

there will be a substantial increase in the targets for construction of houses for the poor and deprived to the extent of 7 lakhs houses per year in the urban areas of the country. The Scheme will also cover the persons belonging to poor and deprived category. National Housing Bank have reported that the details of housing loans under priority sector viz. housing loans up to Rs. 5 lakhs disbursed by banks in Gujarat State during the years ended June, 1996 and June, 1997 as provided by Reserve Bank of India is as given below:

Year ended	No. of Accounts	Amount (Rs. in 1000)
For the year ended June, 1996	693	1,13,972
For the year ended June, 1997	1974	2,36,686

Prices of Gold

797. SHRI BALASAHEB VIKHE PATIL: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether attention of the Government has been drawn to the news-item captioned "Gold premium at 10%" appearing in the 'Business Standard' dated February 2, 1999;

(b) if so, whether the gap between international and domestic gold prices has widened to 10 per cent against around two per cent over the past few months and that this would encourage smuggling; and

(c) if so, the action the Government propose to take to remove this gap and to prevent smuggling?

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) A news item captioned "Gold premium at 10%" had appeared in the *Business Standard* dated 1.2.99. There

has been an increase in the gap between the international price and domestic price of gold approximately to the extent of increase in the rate of duty. Government does not perceive any risk of increased smuggling as a result of the increase in duty rate. However, the field formations have been alerted to maintain strict vigil against any spurt in smuggling activities.

Export of Marine Products

798. SHRI RAVI SITARAM NAIK:
SHRI RAMSHETH THAKUR:

Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the export of marine products and sea food has declined;

(b) if so, the details thereof during each of the last three years, till date, State-wise;

(c) the details of the countries in which export has been increased; and

(d) the steps taken by the Government to boost the export of marine goods?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE): (a) and (b) During the year 1996-97 and 1997-98 there has been an increase in the export of marine products both in quantity and value terms. However, during the current year starting from 1st April 1998 to 31st January 1999, there has been some decline in exports in quantity and in US dollar value terms as compared to the same period of the preceding year. Following are the details of exports of marine products from each of the States based on the exports effected through the various ports/airports located in their respective jurisdictions, during each of the last three years and during the current year from 1st April 1998 to 31st January 1999:—

Q: Quantity in Metric Tons

\$: Value in Million US Dollars

State		1995-96	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99 April 98-Jan. 99
i. Gujarat	Q	82558	123213	125561	55622
	\$	125.49	159.61	175.96	72.46
ii. Maharashtra	Q	55357	71660	78957	52639
	\$	153.77	144.96	175.49	124.32
iii. Goa	Q	13938	13603	11108	5539
	\$	22.34	17.73	14.88	6.40
iv. Karnataka	Q	137	1716	1970	2011
	\$	3.66	3.48	1.56	3.91
v. Kerala	Q	78896	92288	89366	58003
	\$	272.03	261.89	261.53	159.35
vi. Tamil Nadu	Q	31330	40878	41052	38527
	\$	228.31	300.88	336.57	291.22
vii. Andhra Pradesh	Q	20017	18560	23314	18825
	\$	193.29	146.06	213.78	188.62
viii. West Bengal	Q	14044	16281	14469	12168
	\$	112.57	118.22	116.05	96.51
ix. Delhi	Q	—	—	21	—
	\$	—	—	0.04	—
Total	Q	296277	378199	385818	243334
	\$	1111.46	1152.83	1295.86	942.79

Source: Marine Products Export Development Authority.

(c) Exports of marine products to Japan have shown an increasing trend from the year 1996-97 onwards but for a downward trend both in terms of quantity and value in US dollar terms in the current year (from 1st April 1998 to 31st January 1999). The exports of USA have also shown a positive growth trend from the year 1996-97 onwards but for a slight reduction in value in dollar terms during the current year from 1st April 1998 to 31st January 1999. After showing a positive growth trend in the year 1995-96 the exports to the European Union declined in the year 1996-97 and 1997-98 but have shown a growth in exports both in quantity and value terms during the period 1st April 1998 to 31st January 1999. The exports to South East Asia also increased during the year 1996-97 and 1997-98 but have declined during the period 1st April 1998 to 31st January 1999. Exports to middle East countries have shown an increasing trend since the beginning of the year 1997-98.

(d) The major steps taken by the Government to boost of export of fish and fishery products from India are as follows:—

1. The threshold limit for zero duty under Export Promotion Capital Goods (EPCG) Scheme has been reduced from the earlier Rs. 20 crore to Rs. 1 crore for the import of essential machinery and equipment by the fishery product processing units so as to facilitate upgradation and modernisation of units.
2. The Duty Entitlement Pass Book (DEPB) rates for the export of fish and fishery products have been notified.
3. With a view to encourage conformance to high standards and quality, the units having a Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP) based Quality Assurance System, have been given entitlement of additional 5% SIL (Special Import Licence).
4. The Government have introduced a new interest subsidy scheme subsidising upto a maximum of 7% of interest over and above a base rate of 7% on the loans taken by the processing units from the financial institutions/banks for the purpose of modernising/upgrading their units.
5. Implementation of various subsidy schemes through Marine Products Export Development Authority (MPEDA) for helping the fishery product processing units to produce quality fish and fishery products for exports namely

schemes for the establishment of captive, peeling sheds, cold storages, mini laboratories, generator sets, flake/chip/tube ice making machines, individual quick freezing (IQF) units and procurement of refrigerated trucks, equipment and machinery for modernisation and for export of value added products etc.

6. Various training programmes have been got conducted by MPEDA and Export Inspection Council on the implementation of HACCP system and for maintaining high standards of food hygiene and safety at all stages of processing.
7. With a view to increase the availability of shrimps for exports, MPEDA has been extending capital subsidies for the development of new aquaculture farms and shrimp hatcheries. Necessary guidance and training is also being provided to aquaculture farmers on scientific methods for sustainable eco-friendly aquaculture for increased production of disease free shrimps.

Dearness Allowance

799. SHRI K.H. MUNIYAPPA: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the employees of the Union Government have become eligible for one more instalment of Dearness Allowance due to steep increase in the prices of almost all the commodities, especially the essential commodities;

(b) if so, the per cent of increase in the D.A. that is due for the employees from January, 1999;

(c) whether the Government propose to sanction the same; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (SHRI YASHWANT SINHA): (a) to (d) Dearness Allowance to Central Government employees is revised twice a year from 1st January and 1st July payable with the salary for the months of March and September respectively. The instalment due from 1st January normally becomes payable with the salary for the month of March, paid in April and the decision to revise the rates of DA with effect from 1.1.99 will be taken well before it becomes payable.