

(a) whether the Government are considering to release surplus portion of land of Hindustan Salts Ltd., Kharaghuda, Gujarat on lease to other salt manufacturers for heaping of salt;

(b) If so, the details thereof alongwith the date by which it is likely to be made effective; and

(c) If not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF INDUSTRY (SHRI SUKHBIR SINGH BADAL) : (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) Leasing of land to other salt manufacturers is not considered to be in the interest of the company.

India's Anti-Poverty Programmes

958. SHRI K.S.RAO : Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the World Bank has pointed out in its report that "India's anti-poverty programmes and public spending on health and education are not as per target fixed."

(b) If so, the details of points raised by World Bank about India's overall economic position; and

(c) the reaction of the Government towards the observations?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (SHRI YASHWANT SINHA) : No, Sir. However, the central finding of the report emphasises the need for greater attention on improved delivery of education and health care to reduce poverty.

(b) The report has mentioned that India has made many notable social and economic achievements in a democratic political setting, *inter-alia* the reduction of famine, the reduction in population growth, and the creation of a large pool of technical and scientific talent. It has managed to reduce poverty. The decline has been steady since about 1975. Incidence of poverty has decreased from 45 to 36 per cent between 1950 to 1993-94. But due to population growth the number of poor has almost doubled in the same period from 164 to 320 million. Of that total, more than three out of four (76 per cent) live in rural areas.

(c) The details of improvement in education and health care sectors are enumerated in Chapter 10 (Paragraph 24 to 42) of Economic Survey 1997-98.

[Translation]

Supply of Chemical by Drug Mafias

959. SHRI CHINMAYANAND SWAMI : Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether as per the latest report of the United

Nations Narcotics Control Programme, the drug mafias in India are supplying certain chemicals such as acetic, anhydrite, anthelenic, pseudoafidryin which are used to convert opium into heroin to the heroin producing countries and posing a threat to the country's security; and

(b) if so, the steps proposed to be taken by the Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PERSONNEL, PUBLIC GRIEVANCE AND PENSIONS AND MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (BANKING, REVENUE AND INSURANCE) (SHRI KADAMBUR M.R. JANARTHANAN) : (a) Sir, According to the latest report of the International Narcotics Control Board titled 'PRECURSORS AND CHEMICALS FREQUENTLY USED IN THE ILLICIT MANUFACTURE OF NARCOTIC DRUGS AND PSYCHOTROPIC SUBSTANCES' Acetic Anhydride was diverted/smuggled out of India in the past to Pakistan or to Afghanistan via Pakistan, but following the introduction of strict control over Acetic anhydride in India that country may no longer be a major source of acetic anhydride used in illicit manufacture of heroin in the sub-region. There is no reported use of precursors like pseudoephedrine and anthrenilic acid in the illicit manufacture of heroin.

(b) The following steps have been taken by the Government of India to prevent diversion of precursor chemicals into illicit channel:-

(i) Acetic anhydride has been declared as a controlled substance under Section 9-A of the NDPS Act, 1985.

(ii) Export of acetic anhydride, ephedrine and pseudoephedrine is permitted only after a 'No Objection Certificate' is issued by the Narcotics Commissioner of India after establishing the genuineness of each transaction.

(iii) The Indo-Pakistan border has been fenced and provided with flood lights to check cross movement of heroin smugglers.

(iv) A bilateral agreement has been made with Pakistan to ensure exchange of useful intelligence in matters relating to narcotics.

[English]

Circulation of Bhutanese Currency in North Bengal

960. SHRI SRIRAM CHAUHAN : Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government took a note of press report appeared in the Hindu New Delhi dated September 22, 1998 that Bhutanese currency notes are in circulation in North Bengal following acute crisis of Indian Currency notes of small denominations in the region; and

(b) if so, the steps taken by the Government to prevent the circulation of foreign currency on Indian soil?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (SHRI YASHWANT SINHA) : (a) and (b) The information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House.

Flow of Narcotics

961. SHRI K.P. MOHAN : Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) has sought the help of the Defence Services Headquarters to check the flow of narcotics coming to India; and

(b) if so, the reasons and the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PERSONNEL, PUBLIC GRIEVANCE AND PENSIONS AND MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (BANKING, REVENUE AND INSURANCE) (SHRI KADAMBUR M.R. JANARTHANAN) : (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

Export of Agricultural Products

962. SHRI CHETAN CHAUHAN : Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government propose to bring out any policy paper on the export of agricultural products;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the steps proposed to be taken by the Government to boost the export of agricultural and processed food products?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE) : (a) and (b) Policy of exports of agricultural products forms an integral part of the Export Import Policy of the country. The Policy regarding exports of agricultural products is governed principally by the concerns of India's food security, maximising farm incomes and earning foreign exchange. Review of export performance of agricultural products is an ongoing process and accordingly policy interventions are made, as and when considered necessary with a view to making agricultural exports increasingly viable.

(c) Some of the steps taken/proposed to be taken to enhance exports of agricultural and processed food products include:

1. Providing assistance for raising small and large nurseries for production of good quality planting material, upgradation of technical knowhow of farmers through demonstrations, trainings and publicity, rejuvenation of old orchards, are expansion, supply of minikits for vegetables, improving productivity and training of farmers.

2. Provision of soft loans for setting up of grading/processing centres auction platforms, ripening/curing chambers and quality testing equipment.

3. Providing financial assistance to exporters/growers/Cooperative Societies for development of infrastructural facilities such as purchase of specialised transport units, establishment of pre-cooling/cold storage facilities, integrated post-harvest handling systems (pack houses).

4. Grant of financial assistance for improved packaging, strengthening of quality control and modernization of processing units.

5. Establishment of vapour heat treatment facilities for improving the acceptability of the product especially the mangoes in overseas markets.

6. Grant of Air Freight Subsidy for exports of floricultural items and selected fresh fruits and vegetables.

7. Arranging promotional campaigns such as buyer-seller meets and participation in important international fairs and exhibitions.

8. Setting up of integrated cargo handling and cold storage facilities at various international Airports for handling export of perishable items such as fresh fruits and vegetables.

9. Providing assistance in development of data base and dissemination of market information.

10. Providing assistance for setting up of laboratories for testing of products to ensure quality, technology transfer, process upgradation and product development.

Foreign Visits

963. DR. CHINTA MOHAN :

PROF. PREM SINGH CHANDUMAJRA :

SHRI VIJAY GOEL :

SHRI PRAMOTHES MUKHERJEE :

SHRI MADAN PATIL :

SHRI AJAY CHAKRABORTY :

Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Prime Minister has expressed unhappiness at the unwarranted increase in foreign travel by his Cabinet Ministers;

(b) If so, the details of foreign visits conducted by Union Ministers and other senior functionaries of Government during the past eight months and the purpose of their visit;