

completely dependent on tourism. There are resources in our country from tourism point of view, but tourism is not in a very healthy state in our country.

[English]

MR. SPEAKER: Shri Shastri, I will disallow your supplementary. Please put a brief question.

[Translation]

DR. BIZAY SONKAR SHASTRI: We have ample resources and we can promote tourism in a way so as to help our economy to the maximum extent. I would like to know from the hon. Minister as to what is being done by the Govt. to promote tourism. This is one part of my question.

Secondly, I would like to know whether the development of tourism does include other forms of tourism viz. common tourism, tourism connected with religious places, health academic etc. I would like to know whether the Govt. is thinking in this direction?

[English]

MR. SPEAKER: Mr. Minister, will you reply?

SHRI OMAK APANG: Sir, again this is not connected with my question. Anyhow I would like to answer...(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER: If it is not connected to the main question and even though you are going to reply, the Chair does not permit you, Please take your seat.

...(Interruptions)

Strike by Officials of I.T. , Central Excise and Customs

*284. SHRI MOHAN SINGH:
SHRI A. GANESHAMURTHI:

Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the officials of Income Tax, Central Excise and Customs went on strike recently;

(b) if so, the demand raised by them;

(c) whether the Government are considering their demands;

(d) if so, the outcome thereof; and

(e) the loss incurred by the Government due to the strike?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (SHRI YASHWANT SINHA): (a) Sir, Groups 'B' and 'C' officers of the Income Tax, Central Excise and Customs were on strike from 10th November, 1998 to 12th November, 1998.

(b) The employees were demanding higher pay scales and improvement in some of the service conditions.

(c) Yes, Sir.

(d) No final decision has been arrived at.

(e) Nil.

[Translation]

SHRI MOHAN SINGH: Mr. Speaker, Sir, Group "B" and Group "C" officers of the Income Tax, Central Excise and Customs were on three day strike and yet the Government suffered no loss, as per the reply given in the part (c) by hon. Minister it somehow sounds incredible. I would like to ask the hon. Minister as to how it is possible that there was no loss to the Government even after all the officers of the said revenue earning departments were on three day strike. The news papers reports say that railway tickets of Thailand, Singapore were selling in black; people were in a hurry to bring items to India quickly without paying income tax, Central Excise tax and customs duties. However, the hon. Minister is saying that the Govt. of India did not incur any loss during these three days of strike. How is it possible? I would like to know from the hon. Minister as to how much loss was suffered by the Govt. of India in terms of income tax, central excise and customs duties due to the strike of officers belonging to these departments.

SHRI YASHWANT SINHA: Mr. Speaker, Sir, as I have stated in my reply that only Group "B" and "C" officers of those departments were on three days strike, but we had made alternative arrangements. Officers of other groups were deputed on harbours and airports. They carried on work during those three days. How can I give any statement about loss merely on the basis of the fact that some news-papers have published reports about such loss?

SHRI MOHAN SINGH: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I would like to know as to what are the demands of the officers of

those departments and what is the response of the Govt. towards these demands. The hon. Minister says that he has not come to any definite and final conclusion. They had also planned a strike during July in connection with their demands but at that time the hon. Minister had assured them that final decision would be taken regarding their demands. I would like to know the time by when a final decision would be taken by the Govt. so that there is no strike in future.

SHRI YASHWANT SINHA: Mr. Speaker, Sir, through you I would like to convey to the hon. Member that we are also concerned and we do not want that our employees and officers go on strike unnecessarily. That is why when I came to know about holding a strike in July, I invited those groups of employees and talked to them and subsequently they decided not to go on strike. Their demands are related to their pay. There were several anomalies following the recommendations of the Fifth Pay Commission Report. In that very connection several groups of officers and employees are coming forward with their demands. I had constituted a high level Committee to consider their demands. That Committee has also submitted its report. The recommendations of the Committee are under the consideration of the Govt. and on date I am not in a position to divulge out any thing simply because a final decision is taken by the Govt. only after going through such details as to how many departments are concerned with it and what would be the impact of that decision on other groups of employees. At the moment I am not in a position to set any deadline.

[English]

SHRI S. JAIPAL REDDY: Sir, the hon. Finance Minister was good enough to inform us that a High-Powered Committee was constituted to look into their grievances and that Committee had already submitted its recommendations. Then, why should there be any further delay or difficulty in considering the recommendations of the High-Powered Committee? It is reasonable to assume that the High-Powered Committee would have taken the possible cascading effect on other officers into consideration before making those recommendations.

SHRI YASHWANT SINHA: The High-Powered Committee, which I had constituted, comprised of the Chairmen of the two Boards, and Members in-charge of Personnel in these Boards. This was the High-Powered Committee which had given its recommendations. The matter was there. After being considered in the Department of Revenue, they had made some suggestions. After my approval, it was referred to the Department of Expenditure. It is in the Department of

Expenditure that the matter is under examination. Sir, all of us are aware of this. I am sure, the hon. Member, who has been a part of the Government at one time, is fully aware of this. They are the ones who had taken the decision with regard to the implementation of the Fifth Pay Commission's recommendations. The whole system of Government of India is such that any decision taken in respect of anyone category has its impact on various other categories. Since it was a Committee of two Boards, they would look at it from their point of view, as they have done. It is now for the Department of Expenditure, the Department of Personnel, and the Government as a whole to take a holistic view, see how much we can accommodate, and how much we cannot accommodate.

DR. SUBRAMANIAN SWAMY: The hon. Minister just now informed the House that one of the grievances was regarding the working conditions of the officials of the Income-tax Department. I would like to know from the hon. Minister, whether it is a fact that one of the grievances is the victimised transfers done at the instance of the hon. Finance Minister himself where political questions come? For example, in the case of Shri Romesh Sharma, the Commissioner of Income-Tax was transferred on the orders of the hon. Finance Minister. I want to know whether the victimised transfers is one of the reasons why there is dissatisfaction among the officials.

SHRI YASHWANT SINHA: While denying whatever has been said in the nature of allegation, with all the force at my command, I will give the simple answer to this question is 'No'.

SHRI MADHUKAR SIRPOTDAR: Mr. Speaker, Sir, regarding the implementation of the recommendations of the Fifth Pay Commission, there are a number of anomalies and in order to take into account all these anomalies, and to the extent possible, to effect some corrective measures, the Government has established Anomalies Committee. Despite having this position, a number of employees in various departments of the Ministry of Finance are very much dissatisfied. Is there any time bound programme to, at least, inform those people that their matter has been examined by the Anomalies Committee and thereafter the decision will be taken before the next Budget.?

SHRI YASHWANT SINHA: Sir, the hon. Member is quite right in saying that we have a system, a mechanism and whenever any demands are made in the light of the decisions taken about the implementation of the recommendations of the Fifth Pay Commission, the matter is referred to the Committee and the Committee examines the whole thing. Then, the Government takes a decision

in these matters. There is no time-limit because the demands arise from time to time. Since there is no time-limit for the demands to arise, it is difficult to put a time-limit on the solutions to these demands but once the solutions are arrived at, the decisions are conveyed to the interested parties.

[Translation]

SHRI VIJAY GOEL: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I would like to request the hon. Finance Minister to extend the date of SAMADHAN because there has been a shortage of time due to strike and festivals. If you extend the time beyond 31st December the Govt. will get more tax...*(Interruptions)* Let the Finance Minister assure that he would consider this..*(Interruptions)*

SHRI ASHOK PRADHAN: What the hon. Member has said is very important and urgent..*(Interruptions)*

SHRI VIJAY GOEL: This is the demand of traders. This will benefit the Govt. It would be very good if the hon. Minister gives some assurance..*(Interruptions)*. The whole House is unanimous..*(Interruptions)*. Please get it done..*(Interruptions)*

[English]

SHRI YASHWANT SINHA: It is a suggestion for action and I will certainly take note of the feelings of the hon. Members.

[Translation]

SHRI MOHAN SINGH: If the date is extended, nobody will deposit any amount till 31st of the month.

[English]

Insurance Scheme for Sick SSIs

*285. DR. VALLABHBHAI KATHIRIA:
SHRI RAM TAHAL CHAUDHARY:

Will the Minister of INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government propose to launch Comprehensive Insurance Scheme for the sick and unviable SSI units in the country, particularly in Gujarat;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor?

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

(b) Does not arise.

(c) Sick SSI units are declared unviable only after all possible efforts for their revival have failed. Therefore, question of launching an insurance scheme for revival of such unviable sick units does not arise. Further, commercial risks of industrial units turning sick or unprofitable are not considered as pure risks for insurance. In view of this, Government has no plan to launch any insurance scheme for revival of even potentially viable sick SSI units.

As regards revival of potentially viable sick units, Government has taken various measures for their revival. These include reduced rate of interest for rehabilitation, prompt viability studies/nursing programmes of identified sick units, setting up of cells at important regional centres and Head Offices of Banks to deal with sick industrial units and provision of expert staff, including technical personnel to look into technical aspects. State Level Inter-Institutional Committees (SLIICs) exist under the Chairmanship of Secretary (Industries) of the State Governments for revival of sick units.

[Translation]

DR. VALLABHBHAI KATHIRIA: Mr. Speaker, Sir, this question came up before the House because of the inroads of the multinational companies which recently entered into this country due to the policy of globalisation. In last five years nearabout 2 lakhs units of SSI (Small Scale Industry) have been closed. Will the Minister of Industries confirm it that nearabout 2 lakh units of small scale industries have been closed in last five years? Will he also mention the number of workers got unemployed because of the closure of these industries and also the steps taken by the Government for their revival?

SHRI SIKANDAR BAKHT: Hon'ble Member has very rightly said that the number of sick units of SSI till March, 1998, was 2,20,594, but in 1997 this number was a bit higher at 2,35,042. He is very much right in saying this also that workers are going through unemployment, but we are making efforts to help the revival of the sick units as much as possible.

DR. VALLABHBHAI KATHIRIA: Hon'ble Minister has correctly stated it that the number of sick units is 2,35,000, but some more units are on the verge of closure because