

Madurai National Highway in Kerala which is totally in a dilapidated condition; and

(b) the time by which the work is likely to be completed?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF SURFACE TRANSPORT (SHRI JAGDISH TYTLER): (a) and (b) Angamaly is connected to Munnar through N.H. No. 47 upto Cochin and then N.H. 49 which continues upto Madurai. These sections of National Highways are being kept in trafficworthy condition against the available maintenance and repair grant. Further improvements on N.H. 49 will be taken up in a phased manner subject to the completion of surveys and investigations by the State PWD.

Construction of New National Highway from Angamaly to Madurai

721. SHRI PALA K.M. MATHEW: Will the Minister of SURFACE TRANSPORT be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government propose to construct a new National Highway from Angamaly to Madurai via Thekkady through the middle of the backward Idukki District in Kerala;

(b) if so, the time by which the National Highway is likely to be constructed; and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF SURFACE TRANSPORT (SHRI JAGDISH TYTLER): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) There has been neither a request from the Kerala Government for inclusion of this road in the National Highway grid during the 8th Five Year Plan nor has the N.T.P.C. (National Transport Policy Committee) recommended its inclusion in the National Highway network.

Writing-off Agricultural Debts

722. SHRI PALA K.M. MATHEW:

SHRI M. BAGA REDDY:

Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) the present position regarding writing off of agricultural debts upto Rs. 10,000/-;

(b) whether there is any proposal to write off the debts of farmers in other banks also which are not within the purview of this decision;

(c) if so, the details thereof; and

(d) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI DALBIR SINGH): (a) Presumably, the Hon'ble Members are referring to the Agricultural & Rural Debt Relief Scheme (ARDR), 1990 under which debt relief to the extent of Rs. 10,000 per borrower was extended by Government to eligible borrowers including farmers, artisans and weavers in rural areas, with effect from 15th May, 1990. The amount of relief extended by public sector banks, co-operatives and Regional Rural Banks under the Scheme till 1st July, 1991 was Rs. 7434 crores covering about 297.56 lakh beneficiaries.

(b) No, Sir.

(c) and (d) Do not arise.

Bonus Eligibility Ceiling

724. SHRI GOVINDRAO NIKAM: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government propose to raise the ceiling fixed for the eligibility for bonus to its employees; and

(b) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI SHANTARAM POTDUKHE): (a) and (b) The Central Administrative Tribunal, Principal Bench, New Delhi, in a batch of applications filed before it, has held that the applicants (who represent a section of the Central Government employees) shall be entitled to the payment of Productivity Linked Bonus/Ex-gratia as long as their emoluments do not exceed Rs. 3500/- per month, as against the existing eligibility ceiling of Rs. 2500 per month. The order of the Tribunal is receiving attention of Government.

Export of Industrial Goods

725. SHRI GOVINDRAO NIKAM: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government have taken or propose to take any steps to increase the export of industrial goods; and

(b) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI P CHIDAMBARAM): (a) and (b) The Government have recently introduced far-reaching reforms in the export-import policy aimed at reducing controls through licensing, strengthening export incentives and linking import capability in a wide range of imports to export earnings. These are designed to improve the export environment which will lead to increase in production and improvement in the quality of export of industrial goods. Besides, the downward adjustment in the value of Rupee effected by Reserve Bank of India on 1st and 3rd July, 1991 is also expected to improve India's export earnings.

Export of Tea

726. SHRI GOVINDRAO NIKAM: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the quantity of tea exported in 1990 fell in quantity though

it earned more in terms of value as compared to the previous year;

(b) if so, the details thereof and the reasons therefor; and

(c) whether the Government propose to export more tea in international market?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. The export of tea during 1990 has been estimated at 199.66 M.Kgs. valued at Rs. 1028.20 crore with unit price of Rs. 51.50 per kg. as compared to 212.66 M.Kgs. (provisional) valued at Rs. 848.98 crore with unit price of Rs. 39.92 during 1989.

The Gulf-crisis, rising domestic demand and stiff competition abroad have been the main reasons for decline of exports in quantity terms while increased unit price has earned higher value realisation over the last year.

(c) The objective of the Govt. is to maximise export of tea and at the same time to ensure availability of adequate quantity of tea at reasonable price for domestic consumption.

Export of Betel Leaves

727. SHRI SATYAGOPAL MISRA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state the steps taken or proposed to be taken by the Government to promote the export of Betel Leaves?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): Export of betel leaves is allowed on de-controlled basis without any licensing formalities. Replenishment rate of 30 per cent has been provided in the new trade policy to promote their export.