

Therefore, whenever there is a surplus of dairy products, exports are permitted

Opium Growers of Rajasthan

143. SHRIMATI VASUNDHARA RAJE : Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government are aware of the losses suffered by the Opium growers in Jhalawad and other districts of Rajasthan since 1994-95 due to hailstorm and other natural calamities;

(b) if so, the estimated losses, so suffered,

(c) whether the 'pattas' of some opium growers particularly small farmers have been cancelled in Jhalawad districts;

(d) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(e) the steps taken to assist the opium growers in that district for their rehabilitation ?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM) : (a) Yes, Madam.

(b) Consequent to the damage to poppy crops in Rajasthan during the crop year 1994-95, 48 villages were declared to have suffered "partial damage" and 79 villages were declared "extensively damaged" under the licensing policy for the crop year 1995-96

During the crop year 1995-96 also reports regarding damage to poppy crops were received in the State of Rajasthan but the damage was less as compared to the crop year 1994-95.

As for the crop year 1996-97, poppy crops have not matured as yet.

(c) Based on their performance during the crop year 1994-95, *pattas* of 3487 cultivators were not renewed during the crop year 1995-96 in Jhalawad District as the said cultivators failed to tender the prescribed Minimum Qualifying Yield for licence.

While determining the eligibility for licence the size of an individual cultivator's holding is no criterion.

In the crop year 1996-97 on licence for poppy cultivation has been cancelled on account of mere low yield.

(d) As stated in para 'c' above the concerned cultivators in District Jhalawad lost their licences in view of their failure to tender the prescribed Minimum Qualifying Yield of 46 kgs. or 30 kgs/hectare as the case may be for the crop year 1995-96. The Minimum Qualifying Yield for the said crop year was fixed at 46 kgs./ hectare whereas a lower Minimum Qualifying Yield of 30 kgs./hectare was fixed for villages declared to have suffered damage.

(e) No rehabilitation by way of grant of licence beyond the provisions of the Opium Licensing Policy is provided for by the Central Government since it would encourage leakage of opium into illicit channels.

Monetary compensation if any, can be provided for, by the concerned State Governments.

Export of Pearls

144. SHRI RAJENDRA AGNIHOTRI : Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state :

(a) the total value of Pearls exported during each of the last three years;

(b) whether the Government have formulated any scheme for the development of this industry with a view to increase the export,

(c) if so, the details thereof; and

(d) if not, the reasons therefor ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI BOLLA BULLI RAMAIAH) : (a) The total value of Pearls exported during the last three years is as follows :

(Value in US \$ Million)

Item	93-94	94-95	95-96
Pearls	3.73	4.95	5.45

Source : DGCI&S

(b) and (c) In order to provide incentive for export of pearls, replenishment licences are issued at the rate of 65% of the FOB value of pearls (real ore/cultured) to the exporters. The Government also has taken a number of steps to boost exports of pearls which include fine tuning of Exim Policy to ensure easy availability of raw materials at internationally competitive prices and encouragement to exporters to participate in international fairs/exhibition-cum-sale for promotion of Indian jewellery

(d) Does not arise.

Foreign Debt

145. SHRI B.L. SHANKAR :
SHRI SYDAIAH KOTA :
SHRI AJOY MUKHOPADHYAY :

Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state :

(a) the amount of foreign debt on India as on December 31, 1996;

(b) the amount of foreign debt taken from different countries during each of the last three years ending on March 31, 1996;

(c) the amount which was repaid and the interest paid thereon separately during the above period; and

(d) the steps taken by the Government to minimise the foreign debt burden on the country ?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM) : (a) and (b) The latest estimates for

foreign debt outstanding is for March 31, 1996. The debt outstanding for the last three years was as follows :

(US dollar millions)		
31.3.94	31.3.95	31.3.96
92,695	99,008	92,199

The total foreign debt cannot be quantified by country of origin since there are components, e.g. multilateral debt which by definition are not bilateral. In addition, bond holdings have an investor profile spread across countries. They also change hands when they are traded at exchanges.

(c) The total amount of principal repayment and interest payments during the last three years is as under :

(US dollar millions)			
	1993-94	1994-95	1995-96
Principal Repayments	4,783	6,825	8,063
Interest payments	3,818	4,099	4,315
Total Debt Servicing	8,601	10,924	12,378

(d) The main features of debt management strategy followed by the Government includes sustaining a high growth rate of exports, encouraging non-debt creating capital inflows and keeping the maturity structure as well as the total amount of commercial debt under control. As a result, debt service ratio has come down from the high of 35.25 per cent in 1990-91 to 25.70 per cent in 1995-96. Debt to GDP ratio has also come down from the peak of 41.00 per cent in 1991-92 to 28.71 per cent in 1995-96.

[Translation]

Amendment in R.P. Act, 1950

146. SHRI BRIJ BUSHAN TIWARI : Will the Minister of LAW AND JUSTICE be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government are contemplating to bring any Bill to repeal the Section 77 of Representation of the People Act, 1950 in order to conduct free and fair elections;

(b) if so, the details thereof, and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE DEPARTMENT OF LEGAL AFFAIRS, LEGISLATIVE DEPARTMENT AND DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE (SHRI RAMAKANT D. KHALAP) : (a) to (c) Section 77 does not exist in Representation of the People Act, 1950. A proposal to make certain amendments in the section 77 of the Representation of the People Act, 1951, is, however, amongst the proposals on electoral reforms which are being discussed by Government with the political parties.

[English]

Misuse of Gold Import Policy

147. SHRI MULLAPPALLY RAMACHANDRAN : Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government are aware that a large quantity of gold are being brought into the country under the new gold import policy and reaching the hands of smugglers through couriers;

(b) if so, the steps taken to prevent misuse of Gold Import Policy by the smugglers; and

(c) the quantity and value of gold imported through Calicut Airport after the introduction of the liberalised Gold Import Policy ?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM) : (a) and (b) The Government have increased the limit of gold which can be brought by Non Resident Indians after six months' stay abroad, and on payment of appropriate duty in foreign exchange, from 5 kg. to 10 kg. There is no restriction in the import policy or under any Customs Notification on subsequent sale or transfer of the gold after its clearance on payment of duty.

(c) 12.80 tonnes gold valued at Rs. 640.55 crores was imported through Calicut Airport from 1/1/97 to 15/2/97.

Unincorporated Companies

148. DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY : Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government have issued ordinance to curb unincorporated companies comprising partnership firms and combination of individuals seeking funds from public at higher rates of interest;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor, and

(c) the extent to which this is likely to help in companies and firms and the time by which this ordinance will take effect ?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM) : (a) to (c) Several finance companies and unincorporated bodies have reportedly failed to repay the deposits received from depositors who have been tempted by the attractive returns and incentives offered. In view of the need to take urgent steps to further regulate the activities of such companies and unincorporated bodies in order to protect the interests of depositors the Reserve Bank of India (Amendment) Ordinance, 1997 to further amend the Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934 has been promulgated by the President on 9th Jan. 97. The amendments, *inter alia*, provide that with effect from 1st April, 1997 the unincorporated bodies may accept deposits from any person, other than their relatives, only for personal use and not for lending or business purposes. The new provisions are expected to lead to the emergence of stronger financial companies which can better subserve the public good.