

(a) whether most of the State Financial Corporations in the country have been repaying the principal and interest on the money borrowed from SIDBI/IDBI regularly;

(b) if not, the reasons therefor;

(c) whether these SFCs are also paying penal and additional interest to SIDBI and IDBI since years;

(d) if so, the SFC wise quantum of penal and additional interest received by SIDBI/IDBI during the last three years; and

(e) the steps taken by the Government to ensure that the weak SFCs resources are supplemented by SIDBI/IDBI at least to the extent of penal/additional interest collected by them over years, pending a final decision on financial restructuring of SFCs?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (SHRI YASHWANT SINHA) : (a) to (e) The information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House to the extent available.

Trade with China

3859. SHRI VILAS MUTTEMWAR : Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether a fifteen member delegation from China visited India in the month of March, 1999 to have a thorough discussion with the Indian Government to improve trade between the two countries;

(b) if so, whether an agreement between the two countries have been reached; and

(c) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMA-KRISHNA HEGDE) : (a) No fifteen member delegation from China has visited India in March, 1999 for discussions with the Government to improve trade between the two countries. However, trade delegations are frequently exchanged between China and India for the purpose of discussions on specific trade matters.

(b) and (c) Does not arise.

Employees of State Financial Corporation

3860. SHRI RAMA CHANDRA MALLICK : Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government propose to equate the status of employees of the State Financial Corporations with that of other Commercial Banks as they both discharge the same functions; and

(b) if so, the steps taken in the matter so far?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (SHRI YASHWANT

SINHA) : (a) No, Sir. With a view to providing greater functional autonomy and operational flexibility to the State Financial Corporations (SFCs), comprehensive amendments to the State Financial Corporations Act, 1951 however, are under consideration.

(b) Does not arise.

Trade with Pakistan

3861. SHRI BALASAHEB VIKHE PATIL : Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) has identified eight sectors with considerable potential for trade with Pakistan, as reported in the news-item captioned "Remove trade curbs, urges FICCI" which appeared in "The Business Standard" dated February 23, 1999;

(b) if so, the details of the matter reported therein; and

(c) the steps proposed to be taken by the Government to start trade with Pakistan in these sectors?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMA-KRISHNA HEGDE) : (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. In a study entitled "Trade and Economic Cooperation between India and Pakistan", FICCI has identified the following eight specific sectors with potential for bilateral trade; engineering industry, textile machinery, textiles, automobiles, tyres chemical items, plastic products and tea.

(c) Trade between India and Pakistan is hindered by Pakistan's restrictive Trade Policy towards India. While India has granted Most Favoured Nation (MFN) status to Pakistan, they are yet to extend this facility to us. Pakistan currently allows import of 594 items from India, which includes some of the items identified in the FICCI Study and trade is already taking place in such items. However, scope for further increase in bilateral trade depends on Pakistan liberalising its Trade Policy towards India. Government has taken up with the Pakistan Government to accord MFN status to India from time to time. However, their restrictive Trade Policy towards India continues to be in force.

[Translation]

Testing of Gold Ornaments

3862. SHRI MAHESH KANODIA :

DR. ASHOK PATEL :

Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government have formulated any scheme for testing and certification of quality of gold ornaments;