

have submitted their recommendations to the Ministry of Finance. The Government has already notified exemption of seven inputs used in steel manufacturing from the special customs duty. The policy announcements relating to other sectors are expected shortly.

It is expected that the growth in industrial production would pick up as a result of various measures taken by the Government. This in turn would positively impact on revenue collection and help contain the fiscal deficit.

FDI in Insurance Sector

2237. SHRI RAVINDRA KUMAR PANDEY :
SHRI V.V. RAGHAVAN :
SHRIMATI GEETA MUKHERJEE :
SHRI PANKAJ CHOUDHRY :
DR. RAMKRISHNA KUSMARIA :
DR. ASIM BALA :
SHRI PRITHVIRAJ D. CHAVAN :
SHRIMATI SHEELA GAUTAM :
SHRI HANNAN MOLLAH :
SHRI ASHOK NAMDEORAO MOHAL :
PROF. P.J. KURIEN :
SHRI AJOY MUKHOPADHYAY :
SHRI BIKASH CHOWDHURY :
SHRI SUNIL KHAN :
SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA :

Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state :

- (a) whether the Government propose to privatise and allow Foreign Direct Investment in Insurance sector;
- (b) if so, the details thereof alongwith equity participation;
- (c) the modalities adopted for joint venture and private participation in the said sector;
- (d) whether the Government have consulted the trade unions in this regard; and
- (e) if so, the details thereof and if not the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PERSONNEL, PUBLIC GRIEVANCES AND PENSIONS AND MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (BANKING, REVENUE AND INSURANCE) (SHRI KADAMBUR M.R. JANARTHANAN) : (a) to (c) In the budget speech it has been announced that the insurance sector will be opened to competition from private Indian companies and the Insurance Regulatory Authority will be converted into a statutory authority. The Insurance Regulatory Authority Bill, 1998 to carry out the above measures would be introduced in the current session of the Parliament. The Bill shall contain all the details.

(d) and (e) The reforms in Insurance Sector were widely debated at various forums from time to time including trade unions after the report of the committee on reforms in Insur-

ance Sector headed by Shri R.N. Malhotra, Ex.Governor, RBI was submitted to the Government in 1994.

Trade with Foreign Countries

2238. SHRI D.S. AHIRE :
SHRI MANIKRAO HODLYA GAVIT :

Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state :

- (a) whether it is a fact that the India's trade (Import & Export) with foreign countries has declined during each of the last three years;
- (b) if so, the details thereof, country-wise;
- (c) the steps contemplated to improve the trade with these countries; and
- (d) the main items which were exported and imported to each country during the last three years?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMKRISHNA HEGDE) : (a) and (b) As per the data provided by the Directorate General of Commercial Intelligence & Statistics (DGCI&S) the growth rate of imports and exports of India for the last three years are given below:

Year	Exports (Growth Rates)		Imports (Growth Rates)	
	(Rs. in Crs.)	(US \$ Mn.)	(Rs. in Crs.)	(US \$ Mn.)
1997-98(P)	6.3	1.5	9.1	4.2
1996-97	11.7	5.3	13.2	6.7
1995-96	28.6	20.8	36.4	28.0

(P) Provisional.

The country-wise details of exports and imports are given in the enclosed statement.

(c) Many steps have been taken in the direction of improving bilateral and commercial relations. Bilateral Government contacts between various economic Ministries and organisations have grown substantially over the last few years. There has also been an increase in the number of trade delegations exchanged with these countries. There is also an endeavour to adopt specific measures to strengthen the cooperation and raised bilateral trade and economic relations to a new level.

(d) The main items of exports are agriculture and allied products, tea, coffee, marine products, ores and minerals, leather and manufactures, gems & jewellery, chemicals and related products, engineering goods, electronic goods, textiles including handicrafts. The main items of imports are fertilizers, pearls and precious stones, machinery, edible oils, petroleum crude and products, iron and steel, gold and silver, electronic goods, organic and inorganic chemicals, non-ferrous metals, metalliferous ores & metal scrap, project goods, coal, coke and briquettes. The destination-wise details are available in the DGCI&S publications entitled "Foreign Trade Statistics of India" which are available in the Parliament Library.