

Trade Relations with South Eastern Asian Countries

2617. SHRI P.R. KYNDIAH : Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government are seized of the importance of land frontier trade for the North-Eastern region as a catalyst for the development of exportable commodities like coal, minerals and power;

(b) if so, whether the Government propose to establish trade relations with South-Eastern Asian countries as this will strengthen the geographic and historical ties that exist between the South-Eastern Asian countries and the North-Eastern States of India; and

(c) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE) : (a) to (c) Yes, Sir, Recognising the importance of border trade from the North-Eastern region, following projects have been sanctioned under the Critical Infrastructure Balance Scheme :

- (i) Construction of a composite building for trade with Myanmar at Zokhawther, Mizoram; The entire contribution of Central Government i.e., Rs. 2.00 crores, under CIB Scheme has been released to Border Roads Organisation, who are implementing the project.
- (ii) Strengthening of Surma, Trunk road from Karimganj to Sutarkhandi on the Indo-Bangladesh Border: The total cost of the project is Rs. 11.00 crores and the contribution from the CIB Scheme is Rs. 5.50 crores.
- (iii) Installation of weighbridges at Raghna and Akhaura Land Customs Stations : Rs. 27 lakhs have been released under the critical Infrastructure Balance Scheme for the project.
- (iv) Improvement of road from Fire Station Chaumuhani to Akhaura checkpoint in Tripura at a total cost of Rs. 82.00 lakhs. Contribution from the CIB Scheme is 41.00 lakhs, which has been released to the State Government.

India has signed Border Trade Agreement with Myanmar. Besides, India has trade agreement with Thailand and Indonesia and is maintaining friendly and cordial trade relations with the countries in South East Asian region.

India is also an active member of BIMSTEC which is a sub-regional initiative involving India, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Bangladesh and Myanmar. The objectives of this grouping include cooperation in areas such as trade, investment, transportation, infrastructure, agriculture, natural resources etc.

Export of Handicraft Items

2618. SHRI K.P. MUNUSAMY : Will the Minister of TEXTILES be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is proposed to increase the Southern India's share in handicrafts exports;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) the value of exports of handicrafts during the last three years, year-wise; and

(d) the steps taken to boost the exports of handicrafts?

THE MINISTER OF TEXTILES (SHRI KASHIRAM RANA) : (a) and (b) To increase the share of handicrafts exports from Southern India the steps taken include: training; organisation of workshops on packaging, export marketing and documentation and designing; setting up of wood seasoning plant at Thiruvananthapuram and participation of handicrafts exporters from South India in Indian Handicrafts and Gifts Fair (Autumn and Spring) held at New Delhi every year.

(c) The exports of handicrafts during 1995-96, 1996-97 and 1997-98 has been to the tune of Rs. 4621.64 crores, Rs. 5594.86 crores and Rs. 6457.69 crores respectively.

(d) The steps taken to boost the exports of handicrafts include: organisation of workshops on design development, export marketing, packaging etc.; sponsoring of sales-cum-study teams abroad; participation in various international fairs; publicity campaign and organisation of Indian Handicrafts and Gifts Fairs (Autumn and Spring) annually at New Delhi.

[Translation]

Waiving off Loans of Weavers

2619. SHRI AJIT JOGI : Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state :

(a) the State-wise number of weavers of powerlooms and the poor SCs/STs whose loans have been waived off during the last two years and current year;

(b) whether the Government propose to waive off the loans of the people who are living below poverty line; and

(c) if so, the time by which their loans are likely to be waived off?

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