

*[English]***Constitution of Tourism Development Board**

3385. SHRI A. GANESHAMURTHI: Will the Minister of TOURISM be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government are considering to constitute a Tourism Development Board for Development of tourism;

(b) if so, the time by which the Board will be constituted;

(c) whether the representatives from 5 Star Hotels, Tourism Department, States, Cultural Organizations, politicians be included on the Board; and

(d) how the expenditure of the Board will be met?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF TOURISM (SHRI OMAK APANG): (a) and (b) The Government has decided to reconstitute the Board of Tourism Industry and Trade as National Tourism Advisory Council.

(c) The members of the Council include representatives of all the State Governments and the industry associations. It also includes some members of the Parliament and experts.

(d) The expenditure of the council will be met by the Ministry of Tourism.

Decrease in Foreign Tourists

3386. SHRI ASHOK NAMDEORAO MOHOL: Will the Minister of TOURISM be pleased to state:

(a) whether there has been any decrease in the number of foreign tourists during the first six months of 1998 in comparison with same period during 1997;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor;

(c) the extent of loss of foreign exchange suffered due to such decrease; and

(d) the steps taken to boost the tourism in the country to earn more foreign exchange?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF TOURISM (SHRI OMAK APANG): (a) and (b) The tourist traffic during the first six months of the year 1998 registered a positive growth of 1.3% as compared to corresponding period of the previous year. The slow growth is primarily due to economic crisis in South East Asian countries, general economic recession, fall in business tourists, etc.

(c) The estimated foreign exchange earning from tourism during the first eleven months of the year is Rs. 10369 crores as compared to Rs. 9807 crores during the corresponding period of the previous year.

(d) Steps taken to boost tourism in the country include improvement of infrastructural facilities for tourism, development of tourist attractions, strengthening of publicity and promotional efforts, human resource development & encouraging private investment, special events like Buddha Mahotsav, Visit India Year, etc.

Protective Law under WTO

3387. SHRI K. P. MOHAN: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the European Union and the U.S. Trade Department are using protective laws under the WTO agreement against Indian exports; and

(b) if so, the action taken by the Government with the European Union and the United States to protect the interest of Indian exports?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE): (a) and (b) The WTO agreements and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) do not allow restrictions on international trade, except under certain exceptional provisions of the GATT. Even measures falling under such provisions cannot be applied in an arbitrary or discriminatory manner or as disguised restrictions on international trade.

Whenever, protectionist measures taken by other WTO Members, including the European Union and the US come to light, Government takes appropriate action. Recently, for example, trade restrictions imposed by another WTO Member for environmental purposes were successfully challenged by India under the WTO Dispute Settlement Mechanism.