

to the tune of Rs. 50 lakhs for the year 1995-96, steps are being taken to effect purchases of Stores and Equipments to make the Testing Centre operational at the earliest.

Non Payment to Suppliers

4721. SHRI LALL BABU RAI : Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Department of Supply has not made payment to their suppliers,

(b) if so, the reasons thereof;

(c) whether the amount of payments withheld as on February 28, 1995;

(d) if so, the reasons for withholding the payments; and

(e) The action taken by Government to make the payment in respect of pending bills within a stipulated period

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM) : (a) and (b). No, Sir. Payment due and admissible are made to the suppliers if their bills are in order with requisite documents. However, in a few cases, payments to suppliers have been kept pending mainly on account of reasons such as recovery advised by purchaser/indentors/consignees, litigation, non-availability of documents/records etc

(c) and (d). As on 28.2.1995, a total of 10,356 bills amounting to Rs. 10 crores (approximately) could not be paid due to reasons given against (a) and (b) parts of the question

(e) The pending bills are reviewed periodically with a view to ensure that as soon as reason for pendency is removed the pending bill is paid.

[English]

State Finance Ministers Conference

4722. SHRI BOLLA BULLI RAMAIAH :
SHRI M.V.V.S. MURTHY .

Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state :

(a) whether the State Finance Ministers Conference was held in the month of September, 1994;

(b) if so, the subjects discussed and decisions arrived at in the conference; and

(c) the steps being taken to implement the decisions particularly the new economic policy in the States;

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI M.V. CHANDRASHEKHARA MURTHY): (a) No, Sir. However, a Conference of Finance Ministers of States and Union Territories was held on 27th May, 1994.

(b) The Conference discussed the report of the National Institute of Public Finance and Policy, commissioned by the Union Government, on domestic trade taxes reform, the implications of introducing a Value Added Tax, levy of consignment tax, harmonisation of sales tax rates and inclusion of more items in the list of declared goods.

(c) In the Conference it was resolved to constitute a Committee of State Finance Ministers to examine all aspects of tax reforms including introduction of Value Added Tax. The Committee has since been constituted.

Plantation Crop Boards

4723. DR. R. MALLU : Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state :

(a) whether the statutory bodies under his Ministry dealing with various plantation crops like tobacco are over consulted before formulation of fiscal policies;

(b) if so, whether Tobacco Board has been consulted at any stage by the Government in the pre-budget exercises done;

(c) the details of such pre-budget exercises involving Boards and Bodies like the Tobacco Board; and

(d) if not, the role of such bodies in policy formulation severely affecting plantation crops?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM) : (a) to (d). Besides continuous interaction between Commodity Boards/Councils and the Government, it is the normal procedure, as a part of the pre-budget exercise, to obtain their inputs which are taken into consideration while formulating the Ministry's budget-related suggestions for transmission to the Ministry of Finance. These are also discussed, where necessary, with that Ministry at appropriate level.

Agricultural and Construction Workers

4724. SHRI P.C. THOMAS : Will the Minister of LABOUR be pleased to state :

(a) the number of agriculture and construction workers in the country with average income, state-wise;

(b) the steps taken to protect them from several forms of exploitation;

(c) whether the Government propose to bring forward legislation for the welfare of the agricultural and construction workers; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF LABOUR (SHRI P.A. SANGMA): (a) The number of agricultural and construction workers and average wage/salary earning of agricultural and non-agricultural labourers and enclosed at Statement-I and Statement-II, respectively.