts have come to the notice of the Government;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) the steps taken or proposed to be taken to remedy the situation?

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

(a) and (b). The Enforcement Directorate has come across some instances where Non-Resident External (NRE) accounts have been misused for illegal business in foreign exchange.

(c) The Government has been keeping a close vigil to