

(e) whether the Coffee Board has decided to franchise off the Coffee Houses to private sectors to meet the expenditure; and

(f) if so, the details thereof and if not, the steps taken by the Coffee Board to reduce the expenditure ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI BOLLA BULLI RAMAIAH) : (a) A sum of Rs. 1667 lakh was provided as plan and non-plan grants to the Coffee Board during 1996-97.

(b) During the year 1997-98, the Coffee Board had asked for Rs. 7719 lakh from the Government.

(c) and (d) Yes, Sir. For implementation of various schemes for development of coffee, Government has given enhanced grant of Rs. 2800 lakh (plan and non-plan) to the Coffee Board during the year 1997-98. These funds are expected to be spent on various programmes aimed at increasing production, productivity, plantation area under Coffee and Research and Development Schemes of the Coffee Board.

(e) and (f) Coffee Board has not taken any decision to franchise off the Coffee Houses of the Board to private sector. However, the Board has closed down 48 promotional units to reduce the expenditure following scaling down of its marketing activities after introduction of 100% Free Sale quota.

Formula for SSI

6676.DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY : Will the Minister of INDUSTRY be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Chamber of Commerce and Industry has suggested 5-point formula for providing a 'level playing field' to small scale industrial units and making them globally competitive;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether the Government have examined the points suggested by the PMD Chamber of Commerce and Industry; and

(d) if so, the time by which the final decision for implementing the suggestions is likely to be considered ?

THE MINISTER OF INDUSTRY (SHRI MURASOLI MARAN) : (a) and (b) The PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry had submitted a Memorandum to the Task Force set up by the Central Board for Excise and Customs

(CBEC) on 16.11.1996. The Memorandum contained some suggestions for reforms in the Excise duty structure applicable to the small scale industries. The five suggestions made by the Chamber of Commerce and Industry are briefly as follows :-

1. Duty exemption limit of Rs. 30 lakhs should be increased to Rs. 50 lakhs and with a concessional duty rate for above Rs. 50 lakhs and up to Rs. 1 crore. Full duty should be charged above Rs. 1 crore and the turnover ceiling of Rs. 3 crores should be removed.
2. The Excise exemption scheme should be extended to all excisable goods manufactured by SSI. There should be no exclusion.
3. The SSIs should be given the option to pay duty and obtain Modvat facility on exempted goods in some cases while availing duty exemption in some other cases.
4. The Excise exemption scheme should be extended to brand goods also manufactured by the SSIs.
5. The excise duty regulation procedures for the SSI units should be further simplified and relaxed.

(c) and (d) Government have examined the suggestions of the PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry as part of the Budget exercise. A revised excise exemption scheme has been announced in this year's Budget. The new scheme is effective from 01.04.1997. Under the new Scheme, Clearances of goods, excepting certain specified items, manufactured by a SSI unit upto an aggregate value of Rs. 30 lakhs are fully exempt from duty. Clearances in excess of Rs. 30 lakhs but less than Rs. 50 lakhs will be charged a flat rate of duty of 3%. Clearances in excess of Rs. 50 lakhs but less than Rs. 100 lakhs will be charged a flat rate of duty of 5%. Clearances in excess of Rs. 100 lakhs will be charged to full duty. This modification will greatly simplify the administration of the Excise Duty collection. The overall eligibility limit of Rs. 3 crores and the restrictions regarding usage of brand name remain unchanged.

As per the new scheme notified vide No. 16/97. Central Excise dated 01.04.1997 a manufacturer can avail of the facility of MODVAT only after the clearances cross Rs. 100 lakhs. Further, the manufacturer has the option either to pay the normal duties and avail MODVAT or to

avail the exemptions under the stated notification. This option can be exercised once during the year.

However, at the time of moving the Finance Bill, 1997 in the Lok Sabha, the Finance Minister has stated that after consultation with the SSI sector, an alternative scheme would be notified under which the SSI units will be eligible to avail of MODVAT even while paying concessional excise, duty under the existing dispensation. For the present, the scheme which came into force from 01.04.1997 continues to operate.

[Translation]

Tribunals for pending Cases

6677. SHRI JAI PRAKASH AGARWAL : Will the Minister of LAW AND JUSTICE be pleased to state :

(a) whether some tribunals had been set up with the of removing delay in justice and providing justice expeditiously;

if so, the dates on which these tribunals had been set up;

(c) whether the said objectives has not been achieved;

(d) if so, the reasons therefor;

(e) the number of cases pending in each tribunal, till date; and

(f) the steps proposed to be taken by the Government to streamline the functioning of these tribunals ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF LAW AND JUSTICE (SHRI RAMAKANT D. KHALAP) : (a) to (f) A number of Tribunals have been set up by the Government under various Acts for dealing with cases arising under these Acts. These Tribunals are under the administrative control of various Ministries/Departments of Government of India. The Law Commission of India has undertaken a study on the functioning of the Tribunals.

(b) & (e) The Income-tax Appellate Tribunal and the Foreign Exchange Regulation Appellate Board which are under the administrative control of the Ministry of Law and Justice were set up on 25.1.1941 and 1.1.1974 respectively. The number of cases pending in the Income-tax Appellate Tribunal (as on 1.5.1997) and the FERA Board (as on 13.5.1997) are 3,01,034 and 4,408 respectively.

[English]

Grant of New Registration to Farmers by Tobacco Board

6678. SHRI L. RAMANA : Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state :

(a) the methods followed by Tobacco Board for granting new registration to farmers in Andhra Pradesh;

(b) whether the field officers are unable to help to the tobacco farmers; and

(c) if so, the steps proposed to be taken to improve the situation and functioning of the Tobacco Board in Andhra Pradesh ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI BOLLA BULLI RAMAIAH) : (a) Tobacco Board grants registration to the tobacco farmers under the relevant provisions of the Tobacco Board Act, 1975 and the Tobacco Board Rules, 1976. The Tobacco Board each year fixes the crop size of FCV tobacco and lays down the policy for regulating its production keeping in view the international and domestic demand and carry over stocks, if any. Registration Committee of the Board lays down criteria for registration/renewal of registration keeping the production policy of the Board in view. Notice inviting applications for renewal of registration or for grant of new registrations are given wide publicity in the local press and are also displayed on the notice board of all Tobacco Board offices.

(b) No, Sir.

(c) Does not arise.

Coal Washeries

6679. SHRI NARAYAN ATHAWALAY :
SHRI NAMDEO DIWATHE :

Will the Minister of COAL be pleased to state :

(a) the details of new coal washing capacity added through modernisation/capacity expansion/establishment of new coal washeries during the last three years and investment made thereon;

(b) whether production of washed coal remained stagnant during the last three years;

(c) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(d) the estimated demand for washed coal during 1997-98 and the Ninth Plan period and new policy