

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE): (a) to (c) Yes, Sir. The development and promotion of export of flowers including orchids has been identified as thrust area by the Government.

(d) Arunachal Pradesh and Sikkim have rich collection of orchid varieties. However, the commercial production of flowers do not compare favourably with International standards of quality.

(e) The Government has been taking various measures to boost exports of floricultural products. Some of the steps taken to enhance production and boost exports of floricultural products include:—

- (i) Provision of soft loans for setting up of grading/processing centres, auction platforms, quality testing equipment.
- (ii) Providing financial assistance by APEDA, NHB etc. to exporters/growers/Cooperative Societies for development of infrastructural facilities such as for purchase of specialised transport units (reefer containers), establishment of pre cooling/cold storage facilities, etc.
- (iii) Grant of financial assistance for improved packaging and strengthening of quality control.
- (iv) Arranging promotional campaigns such as buyer-seller meets and participation in important international fairs, flower shows and exhibitions.
- (v) Setting up of walk-in-type cold storage and integrated cargo handling and cold storage facilities at various International Airports for handling export of perishable items such as floriculture and horticulture products; walk-in-type cold storage facilities have been set up at Guwahati and Calcutta Airports. Integrated cold storage and cargo handling facilities have been set up at the Indira Gandhi International Airport at New Delhi and at Bangalore Airport. Similar facilities are being established at Chennai, Hyderabad and Thiruvananthapuram Airports.
- (vi) Providing technical advisory services and other support services to trade and industry including training to farmers for export production, quality control packaging, transport, etc.
- (vii) Grant of air freight subsidy for export of floriculture products.

- (viii) Provision of assistance for undertaking feasibility studies, surveys, etc. UNDP assisted feasibility study for development, promotion and post harvest handling of export oriented floriculture products from the North Eastern Region was undertaken in 1995. The report has been circulated to the North Eastern States Organisations in order to disseminate the recommendations to the growers/exporters.

#### **Guns Seized by Customs Officials**

747. SHRI K. YERRANNAIDU:  
SHRI M. RAJAI AH:  
SHRI GAJENDRA SINGH RAJUKHEDI:  
SHRI MOTILAL VORA:

Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) the number of guns seized by the customs department since April 1995 and their disposal;

(b) the customs department sale price of the guns and their market price, category-wise;

(c) the category of persons who are given special concession for purchasing various types of guns/revolvers from the customs and the extent of concession given to them;

(d) the total number of Members of Parliament and persons of other category who purchased the guns/revolvers from the customs on concessional rates between 1995 to 1998; and

(e) the number of persons out of them who have sold their guns/revolvers after the stipulated period and the persons to whom these were sold?

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) 132 Nos. of Guns/firearms (including Pistols, Revolvers, Rifles, Shotguns & Air Guns) are reported to have been seized by the officers of the Customs Department, since April, 1995. During the said period, 179 firearms/guns (including Pistols, Revolvers & Rifles) have been disposed of.

(b) The Customs are presently selling the weapons, on request and availability only to Members of Parliament

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\*The reply printed in part (a) above was sent by Minister of Finance Shri Yashwant Sinha afterwards in substitution of the original reply.

for their personal safety and these cannot be further disposed of. The sale price of fire arms varies with the Type, Model & Category e.g. rifle, revolver, pistol etc. and the prices ranges between Rs. 5,000/- and Rs. 41,000. Fire arms imports are restricted and as sale of imported arms is prohibited, the market prices are not available.

(c) As per the existing policy of the Government, the confiscated prohibited bore weapons are appropriated only for the Departmental use. Confiscated non-prohibited bore weapons are, however, given to the Departmental Officers on lease terms on a selective basis, subject to the condition that on retirement/superannuation, these weapons would be returned to the Department. After meeting the above requirements, if any non-prohibited bore confiscated weapons are available, the same can be sold to the Members of Parliament on first-cum-first-serve basis, with the approval of Finance Minister in each case. The sale is subject to the condition of no resale as it is only for their personal use-safety.

(d) Between 1995 & 1998, 176 Members of Parliament and 3 other VIPs were authorised and purchased guns including revolvers and pistols from the Customs Department.

(e) The weapons sold to the VIPs are with the specific condition of no resale. There is no information with the Govt. of any resale having been effected by any purchaser.

#### **Pilferage of Customs Goods**

748. SHRI CHHATTRA PAL SINGH: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the smuggling and pilferage of customs goods from the Custom Bonded area such as Inland Container Depot and Container Freight Station of Container Corporation of India is rampant;

The original reply by the Minister of State in the Ministry of Finance (Banking, Revenue and Insurance) (Shri Kadambur M.R. Janarthanan) reads as follows:

“(a) 93 Nos. of Guns (including pistols, revolvers, rifles & air guns) are reported to have been seized by the Officers of the Customs Department during April, 1995 to December, 1998. During the said period, 179 Guns (including pistols, revolvers & rifles) have been disposed of.”

(b) whether there is any nexus between CONCOR official and criminal;

(c) if so, whether Customs Authorities has proved and imposed penalties over CONCOR official for the charges of smuggling and pilferages under the Customs Act;

(d) if so, the number of such proved cases and action taken against the CONCOR officials; and

(e) the total amount of Duty and Penalties raised against CONCOR by customs and whether the amount has been deposited by CONCOR?

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 (e) The reports available do not indicate any such rampant smuggling or pilferage of customs goods from the Customs Bonded Area, such as Inland Container depot and Container Freight Stations, of Container Corporation of India. As per reports available, 12 cases of pilferage of customs goods involving customs duty amounting to Rs. 18.02 lakhs for the period August '96 to February '99 have been booked by Delhi Customs, in which demands have been issued to Container Corporation of India — the Custodian of ICD at Delhi. Out of these 12 cases, demands of Rs. 3.60 lakhs have already been confirmed in 3 cases and recovery proceedings are underway. Other 9 cases are under process of adjudication. Further, in one case relating to ICD, Bangalore, an agent of CONCOR Bangalore, was *prima-facie*, found involved in an export fraud involving substitution of Raw Silk Sarees of mulberry silk of declared value Rs. 31.36 lakhs stuffed in one container cleared from ICD for transshipment to Chennai for final export. An offence case has been registered against the Exporter and the Agent of M/s. CONCOR, and Show Cause Notices have been issued to them, which are pending adjudication.

#### **Writing-off the Loss of IISCO**

749. SHRIMATI GEETA MUKHERJEE:  
SHRI K. PARYMOHAN:  
SHRI AJAY CHAKRABORTY:  
SHRI HANNAN MQLLAH:

Will the Minister of STEEL AND MINES be pleased to state: