

(b) The State-wise data regarding the quantum of loan provided by the nationalised banks to the rural artisans during 1994-95 is being collected and, to the extent available, will be laid on the Table of the House.

Closure of Tea Gardens in Darjeeling

4092. SHRIMATI GIRIJA DEVI : Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state :

(a) whether a number of tea gardens managed by the Government in Darjeeling have been closed down during each of the last two years;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(c) the steps taken by the Government for reviving these tea gardens?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM) : (a) and (b) No official closure or lock out has been declared in any of the tea gardens in the Darjeeling District owned by Government agencies. However, Pashok, Vah Tukvar and Potong Tea Estates in Darjeeling District owned by Tea Trading Corporation of India Ltd. have been facing problems on account of continuing losses and mounting arrears of wages and salaries of the workers.

(c) In view of the consistent losses by the gardens owned by Tea Trading Corporation of India Ltd., it has been decided to dispose of all the gardens including Pashok, Potong and Vah Tukvar through outright sale.

Carpet Industry

4093. SHRI PANKAJ CHOWDHARY : Will the Minister of TEXTILES be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government are aware of the crisis being faced by the Carpet Industry at present;

(b) if so, the number of small and medium scale carpet units closed during the last two years;

(c) the loss of foreign exchange suffered by the Government as result of the closing down of said carpet units; and

(d) the steps taken by the Government to eliminate child labour from carpet industry?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF TEXTILES (SHRI KAMAL NATH) : (a) Yes, Sir. The crisis being faced by the carpet industry at present is due to exaggerated and motivated publicity within and outside the country regarding involvement of child labour and also the general economic recession prevalent in the world market, particularly in the U.S.A. and Germany, which are the principal importers of our carpets.

(b) The Government is not aware of any carpet unit closing down due to the above mentioned reasons.

(c) Does not arise.

(d) The steps taken by the Government to eliminate child labour from carpet industry include: stepping up of enforcement measures, welfare measure for rehabilitation of children weaned away from the carpet industry; promotional publicity measures and introduction of a label called "Kaleen" to be affixed on carpets to be exported, signifying commitment towards eradication of children from the carpet industry.

[English]

Non-Payment of Dues

4094. SHRI HARADHAN ROY : Will the Minister of LABOUR be pleased to state :

(a) whether the employees of Refractory and Ceramic Units and other units of Burn Standard Company Limited, Calcutta are not getting the salary and wages in time;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor;

(c) whether the Provident Fund money, gratuity and other admissible benefits to retired employees have not been paid in full in the said company for the last three years;

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

(e) the steps taken by the Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF LABOUR (SHRI G. VENKAT SWAMY) : (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. Payment of salaries and wages to the employees became irregular in all units of Burn Standard Company Ltd. (BSCL) including Refractory and Ceramic units mainly due to drastic reduction in the off take of railway wagons.

(c) and (d) Due to financial constraints the company could not pay statutory liabilities in full to the retired employees for the last three years. As on 30.11.1995 the outstanding statutory liabilities of the company is Rs.18.28 crores.

(e) Government has released Rs.5.30 crores to Burn Standard Company Ltd. during the current year for payment of salaries and wages to the employees. Performance of BSCL is improving with the recent release of wagon orders to the company.

Pending Cases of Central Excise

4095. SHRI RAM KRIPAL YADAV : Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state :

(a) the number of cases relating to Central Excise lying pending in the Supreme Court/High Courts/Tribunals as on August 1, 1995;

(b) Since how long these cases have been lying pending, and the reasons for not disposing of these cases;

(c) the amount involved in these cases; and

(d) the steps taken by the Govt. for the speedy disposal of these cases?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI M.V. CHANDRASHEKHARA MURTHY) : (a) to (c) As on 1.8.1995, the number of Central Excise cases pending in the Supreme Court and High Courts were 2696 and 4392 involving revenue of Rs.702.21 crores and Rs.1309.63 crores respectively.

As on 1.8.1995, there were 52364 total number of appeals pending for disposal with different benches of Customs, Excise and Gold (Control) Appellate Tribunal. However, separate figures in respect of Central Excise cases alone are not being maintained. These cases have been pending for varying periods. In the Courts, the cases are taken up on the basis of date of filing of the case. Depending on urgency and cases involving important questions of law are taken up for early hearing.

The reasons for non-disposal/delay in disposal of the cases in the Tribunal include vacancies of Judicial Members, stay granted by the Courts and clearance required from the Committee of Secretaries for action on appeals filed by Public Sector Units.

(d) Steps taken for early disposal of the cases include bunching of cases issue-wise, request for early hearing in cases involving important question of law and high revenue stakes, request for vacation of stay orders, maintaining a close liaison with Ministry of Law and the Counsels, briefing of Counsels at senior level etc. In fact, the pendency of Supreme Court cases has been brought down from 2896 in 1994 to 2696 cases in 1995. Similarly, the pendency of High Courts cases has come down from 4667 cases in 1994 to 4392 cases in 1995.

As regards Tribunals, steps have also been taken by the Ministry for filling up the vacancies of Members (Judicial), and providing infrastructural support. The law has also been amended for removing distinction between Special and Regional Benches.

Income Tax/Excise Duty Dues Against Reliance Industries

4096. SHRI MOHAMMAD ALI ASHRAF FATMI : Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state :

(a) the outstanding income tax and excise duty against the Reliance Industries Group as on March 31, 1995;

(b) whether any action is being taken by the Government to recover the said outstanding tax revenue;

(c) if so, the details thereof; and

(d) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI M.V. CHANDRASHEKHARA MURTHY) :

(a) The outstanding amounts of Income Tax and excise

duty against the Reliance Group as on 31.3.1995 were as under :-

Income Tax _ Rs. 147.68 crores

(for demands amounting to Rs. one crore and above)

Excise Duty - Rs. 1.51 crores.

(b) and (c) A major portion of the outstanding taxes is locked up in litigation before Courts/Tribunals/Commissioners (Appeals). The concerned courts/appellate authorities are requested for early disposal of appeals/vacation of stay orders. Other administrative and legal measures envisaged under the statutes are also taken to recover the outstanding amounts.

(d) Does not arise.

Inadequate Managerial Staff

4097. SHRI S.M. LALJAN BASHA : Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION AND TOURISM be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government are aware that the present strength of managerial staff at middle top level is insufficient to cope with the tasks assigned to them and for smooth operation of modern airports;

(b) if so, whether the Government are considering to increase the strength or create a new cadre of airport management to meet the challenges of increased air travel; and

(c) if so, details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION AND TOURISM (SHRI GHULAM NABI AZAD) : (a) No, Sir.

(b) and (c) Do not arise.

Economic Cooperation Between Indo. Namibia

4098. SHRI RAM PAL SINGH :

SHRI SATYA DEO SINGH :

Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether any agreement has been signed between India and Namibia to increase economic cooperation relation;

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

(c) the time by which the said agreement would come into force?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM) : (a) to (c) During the recent visit of the Prime Minister of Namibia, the following Agreement/MOU were signed on 27th Nov., 1995 :-

(1) Trade Agreement between India and Namibia;