

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF SURFACE TRANSPORT (SHRI M. RAJASEKARA MURTHY): (a) In some Ports including Madras congestion was witnessed during the last few months due to bunched arrival of vessels. Apart from this the inclement weather/cyclonic weather further affected the handling of cargoes like fertilizer which resulted in increasing the Turn Round Time of vessels and led to increase pre-berthing detention.

(b) The port officials are constantly monitoring ship-to-shore handling of cargo to ensure that turn round time of vessels is reduced and berthday output is improved thereby reducing the congestion. Besides, minimum performance norms for loading and unloading of cargo have also been fixed by some of the ports. A new scheme called "Group Berthing" has been introduced at Madras Port since 1.1.1996 which has played major role in easing out the congestion.

(c) and (d) . Yes, Sir. An outlay of Rs. 2984 crores has been approved in the 8th Five Year Plan which aims at augmentation/expansion of various facilities in all the major ports. Some of the mega projects which cost more than Rs. 100 crores and approved by the Government include the following :

- (i) Development of a new port at Ennore.
- (ii) Development of Coal handling facilities at Paradip.
- (iii) Replacement of Sub-marine Pipe lines at Bombay Port.
- (iv) Development of Oil handling facilities at New Mangalore.
- (v) Extension of container Terminal at Madras Port

Eighth Five Year Plan Schemes, upon implementation, will augment aggregate Port capacity from the existing 174 million tonnes to 237 million tonnes. Besides, private sector schemes will also add to the Port capacities.

#### **Rural Development Projects**

1255. SHRI KASHIRAM RANA :  
SHRI HARIKEWAL PRASAD :  
SHRI CHEDDI PASWAN :  
SHRI MAHESH KANODIA :

Will the Minister of RURAL AREAS AND EMPLOYMENT be pleased to state:

(a) the number of rural development schemes/projects of each State lying pending for clearance with the Union Government; and

(b) the time by which these are likely to be cleared?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RURAL AREAS AND EMPLOYMENT (DEPARTMENT OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT) (SHRI UTTAMBHAI HARJIBHAI PATEL): (a) and (b) . The information is being collected and will be laid on the table of the House.

#### **Nuclear Tests**

1256. SHRI SHRAVAN KUMAR PATEL : Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether nuclear powers have opposed India carrying out its missile programme; and

(b) if so, the details of their reaction in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE) : (a) and (b) . The G-8 group of countries have conveyed their concerns regarding India's missile programme. The G-8 includes four nuclear weapon states-USA, UK, France and Russia. Government has conveyed categorically that it does not share the assessment of the G-8 on this matter. Government keeps the security situation of India constantly under review particularly in the light of developments in the neighbourhood and is committed to taking all necessary measures designed to cope with any threat that may be posed to the security of the nation.

*[Translation]*

#### **Cotton Farmers**

1257. SHRIMATI KESHARBAI SONAJI KSHIR-SAGAR : Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) the output of the cotton in the country during 1996;

(b) whether there is abnormal delay in making payments of cotton to the farmers in Maharashtra;

(c) if so, the details thereof and the reasons therefor, and

(d) the steps being taken by the Government to ensure timely payments of Cotton to the farmers?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI AYUB KHAN) : (a) The likely production of cotton during 1995-96 cotton season is estimated at 123.4 lakh bales of 170 kgs each.

(b) and (c) . Payments to cotton growers in Maharashtra are made on the ongoing basis with a delay of 30 to 40 days from the date of tender. The delay for this limited period is due to inadequate working capital and non-availability of bank finance.

(d) The Government of Maharashtra has provided financial assistance and bridge loan for speedy payments to Cotton growers.

*[English]*

#### **Compensation to Gulf War Victims**

1258. SHRI V.S. VIJAYARAGHAVAN : Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government have directed the Union Bank of India to pay interest to all depositors who have claimed Gulf war compensation;