

Electoral Reforms

*42. SHRI SUNDER LAL PATWA :
SHRI V.M. SUDHEERAN :

Will the Minister of LAW AND JUSTICE be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Election Commission has taken a stand that the person with criminal background will not be allowed to contest election and also sent some suggestions to the Government in this regard;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) the reaction of the Government thereto and the action taken thereon;

(d) whether the Government have formed a ministerial panel to discuss proposal on electoral reforms;

(e) if so, the details thereof; and

(f) the time by which this panel is likely to submit its recommendations?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF LAW AND JUSTICE (SHRI RAMAKANT D. KHALAP) : (a) and (b) The Election Commission has taken note of certain judicial pronouncements to the effect that suspension of the sentence and release on bail does not wipe off the disqualification under section 8 of the Representation of the People Act, 1951 and has directed all the Returning Officers to decide validity or otherwise of the candidature of contestants accordingly. The main suggestions made by the Election Commission for strengthening said section are given in the enclosed statement.

(c) to (f) A group of Ministers under the Chairmanship of the Home Minister has been constituted to consider the proposals on electoral reforms, including proposals for amending section 8 of the Representation of the People Act, 1951, and to make its recommendations. A meeting of the Group has already been held on 5.11.97 and its recommendations are expected shortly.

Statement

The main suggestions made by the Election Commission for strengthening section 8 of the Representation of the People Act, 1951

- (i) the disqualification in all cases provided under section 8 of the Representation of the People Act, 1951 should start from the date of conviction and the period of disqualification should be the period of sentence and additional six years thereafter;

(ii) Clauses (2) and (3) of section 8 of the said Act be put together, simplified and the minimum sentence reduced from two years to six months; and

(iii) Instead of clauses (1), (2) and (3), a simple provision be made that any one sentenced to imprisonment for six months or more should be debarred from contesting elections.

TWRF Scheme

*43 SHRI SATYAJITSINH DULIPSINH GAEKWAD:
SHRIMATI BHAVNA BEN DEVRAJBHAI
CHIKHALIA :

Will the Minister of TEXTILES be pleased to state :

(a) whether the proposal to cover State and Central PSUs Textile workers under the Textile Workers Rehabilitation Scheme has been under the consideration of the government for the last many years;

(b) if so, the reasons for delay in taking a decision in this regard; and

(c) the steps taken to expedite the decision and the time by which the decision is likely to be taken to cover these workers under the Scheme?

THE MINISTER OF TEXTILES (SHRI R.L. JALAPPA): (a) to (c) At present payments under the Textile Workers' Rehabilitation Funds Scheme (TWRFS) are restricted to workers of eligible private sector mills. However, there is a request for extending the benefit under the Scheme to the workers of a closed State Public Sector mill.

Consultations with Textile Commissioner and Ministry of Finance are required for taking a decision in the matter. Efforts will be made to take an appropriate decision early.

Recession in Industry

*44 SHRIMATI GEETA MUKHERJEE :
SHRI ANNANT GANGARAM GEETE :

Will the Minister of INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether the 5 per cent cut in Plan expenditure announced by the Government is likely to cause recession as feared by the industry;

(b) if so, the impact thereof on the domestic industry and economic growth; and

(c) the steps proposed to be taken by the Government to remedy the situation?

THE MINISTER OF INDUSTRY (SHRI MURASOLI MARAN): (a) and (b) No, Sir. The 5 per cent cut in the Central Plan Expenditure (excluding externally aided projects) is expected to lead to a saving of about Rs. 1800 crores. The overall saving is just 0.16 per cent of GDP at market prices in 1995–96. At the current level of GDP the proportion would be even lower.

(c) In the Union Budget 1997–98 and the Credit Policy announced thereafter in April-October, 1997, strong initiatives have been provided to improve investor's confidence, industry profitability and credit flow. In a meeting convened by the Prime Minister with Infrastructure sectors on 22nd July, 1997 and with other Manufacturing Industry on 14th October, 1997, issues relating to temporary slow down in some of the sectors were discussed and steps such as restoration of duty draw-back to encourage exports have already been taken. Further, with the sharp increase in availability of lendable resources with banks with phased reduction of Cash Reserve Ratio (CRR), substantial lowering of interest rates and release of arrears of pay to Central Government Employees on implementation of the Recommendations of Fifth Pay Commission, the overall demand for industrial products is expected to go up.

Import of Rubber

*45. SHRI N.K. PREMCHANDRAN:
SHRI V.V. RAGHAVAN:

Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state :

(a) the quantity of Natural Rubber imported during each of the last three years, country-wise;

(b) the quantity of rubber procured by STC so far and per kg. price offered to the natural rubber growers;

(c) whether there is a steep fall in the price of natural rubber in the domestic market;

(d) if so, the reasons therefore;

(e) whether the Government have received any representation from the rubber growers of Kerala in this regard; and

(f) if so, the steps taken thereon to save the rubber growers of the country?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (DR. BOLLA BULLI RAMAIAH) : (a) The quantity of Natural Rubber imported during each of the last three years is as under:—

Year	Qty (MT)
1994–95	8094
1995–96	51644
1996–97	18057

(Source: DGCI&S. Statistics)

Country-wise details of imports of Natural Rubber are available in Foreign Trade Statistics of India Published by DGCI&S, copies of which are available in the Parliament Library.

(b) As on 17.11.97, 1193 MT of Natural Rubber has been delivered against authorisation of 9256 MT by STC. The authorisation has been at prevailing day to day market prices.

(c) and (d) Due to sluggish demand of Natural Rubber from the tyre industry & general slowness in industrial activities, the prices of Natural Rubber have been showing a declining trend in tandem with International Rubber Prices. However, the domestic prices are still higher than the International Rubber Prices.

(e) and (f) Yes, Sir. In order to stabilise the price of Natural Rubber in the domestic market Govt. has already directed STC to intervene in the market and procure Natural Rubber on Government Account up to 10,000 MT at current prevailing prices not exceeding Rs. 42/- per kg.

[Translation]

Development of Handloom Sector

*46. SHRI DATTA MEGHE : Will the Minister of TEXTILES be pleased to state :

(a) whether there are ample possibilities for the development of handloom textile industry in Maharashtra and other States;

(b) if so, the steps taken by the Government to ascertain the possibilities of handloom development in such States; and

(c) the details of assistance proposed to be provided for this purpose?

THE MINISTER OF TEXTILES (SHRI R.L. JALAPPA):

(a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The formulation of policies and programmes for handloom development is a continuous process. The Government is presently implementing a number of programmes for the development of handloom sector and welfare of weavers. These provide support to weavers for modernising their looms, upgradation of weaving skills through training, developing of designs, provision of product input like yarn and dyeing facilities and marketing of their products. Some of the schemes under which assistance is being provided to weavers are Project Package Scheme, Scheme for Export Development, Scheme for Freelance Designers, Market Development Assistance, scheme for setting up of Marketing Complexes, setting up of Handloom Development Centre & Quality Dyeing Units and assistance for organising fairs and exhibitions. In addition, welfare