

to engineering exporters at prices comparable to international prices against import of duty free inputs for steel production. In the 1995-96. Budget, the peak level of import tariff has been reduced from 65% to 50%, besides tariff rationalisation, to make imported inputs/ less costly,

(e) Exports grew by 20.0% in dollar terms during 1993-94 and have risen further by over 17% in dollar terms, during April 1994 to february 1995.

Agro-Based Industries

*269. SHRIMATI BIBHU KUMARI DEVI:

Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government have chalked out any action plan to provide loans from nationalised banks to agro-based industries in the North-Eastern States:

(b) if so, the details thereof, state-wise: and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI M.V. CHANDRASHEKHARA MURTHY) (a) to (c). as a part of Government's overall policy to promote agro-based industries, the nationalised banks make available credit to viable agro-based industries. 18% of the total advances are to be made out to agriculture and allied sectors and upto 25% out of these can be for indirect agricultural activities. The network of bank branches in the North-Eastern region has expanded even though there is considerable scope for improving the absorptive capacity for credit. There were 1875 branches as On 30.6.1993 with an Average Population per branch office ranging from 9000 to 17000.

Some of the special steps taken up to facilitate credit availability in the North-Eastern Region that will assist agro-based industries are:

- (i) NABARD makes available refinance to the extent of 90% of disbursements as against 75% in other parts of the country.
- (ii) NABARD is organising a special study with reference to the needs of working capital & Marketing arrangements for small tea growers.
- (iii) Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI) has sanctioned Rs. 25 lakhs towards a corpus fund for setting up the Indian Institute of Entrepreneurship at Guwahati.
- (iv) NABARD provides assistance to state Cooperative Banks, District Central Cooperative Banks, State Land Development Banks and Regional Rural Banks for setting up Technical Monitoring and Evaluation Cells. NABARD has created a cell in its Head office to coordinate and monitor developmental efforts in North Eastern Region.
- (v) A new North Eastern Development Bank with

an authorised capital of Rs. 500 crores is being set up to facilitate industrial and infrastructural development in the North Eastern Region.

[Translation]

Trade Agreements

*270. SHRI RAJENDRA KUMAR SHARMA:

SHRI HARISH NARAYAN PRABHU ZANTYE:

Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether high power trade delegations from a number of countries visited India to discuss problems relating to the existing trade and explore the possibilities of expanding bilateral trade relations during the current year;

(b) if so, the details thereof alongwith the outcome of deliberations;

(c) the details of our trade delegations which visited various countries during the current year; and

(d) the steps proposed to be taken to strengthen our embassies abroad for undertaking the challenges thrown by globalisation for capturing the export potential?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM) : (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) the details of high power trade delegations that visited India during the current year are:-

Name of Country	Period	Official	Outcome of the delegations
1	2	3	4
ITALY	Feb.1995	President of Italy	The delegations held meetings with concerned officials and ministers. These interactions paved the way for clearer understanding of Indian economic policy and other details concerning economic co-operation.
TURKEY	Jan-Feb 1995	President of Turkey	-
U.K.	Nov.'95 & Feb.'95	President Board of Trade of U.K. and Trade Minister of U.K.	-
FRANCE	Feb.' 95	Chief of the	-