d.   In case the effective drugs for prevention and treatment of diseases and measures for promoting Health, are not available under ISM & H, the standard drug regimens under the national programmes be allowed to be used by the practitioners of ISM & H. If there are legal hurdles, the legislation be suitably amended.

PM's Tour to North-East

990. SHRI SUSHIL KUMAR SHINDE : Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state;

(a)   whether the Prime Minister offered to hold talks with North East Insurgents not only within the parameters of the Constitution of India, but also to accommodate their demands by way of bringing amendments in the Constitution during his North-East tour in April this year; and

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

THE MINISTER OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI L.K. ADVANI) : (a) and (b) The Prime Minister had, during his visit to Assam in April, extended and invitation to insurgent groups to come forward and hold talks to bring about peace in the region. The Prime Minister in his Press Statement at Guwahati on 15th April, 1998 had stated : "To all those who have strayed from the paths of togetherness, whether in Assam or other States of the North-East, I extend an invitation. come forward; let us discuss, my Government is committed to holding talks, to a restoration of peace; let us do so within the four corners of our Constitution". The Prime Minister also stated that if necessary the Constitution could also be amended to find the solution to the problem.

Decline In Sugar Productions

991. DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY : Will the Minister of FOOD AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS be pleased to state :

(a)   whether there is a sharp dip in the world sugar prices and competition from importers could hit sugar output in future;

(b)   whether the Indian traders were taking advantage of a crash in world sugar prices and importing sugar in a large quantity;

(c)   if so, whether this could have long term implication on production;

(d)   If the whether in view of this, the Government have decided not to allow sugar imports; and

(e)   the total sugar imported so far and the steps the Government propose to take that import of sugar does not affect sugar production in the country?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FOOD AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS (SHRI SATYA PAL SINGH YADAV) : (a) to (e) World sugar prices have shown a declining trend in the last three months.

In order to monitor the import of sugar, with effect from September, 1997 Government has introduced a system of compulsory registration of import contracts with the Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority a organisation under the Ministry of Commerce. The monthly figures of registration of contracts gives an indication of the likely imports in future. In the period 1.4.97. to 28.2.98. a quantity of 2.71 lakh tonnes of sugar has been imported into the country.

In order to protect domestic sugar producers from any possible threat as a result of the declining international sugar prices, with effect from 28.4.98. Government has imposed a basic customs duty of 5% and a countervailing duty of Rs. 850 per tonne of imported sugar.

Against a monthly consumption of approximately 12 lakh tonnes of sugar in the country, the imported sugar has supplemented the domestic availability.

Visits by Union Ministers Abroad

992. SHRI P.S. GADHAVI : Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state :

(a)   the details of Union Ministers visited abroad from August to November 1997;

(b)   the purpose of each visit and its duration;

(c)   the number of persons accompanied them and the expenditure incurred on each visit; and

(d)   the details of achievements from these visits?

THE MINISTER OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI L.K. ADVANI) : (a) to (d) The information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House.

[Translation]

Grant to Alimco

993 SHRI JAGAT VIR SINGH DRONA : Will the Minister of SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT be pleased to state :

(a)   whether the production and sale of Alimco has been affected due to stopping of grant of Alimco under the 'Adip' scheme;