

ensuring that our economic situation is strong and such as to create confidence in financial markets. It is also expediting various programmes and changes which will improve the general climate for investment, growth and equity.

Assistance to Handloom Weavers

1015. SHRI BIJOY KUMAR "BIJOY" :

SHRI RAJ BANSHI MAHTO :

Will the Minister of TEXTILES be pleased to refer to the reply given to Unstarred Question No. 2749 on July 3, 1998 and state :

(a) whether a High Power Committee on handlooms has made recommendations for giving assistance to handloom weavers;

(b) if so, the details of recommendations made and the action taken by the Government thereon;

(c) whether the Government have received any proposals from the Government of Bihar for providing assistance to handloom weavers in the State; and

(d) if so, the action taken by the Government thereon?

THE MINISTER OF TEXTILES (SHRI KASHIRAM RANA) : (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) A statement is attached.

(c) Yes, Sir.

(d) The Central assistance for Rs. 233760 under New Insurance Scheme during 1998-99 covering 3896 weavers and Rs. 8,50,000 under project Package Scheme have been released to State Government of Bihar. However, proposals for Rs. 22.58 lakhs under Market Development Assistance/Rebate claims were returned to Government of Bihar for State Share release order and Utilisation Certificates for earlier releases.

Statement

Details of Main Recommendations of High Powered Committee on Handloom Sector and Action thereof.

1. All major handloom concentrated States may set up a separate Department of Handlooms, State Handloom Corporations and Apex Societies should be revitalised by providing suitable rehabilitation package.

The State Governments have been requested to set up separate department wherever these have not been formed yet.

2. A National Handloom Credit Fund with a Corpus of atleast of Rs. 500 crores may be set up for providing credit to the weavers outside the co-operative fold.

A study has been entrusted to Agriculture Finance Corporation to go into various aspects of problems of weavers.

3. NABARD may consider waiving the provisions with regard to the guarantee cover in respect of limits sanctioned. Loss Guarantee Scheme may be introduced to protect the interest of the Banks. The Credit for trading in yarn may also be re-financed at 9½% interest rate.

NABARD has provided refinance facility for banks for working Capital requirement of handloom weavers and for providing additional credit limit. NABARD has made a major shift in policy for sanction of credit limit to certain categories of scheduled State Cooperative Banks without the requirements of State Government guarantees in respect of good working banks and societies. Refinance to commercial banks for working capital requirements of handloom weavers has also been provided for. The rate of interest has been reduced on refinance. Reduction in interest rates have been made for marketing activities and trading in yarn.

4. All State Governments may exempt Hank Yarn and Handloom products from any tax, including sales tax and octroi.

The State Governments have been requested to consider exemption of hank yarn and handloom products from any Tax etc.

5. Marketing complexes including handloom haats and permanent exhibition sites at Village, sub-division, district and town level in large numbers may be set up by the Central/State Governments or their agencies.

Marketing Complexes have been set up in Jaipur, Ahmedabad, Hyderabad, Kanpur, Mumbai, Indore, Cochin, Calcutta and Kollam.

6. A comprehensive project package for development of exportable products should be developed.

A budget provision of Rs. 500 lakhs was made during 1998-99 under the scheme for Handloom Export.

7. Calamity Relief Scheme may be introduced to provide support for purchase of handlooms and other accessories, subsidy on purchase of Hank Yarn under Yarn Subsidy Scheme, enhanced availability of credit, ensured buy-back of production and to provide immediate relief under various ongoing schemes of the State Governments.

The New Insurance Scheme has been introduced wherein calamity relief together with accidental death, loss and damage of dwelling units due to flood, fire and earth quake has been included.

8. Welfare schemes may include all handloom workers and not just weavers. Coverage of Handloom workers under the Welfare Schemes of the Handlooms should be substantially stepped

up both in cooperative and outside the cooperative fold.

Under the Category of Welfare Scheme, all types of handloom weavers can be covered under the New Insurance Scheme. It would include weavers in both cooperative fold and outside.

9. Special thrust under ongoing schemes of handlooms sector may be given for overall development of North-Eastern States, by providing additional financial input, where required.

North Eastern States are being given special attention. More than 10% of the total funds had been released to N.E. States. Special dispensation is being given under different existing schemes to N.E. States.

Coal Reserves in North-Eastern Region

1016. SHRI BIJOY HANDIQUE : Will the Minister of COAL be pleased to state:

- (a) the total reserves of coal in the North-Eastern region;
- (b) whether the Government are aware of the unique nature and various properties of the North East Coal; and
- (c) if so, the steps the Government have taken to develop and utilize the coal for setting up coal based industries in the North Eastern region?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COAL (SHRI DILIP RAY) : (a) As per Geological Survey of India's Report as on 1.1.1998, the total reserves of coal in North Eastern region are 889.81 million tonnes.

(b) and (c) Yes, Sir. N.E. coals are low in ash but have high sulphur content. Central Mine Planning and Design Institute Limited has prepared a techno-economic feasibility report for setting up Bee-Hive Coke Oven utilising low ash coking Meghalaya coal for Meghalaya Industrial Development Corporation. Project reports for production of coal based domestic fuels like pellets/briquettes from Assam coal were prepared but none has been implemented as an entrepreneur has come forward for investment.

Export of Fruits and Vegetables

1017. SHRI GORDHANBHAI JADAVBHAI JAVIYA : Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

- (a) the amount and quantity of fruits and vegetables exported during the last three years;
- (b) whether the Government have announced certain incentives to promote export of fruits and vegetables during the current year; and
- (c) if so, the details of such incentives?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMA KRISHNA HEGDE) : (a) The amount and quantity of fruits and vegetables exported during the last three years are as follows :

Year	Fresh Vegetables		Fresh Fruits	
	Quantity (MTs)	Value (Rs. crores)	Quantity (Mts)	Value (Rs. crores)
1995-96	434401	301.19	109704	229.96
1996-97	498863	341.16	217753	241.17
1997-98*	NA	319.45	NA	268.98

*Provisional

(Source - DGCI & S, Calcutta/APEDA)

(b) and (c) Some of the steps taken/measures proposed to be continued during the current year to promote export of horticulture products such as fruits and vegetables are :-

- (i) 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, area expansion, supply of minikits for vegetables, improving productivity and training of farmers under the Centrally Sponsored Scheme on Integrated Development of Tropical, Temperate and Arid Zone fruits;
- (ii) Provision of soft loans for setting up of grading/processing centres, auction platforms, ripening/curing chambers and quality testing equipment;
- (iii) Providing financial assistance to exporter/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 handlings systems (pack houses);
- (iv) Grant of financial assistance for improved packaging, and strengthening of quality control including installation of latest ISO 9000/HACCP equipments at export units;
- (v) Grant of air freight subsidy for export of selected fresh vegetables and fresh fruits;
- (vi) Establishment of vapour heat treatment facilities for improving the acceptability of the product especially mangoes in overseas markets. Research efforts are on for the use of modern technologies such as Controlled/Modified Atmosphere technologies in transportation for increasing the shelf-life of perishable products;
- (vii) Arranging promotional campaigns such as buyer-