

ITA aims to expand the world trade in Information technology products. After extensive discussions with its trading partners, India filed its final Schedule of Concessions with regard to information technology products on 25-3-97 in Geneva and India's schedule has been approved by consensus by the Participants of the ITA. In all 217 tariff lines have been included in India's Schedule of Concessions. In respect of 95 tariff lines the duty will be brought to zero by 2000. In respect of 4 tariff lines the duty will be brought to zero by the year 2003, in respect of 2 tariff lines the duty will be brought to zero by the year 2004. The remaining 116 tariff lines will reach zero duty level by the year 2005.

(d) and (e) The ITA covers the following main categories of products: computers (including printers, scanners, monitors, hard-disc drives, power supplies etc.), telecom products (including fax machines, modems, pagers, etc) semiconductors (including chips and wafers), semiconductors manufacturing equipment, software products (e.g. diskettes and CD-ROMs) and scientific instruments. The Participants of ITA, representing countries which account for more than 90% of world trade in the information technology products, include Australia, Canada, Costa Rica, Estonia, EU (15 countries), Hong Kong, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Israel, Japan, Korea, Macau, Malaysia, New Zealand, Norway, Romania, Singapore, Slovak and Czech Republic, Switzerland, Chinese Taipei, Thailand, Turkey and United States.

(f) India decided to join the Information Technology Agreement after extensive discussions with various industry associations. There was general acceptance of the need to join ITA by most of the Associations. International trade in information technology is presently of the order of US \$ 500 billion. In the next century, this sector is expected to be the largest industry in the World and may provide the foundation upon which most of the other industries will be built. Not only will stability and predictability of Govt. policy in this sector attract foreign investment, India will also benefit by the fact that information technology will be available to other industrial sectors at relatively low cost, thus ensuring general increase in productivity all round.

Dismantling of Barriers in Agricultural exports

*499. DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the progressive dismantling of barriers in agricultural exports, which started as part of the structural adjustment programme five years ago, is yet to bring about a perceptible change in the sectoral pattern of exports;

(b) if so, whether future trading have been extended to cotton, raw jute and jute goods;

(c) if so, the total agricultural exports that have been estimated during 1997-98;

(d) to what extent it will be more in comparison to 1996-97; and

(e) further steps taken by the Government to boost the export of agricultural exports?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI BOLLA BULLI RAMAIAH): (a) There has been a perceptible shift in the sectoral composition of agricultural exports. The items whose share increased during the period 1991-92 to 1996-97 (April-February'97) are Rice (basmati & non-basmati), HPS Groundnut, Sugar and molasses, Horticultural and floricultural products and Miscellaneous processed items. The items whose share in the agricultural exports declined during the same period were Tobacco, Spices, Cashew, Guar gum meal and Oil meals. The total agricultural exports (excluding tea, coffee, raw cotton and marine products) increased from Rs. 4343.12 Crores in 1991-92 to Rs. 13720.60 Crores in 1996-97 (April-February 1997).

(b) No, Sir.

(c) and (d) The export projections for the year 1996-97 of the Eighth Five Year Plan by the Planning Commission for agricultural and allied products (excluding tea, coffee, raw cotton and marine products) was Rs. 10,398 Crores (at 1991-92 prices). The actual achievement during 1996-97 (April-February 97) was Rs. 13720.60 Crores. The export projection for the Ninth Five Year Plan including the year 1997-98 are yet to be formulated.

(e) Steps taken to enhance export of agricultural and allied products include simplification of inspection procedures, removal of minimum export price and quantity restrictions on selected items, provision of concessional credit, product development to meet international needs, extension of benefits available under the scheme of EOUs/EPZs to agriculture sector and permitting 50% sale in the domestic tariff area, assistance to exporters for improved packaging, strengthening of quality control, air freight subsidy on export of selected horticultural, floricultural products and fresh vegetables to identified destinations, promoting export of identified products through brand promotion campaigns, arranging buyer-seller meets and participation in international fairs/exhibitions.

Weaving and Processing Units

*500. SHRI R. SAMBASIVA RAO: Will the Minister of TEXTILES be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Union Textile Minister called upon the textile industry to redraft strategies so that there can be more investment in modern weaving and processing units;

(b) whether the Textile Ministry has agreed to invest more in the weaving and processing units in the country;

(c) if so, whether any plan have been formulated in this regard; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF TEXTILES (SHRI R.L. JALAPPA): (a) to (d) The Union Textile Minister has in different fora