

- (a) whether the Government have decided to withdraw the ban on import of raw silk yarn;
- (b) if so, the details thereof;
- (c) the details of price difference between imported silk, silk yarn and locally produced one; and
- (d) the steps taken to protect the interests of indigenous silk producers?

THE MINISTER OF TEXTILES (SHRI KASHIRAM RANA) : (a) and (b) The import of raw silk continues to be in the restricted list of import. However, to cater to the demand for high grade quality mulberry raw silk, the Government have now permitted import of grade 2A and above mulberry raw silk against Special Import License (SIL). Such imports are subject to the condition that the CIF (Cost, Insurance and Freight) value of the surrendered SIL will be three times the CIF value of the imported goods.

(c) Most of the finer mulberry raw silk in filature form produced in the country is of grade B and below. The prevailing price of such indigenous raw silk is approximately Rs.1450 per Kg. The CIF price of superior quality Chinese raw silk of grade 2A and above is about Rs.1040 per Kg. However, the basic import duty on raw silk is 30%; in addition there is also Special Customs Duty of 5% and Special Additional Duty of 4%.

(d) Apart from both tariff and non-tariff protection provided to indigenous raw silk producers, Government have taken several steps to strengthen indigenous production. These include the National Sericulture Project, various catalytic schemes for promoting production of high grade quality silk such as use of multi-end reeling machines, creation of growth centres for production of quality silk and specific schemes for quality enhancement of silk. These schemes are implemented by the Central Silk Board through respective State Governments.

SEBI Suggestions on Mutual Funds

*198. SHRI INDRAJIT GUPTA : Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state :

- (a) whether the Government have received suggestions from SEBI to allow mutual funds to invest abroad;
- (b) if so, the details thereof;
- (c) whether RBI has warned against such investment by mutual funds due to worsening position of foreign exchange reserves; and
- (d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (SHRI YASHWANT SINHA) : (a) and (b) - Reserve Bank of India in its credit and monetary policy of October, 1997 announced that SEBI registered Indian Fund managers, including Mutual Funds, would be permitted to invest in overseas markets subject to SEBI guidelines. This facility was subject to an annual overall cap of US \$ 500 million with the ceiling for individual funds at US \$ 50 million.

- (c) and (d) Do not arise.

[Translation]

Patent of Indian Plants by US

*199. PROF. PREM SINGH CHANDUMAJRA :
SHRI CHINMAYANAND SWAMI :

Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state :

- (a) whether more than 100 useful Indian plants originally grown in India have been got patented by America;
- (b) if so, the names of such plants;
- (c) whether India have to pay royalty on these plants to the foreigners;
- (d) if so, the details thereof; and
- (e) the steps taken by the Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMKRISHNA HEGDE) : (a) and (b) Patents can not be granted for existing plants, as they are not new. Patents are granted on inventions, which are new, involve an inventive step and are capable of industrial application. Patents are granted to inventors under respective national legislation and not to countries. The rights granted to patentees are restricted to the territory of that country.

- (c) and (d) Does not arise.

(e) Whenever information is received about patents being taken on certain products, which are not considered patentable, steps are taken to assess whether the grant of a patent can be challenged. If there is sufficient material to justify objection to the grant of the patent, a petition for re-examination and revocation of the patent is filed in the patent office of the concerned country.

[English]

National Renewal Fund

*200. SHRI ANNASHEB M.K. PATIL : Will the Minister of INDUSTRY be pleased to state :

- (a) whether the Government propose to abolish National Renewal Fund Programme set up in 1991-92 due to its failure to deliver the expected results;
- (b) if so, the details thereof;
- (c) if not, the reasons therefor; and
- (d) the Budget allocation to National Renewal Fund since 1991-92, year-wise?

THE MINISTER OF INDUSTRY (SHRI SIKANDER BAKHT) : (a) No, Sir.

- (b) Does not arise.

(c) Assistance from National Renewal Fund is being provided for Voluntary Retirement Scheme (VRS) in Central Public Sector Undertakings and for counselling, retraining and re-deployment of rationalised workers.