

(d) and (e) The Disinvestment Commission has so far made specific recommendations in respect of 45 PSUs. These recommendations are processed in consultation with the Administrative Ministries for obtaining the Government decision in such recommendations. The actual implementation is done keeping in view the market conditions, as a result of which sometimes the delays occur.

Production of Rubber

3872. SHRI P. SANKARAN : Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state :

(a) the present production of natural rubber in the country and especially in Kerala;

(b) whether the Government are aware that even the bench price on rubber has not protected the interests of rubber growers;

(c) whether the Government are aware that the prevailing situation is likely to lead to complete annihilation in the rubber cultivation; and

(d) if so, the remedial measures are being taken to save this sector?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMA-KRISHNA HEGDE) : (a) During 1997-98, the production of rubber in the country was 5.84 lakh tonnes out of which 5.42 lakh tonnes was produced in Kerala State. The production of rubber during 1998-99 in the country is estimated at 6.10 lakh tonnes.

(b) to (d) The decline in prices of Natural Rubber is due to industrial recession. In order to protect the interests of the rubber growers, Govt. of India have taken a number of remedial measures besides fixing the Benchmark Price. These measures are:

- (i) market intervention operation through STC to procure rubber on Govt. Account;
- (ii) to sell the procured rubber to the holders of Advance Licence;
- (iii) suspension of import of rubber through Advance Licence;
- (iv) prescribing a minimum c.i.f. value ceiling on import of used/retreaded tyres; and
- (v) revision of Benchmark Price of Natural Rubber.

Further, the situation in this sector is being monitored on a regular basis.

Import of Coal

3873. SHRI TATHAGATA SATPATHY:

SHRI P.S. GADHAVI:

Will the Minister of COAL be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government have any data about the Coal imported annually by various sectors;

(b) if so, the total quantum of Coal imported annually by them, sector-wise, indicating the grades of coal imported so far and the per tonne cost of such coal;

(c) whether the production cost of that coal is much higher in India;

(d) if so, the details thereof and the steps taken to reduce the production cost;

(e) whether the coal industry is badly hit by huge quantity of cheaper coal imports made by various sectors;

(f) if so, the details thereof;

(g) whether the Coal India Limited has prepared a plan to face the challenges of imported coal in Indian market and sluggish coal demand from power and steel sector;

(h) if so, details thereof; and

(i) the details of steps being taken/proposed to be taken to discourage the cheaper coal imports and ensure healthy growth of coal industry and also to improve the demand of indigenous coal in power, steel, cement and fertilizers sector?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COAL (SHRI DILIP RAY) : (a) and (b) Since coal is under open general licence, this Ministry does not monitor the import of coal. However, the total quantity of coal imported in the country during the last three years as per available information with Ministry of Coal is as under :

Year	Import (In million tonnes)			Value
	Coking	Non-Coking	Total	
1995-96	9.37	3.14	12.51	US\$925.6 million
1996-97	9.78	4.53	14.31	Rs. 3532.00 crores (Approx)
1997-98	10.65	6.56	17.21	Rs. 4422.30 crores (Approx)

The sector wise break-up of imported coal, grades and cost of imported coal per tonne is not available in the Ministry.

(c) and (d) The cost of domestic coal at pitheads is probably the lowest in the World. However, the cost to the consumer is higher owing to rail freight and high level of royalty and other levies on domestic coal as compared to imported coal.

(e) to (i) Yes, Sir. Domestic coal is higher price than