

having a bearing on national security and take necessary measures to safeguard it.

#### Talks with China on DF-31 Missile

2493. SHRI NAWAL KISHORE RAI :

SHRI GUMAN MAL LODHA :

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government have directly held any talks with China in regard to its successful firing test of DF-31 missiles which is having a strike range of about 8000 kms; and

(b) if so, when and the reaction of China in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE) : (a) and (b) It has been reported that China tested the Dong Feng-31 (DF-31) ICBM which has a strike range of 8000 kms. The launch has not been confirmed officially.

Government have made known to the Chinese side some of our security concerns. Our views on disarmament and vertical proliferation of nuclear weapons, including those in our neighbourhood, have also been made known. However, there has been no discussion, so far, on DF-31 ICBM.

#### Shortage of Paraxylene

2494. SHRI LAKSHMAN SINGH : Will the Minister of CHEMICALS AND FERTILIZERS be pleased to state :

(a) whether there is any worldwide shortage of Paraxylene, a raw material of DMT/PTA production;

(b) the current prices at which Paraxylene is being imported by Indian DMT and PTA producers;

(c) whether there is a severe shortfall in availability of Paraxylene in India and if so, the details thereof;

(d) whether any Indian Company is exporting Paraxylene; and

(e) if so, the reasons for permitting such exports from India in the face of severe shortage in India?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CHEMICALS AND FERTILISERS, AND MINISTER OF STATE IN MINISTRY OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS AND MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF ELECTRONICS AND DEPARTMENT OF OCEAN DEVELOPMENT (SHRI EDUARDO FALEIRO) : (a) To the extent information is available paraxylene as a raw material for the manufacture of DMT/PTA is in short supply globally.

(b) The prices at which Paraxylene has been recently imported range between US \$ 1550/MT to US \$ 1745/MT o.f.f.

(c) Yes, Sir. There is shortfall in the availability of Paraxylene in India. In the year 1994-95, the shortfall was to the extent of about 20%. During the current year the shortfall is expected to be higher.

(d) Yes, Sir. Recently, a small quantity of Paraxylene was exported by Indian Petrochemicals Corporation Ltd.

(e) As per the current Import-Export Policy, there is no restriction on imports as well as exports of paraxylene.

[Translation]

#### Coastal Navigation

2495. SHRI ARJUN SINGH YADAV : Will the Minister of SURFACE TRANSPORT be pleased to state :

(a) whether the share of coastal transport is very less despite benefits of coastal navigation and the availability of means of international transport in the country;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(c) the efforts made by the Government so far to make maximum use of the coastal navigation in transport?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF SURFACE TRANSPORT (SHRI JAGDISH TYTER) : (a) and (b) There has been a steady increase in the growth of Coastal Shipping and from 1.1.1985 to 30.6.1995, 120 vessels were added to the Coastal Shipping tonnage with a net tonnage of 3,30,666 GRT. The tonnage position as on 1.7.1995 is 280 vessels with 6,86,202 GRT. However, the main problems being faced by Coastal Shipping Industry are : i) inadequate berthing facilities at minor ports, ii) enormous documentation involved in Port clearance, iii) absence of exemption from custom duty for import of spare parts for coastal vessels, iv) absence of concession in bunker costs as available to foreign going ships, v) competition offered particularly by Railways which enjoys an implicit subsidy on certain commodities, etc.

(c) Government have relaxed age norms for acquisition of second hand coastal vessels and Section 412 of the Merchant Shipping Act has been deleted giving freedom to Coastal vessels to fix freight rates.

Procedures involved in the acquisition of vessels have also been relaxed.

#### Assistance to Construct Houses of EWS/LIG in Gujarat

2496. SHRI RATILAL VARMA : Will the Minister of URBAN AFFAIRS AND EMPLOYMENT be pleased to state:

(a) the number of EWS (Economically Weaker Section)/LIG houses constructed in Gujarat State, district-wise during 1994-95 and 1995-96 till date;

(b) the agencies entrusted with the implementation of these schemes under 20-point programme; and