

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COAL (SHRI DILIP RAY) : (a) No, Sir.

(b) Since the matter of celebration of golden jubilee of Official Language is a national policy issue, the Ministry of Home Affairs, Department of Official Language, which is the Nodal Department, will need to take a decision in the matter. The instructions/guidelines issued in this regard by the Department of Official Language will be implemented fully by the Ministry of Coal, too.

[English]

Patent of Basmati by Texan Company

3883. SHRI M. RAJAI AH : Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government have not yet build up its Basmati patent case against the US patent to the texan Company; and

(b) the steps proposed to be taken to file the case early in the US and subsequently to the disputes settlement body of WTO?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE) : (a) and (b) The exercise is on to assess whether the grant of patent on "novel basmati rice lines" and grains granted by the United States Patent Office can be challenged. Government have set up an Inter-Ministerial Committee to examine the matter. The revocation of the patent would have to be carried out under the US Patents and Trademarks Law. Therefore, raising the matter before the WTO and other international fora does not arise.

Trade Relations with Taiwan

3884. SHRI ANNASAHEB M. K. PATIL : Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government have received any proposal from Government to Taiwan to expand trade relation with India;

(b) if so, the details thereof and the steps proposed to be taken by the Government in this regard;

(c) the volume of trade made between the two countries during the last three years;

(d) whether new areas have been indentified for expanding trade relation between both the countries; and

(e) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE) : (a) and (b) Government of India does not maintain official or diplomatic relations with the "Govern-

ment of Taiwan" (Republic of China). However, the Government facilitates non-official trade, economic and cultural contacts to enhance trade, investment and tourism.

(c) The volume of trade between the two countries during the last three years is given below :

	(Rupees in crores)			
	1995-96	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99 (Apr.-Jan)
Exports to Taiwan	861.44	1504.11	1443.74	1073.53
Imports from Taiwan	1277.21	1504.48	1313.51	3704.71

(Source : DGCI&S)

(d) and (e) New areas for expanding trade are regularly being identified by Business Cooperation Committees of both the countries. Some of the measures of expanding the existing level of trade ties include regular exchange of delegations, participation in trade fairs and establishment of liaison officers for trade and commercial matters.

[Translation]

PAN

3885. SHRI PANKAJ CHOUDHARY :

SHRI RAJENDRA AGNIHOTRI :

Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) the number of Persons provided Permanent Account Number (PAN) in the country so far;

(b) whether the Government have received complaints regarding non-issuance of delayed issuance of PAN;

(c) if so, the reasons therefor;

(d) whether the Government have taken any action to provide PAN at the earliest; and

(e) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (SHRI YASHWANT SINHA) : (a) to (e) As against 1,70,94,507 applications for allotment of Permanent Account Number in the prescribed form received upto 28-02-1999, 1,14,75,117 Permanent Account Numbers have been allotted all over the country as on 31st March, 1999.

A substantial number of applications were received in recent months. PAN could not be allotted in a large number of cases for want of certain essential information. Deficiency letters have been issued. Allotment of PAN will be made on receipt of replies to the deficiency letters.

The work of allotment of PAN is in full swing and all out

efforts are being made for expeditious allotment of PAN to all applicants. Complaints received by the Department regarding non-issuance of PAN are Being attended to.

[English]

Assistance to Essar Steel by Financial Institutions

3886. SHRI C.D. GAMIT: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether financial institutions are being pressured to provide substantial financial assistance to Essar Steel in order to bail them out from the present crisis;

(b) whether no concrete study has been made in the affairs of the company with a view to assure safeguards for the proposed financial investments of the Financial Institutions in the company;

(c) if so, the reasons for departing from the policy guidelines set for the financial institutions in the matter of investments in the corporate sectors;

(d) whether attention of the Government has also been drawn to the news-item captioned "Government pressures FIs on steel company bailouts" appearing in "The Indian Express" dated January 15, 1999;

(e) if so, the facts of the matter reported in the news paper and the reasons for imposing compulsions on financial institutions; and

(f) the steps the Government propose to take to clear the depressing impression on the minds of investors including financial institutions?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (SHRI YASHWANT SINHA) : (a) No, Sir. The sanction of financial assistance or restructuring of loans is decided by the financial institutions concerned based on their considered commercial judgement and RBI guidelines on the subject.

(b) and (c) Financial Institutions have reported that in the context of problems being faced by the steel industry, large steel projects (including Essar Steel) which are at advance stage of implementation have been reviewed by them. FIs have considered it essential that the long term viability of these projects be reassessed and need based assistance be provided to them to ensure early completion of projects if the projects were found viable. Also that the need-based reliefs and assistance be provided to assisted steel projects, subject to necessary safeguards, including inter-alia strict financial discipline in the part of promoters, close control over end use of funds, tighter norms for financing and adherence to guidelines laid down by RBI regarding asset classification and income recognition.

(d) Yes, Sir.

(e) and (f) No compulsions are imposed on financial in-

stitutions and sanction of financial assistance is decided in accordance with procedure stated at (a) above.

[Translation]

Discount Schemes on Tin Plates

3887. PROF. RITA VERMA: Will the Minister of STEEL AND MINES be pleased to state :

(a) whether discount scheme for the sale of tin plates by Steel Authority of India were launched and if so, when and the period thereof;

(b) the details of schemes launched during 1997-98 and 1998-99;

(c) the reason of launching the discount schemes; and

(d) the amount of discount given on the sale of tin plates and the market price of tin plates during that period alongwith the discount schemes, separately?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF STEEL AND MINES (SHRI RAMESH BAIS) : (a) to (d) Steel Authority of India Limited (SAIL) offers marketing incentives in the form of rebates/other commercial terms to improve the sales of its products in a competitive market. These schemes are generally linked with quantity. The extent of incentive depends on several factors such as market conditions, overall demand, availability, stock situation, competitor's activities, seasonality and other local factors etc. However, other details are commercially sensitive in nature, therefore, it may not be possible to reveal them.

[English]

Floor Price for Rubber

3888. SHRI SURESH KURUP : Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government are aware that the rubber growers have been constantly demanding for fixation of floor price for rubber; and

(b) if so, the reaction of the Government thereto?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMA-KRISHNA HEGDE) : (a) and (b) Price of Rubber is basically determined by demand and supply factors. Since Government of India is taking all possible measures to help the rubber growers to get remunerative price for their produce, fixation of floor price of rubber is not warranted.

Comparison of FDI Inflow

3889. SHRI NADENDLA BHASKARA RAO : Will the Minister of INDUSTRY be pleased to state :