

AND CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware about increased demand of daily Air Service to Port Blair, Andaman and Nicobar Islands; if so, what action Government contemplate to take;

(b) whether Government are planning to have direct Air Service from Delhi-Bhubaneshwar; if so, daily or biweekly-weekly Boeing or other type of Air Crafts and details thereof; and

(c) whether Government like to consider suggestion to have boeing service from Delhi-Bhubaneshwar-Port Blair and back to Delhi which will facilitate the Bhubaneshwar and Port Blair into closer links with Delhi and the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF TOURISM AND CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI KARTIK ORAON): (a) Yes, Sir. With the expansion in fleet, Indian Airlines has plans to increase the number of services from twice weekly at present to thrice-weekly—the third frequency to be operated by a Boeing-737 aircraft on the route Madras/Port Blair/Madras in the Winter Schedule 1980-81.

(b) A thrice-weekly F-27 service has been introduced on the Sector Bhubaneshwar/Varanasi/Delhi from 1st February, 1980.

(c) There is not enough traffic to warrant Boeing service on the Delhi/Bhubaneshwar/Port Blair route.

Free Trade zone in Salt lake Area of Calcutta

525. SHRI MANORANJAN BAHKTA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND CIVIL SUPPLIES be pleased to state:

(a) whether there was a decision for having a Free Trade Zone in Salt Lake area at Calcutta and whether Government propose to revive it; and

(b) if so, details of the project, and if not, the reasons thereof?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE, CIVIL SUPPLIES AND STEEL AND MINES (SHRI PARNAB MUKHERJEE): (a) and (b). The Government of West Bengal had send a proposal to the Central Government in 1973 regarding setting up an export processing zone near Calcutta. In May-1976, a general decision was taken by the Central Government not to set up any further free trade zones in the Country. This decision was communicated to the West Bengal Government in June, 1976. No proposal for revision of the general decision taken in May-June 1976, of not having any further free trade zone, is presently under consideration, and hence the question of setting up an export processing zone in the salt Lake Area does not arise at present.

Export of Onions

526 SHRI VIJAY N. PATIL: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND CIVIL SUPPLIES be pleased to state:

(a) what was the total export of onions in the year 1978-79;

(b) whether Government propose to evolve uniform policy regarding export of onions and fix the quota of export looking at the experience of past five years; and

(c) if so, whether Government propose to announce the quantity of onions that will be allowed to be exported in a particular year?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND CIVIL SUPPLIES (SHRI Z. R. ANSARI): (a) The total export of onions was 95,541 tonnes valued at Rs. 13.65 crores.

(b) Uniform export policy can be evolved for those agricultural commodities in which the production is

stable at a level higher than their domestic consumption. The production of onions has been fluctuating in the past, from year to year, and therefore export policy for an essential commodity like onions has to be reviewed each year and quota for export fixed keeping in view the size of the crop and the trends in domestic prices.

(c) Export of onions is canalised through NAFED who are advised about the quantity to be exported in a particular year. Since export of onions is canalised public announcement of quota is not considered necessary.

Take over of management of Ritz Continental Hotel Calcutta

527. SHRI MADHAVRAO SCINDIA: Will the Minister of TOURISM & CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether I.T.D.C. have received proposal to take over management of Ritz Continental Hotel, Calcutta;

(b) whether Government (I.T.D.C.) propose to consider the matter; and

(c) if not, the reasons thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF TOURISM AND CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI KARTIK ORAON): (a) to (c). Yes Sir, A proposal for the take over of the management of the Ritz Continental Hotel at Calcutta by ITDE is under consideration. As the hotel is suffering from acute sickness due to accumulated losses, outstanding statutory and other liabilities and heavy arrears of interest on loans, sound scheme of rehabilitation involving financial assistance has to be formulated and the the Hotel Company is seeking advice from an expert agency in this regard.

Excise Duty on Branded Bidis

528. SHRI MADHAVRAO SCINDIA: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that as a result of excise duty on branded Bidis by imposing duty at the rate of Rs. 3.60 per thousand Bidis has adversely affected the industry;

(b) if so, whether Government have received a number of representations from Bidis Industry on this issue;

(c) if so, details therein; and

(d) action taken or proposed to be taken by the Government to consider the matter in this year's budget?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI JAGANNATH PAHADIA):

(a) to (d). Government have received a number of representations from various quarters requesting for relief in the existing central excise duty burden on biris. The requests made in these representations are generally as below:

(i) Incidence of excise duty on biris should be reduced;

(ii) Biris should be exempted from the levy of excise duty and, in its place, excise duty should be reimposed on biri tobacco;

(iii) The distinction between branded and unbranded biris in relation to the levy of excise duty should be abolished and all biris, whether branded or unbranded should be charged to a uniform rate of excise duty. The exemption from the levy of excise duty up to a quantity of 60 lakhs biris in a financial year presently available to unbranded biri manufacturers should be withdrawn;

(iv) Biris should be protected from competition by cheap cigarette rates by maximising excise