

Racket in Forged Drafts

*113. SHRI JANG BAHADUR SINGH PATEL : Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state :

(a) whether the attention of the Government has been drawn to the newsitem captioned "Racket in forged drafts unearthed" appearing in the *Hindustan Times* dated December 25, 1996;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the action taken against the bank officials for not following the laid down rules and regulations?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM) : (a) to (c) Government have seen the news item referred to in the question. The fact as reported by Bank of Baroda (BOB) are as under :-

- (i) A demand draft for Rs. 50,000 was deposited in the newly opened current account in the name of M/s. Parveen Hide Company at Hapur Branch of BOB and Rs. 35,000 was withdrawn by Ms. Parveen on 13.12.1996. The Branch received a mail transfer dated 16.12.1996 purportedly issued by its Latouche Road, Kanpur Branch for Rs. 8.50 lakhs favouring the firm. Enquiry with Latouche Road Branch revealed that the draft and mail transfer were not issued by them. FIR was lodged with local police at Hapur on 21.12.1996. Police arrested Ms. Parveen, her two other accomplices and five other persons including the watchman and the clerk of Latouche Road Branch. The watchman and the clerk have been placed under suspension.
- (ii) An account in the name of M/s. B.R. Enterprises was opened in January, 1995 at Clock Tower, Ghaziabad Branch of BOB. On 20.10.1995, one mail transfer for Rs. 6.80 lakhs purported to have been issued by Sisamau, Kanpur Branch of BOB was credited to the account and several withdrawals aggregating Rs. 3.30 lakhs were allowed from this account. The fraud came to light when the Clock Tower, Ghaziabad Branch contacted Sisamau, Kanpur Branch and it was revealed that the mail transfer for Rs. 6.80 lakhs was a fake one. FIR was lodged with the police.
- (iii) During periodical inspection of Muzaffarnagar Branch of BOB in December, 1996, it was found that a draft book containing 50 demand drafts was missing. Instructions were issued to all the branches to exercise caution in making payments against stolen drafts. However, 12 demand drafts for Rs. 26.18 lakhs had already been paid by the Bulandshahar and Akbarpur Branches of

BOB in September-October, 1996. The enquiry carried out by the bank revealed certain lapses such as absence of joint control of security forms and periodical physical verification of stock of security forms at Muzaffarnagar Branch and non-observance of caution in high value transactions at Bulandshahar and Akbarpur Branches. The concerned Zonal Offices have been advised to issue specific instructions to all branches for physical verification of security forms. FIR has been lodged by Muzaffarnagar Branch in December, 1996. Akbarpur Branch has also lodged FIR with the police who have arrested one of the account holders. The accountant of Muzaffarnagar branch has been suspended.

[Translation]

Decline in Export

*114. SHRI KASHI RAM RANA :
SHRI T. GOPAL KRISHNA :

Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) the target fixed for growth rate of exports and imports during 1996-97;

(b) the actual growth rate of exports and imports achieved during 1996-97 in comparison to the corresponding period of the last two years;

(c) the reasons for decline in export growth rate and the areas in which the progress has been poor; and

(d) the steps taken to check the decline in exports and the export growth rate in comparison to increase in imports and its growth rate during 1996-97?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI BOLLA BULLI RAMAIAH) : (a) to (d) At the beginning of 1996-97, an export growth of 18 to 20% in dollar terms was envisaged for the current financial year. However as per the latest data available from DGCI&S, exports have registered a growth of 6.4% during April-December, 1996 as compared to a growth of 24.2% achieved during the corresponding period in 1995-96 and a growth of 16.9% achieved during April-December, 1994-95.

No targets are fixed for imports which are made as per the requirements of the economy. The imports registered a growth of 4.4% during April-December, 1996-97 as compared to a growth of 29.3% and 23.9% achieved during the corresponding period in 1995-96 and 1994-95 respectively.

Export growth is influenced by international market conditions, non-tariff barriers imposed by the importing countries, supporting infrastructural facilities available

for exports as well as the policy environment. As per the DGC&S quick estimates for April-December, 1996-97, commodities like tea, coffee, rice, cashew, fruits and vegetables, gems and jewellery, leather manufactures, man-made yarn fabrics, etc., jute manufactures, Handicrafts and Plastic and Lineoleum Products have registered negative growth.

During April-December, 1996-97, the value of exports as well as imports have shown increase though the growth rates are at lower levels than during the previous year period. Measures for promoting exports are continuously being taken. These include changes in policies and procedures for providing an export friendly environment, interaction with trade and industry, consultations with the State Governments for involving States in export promotion, de-bottlenecking of crucial infrastructure facilities for exports, meeting of joint commissions and bilateral fora and dialogue with partner countries.

[English]

Electoral Reforms

*115. SHRI MUKHTAR ANIS : Will the Minister of LAW AND JUSTICE be pleased to state :

(a) the details of the proposals and suggestions for reforms in Electoral System and the laws relating thereto submitted by the Election Commission of India to the Union Government which are pending as on January 1, 1997;

(b) whether the Government propose to consult various political parties on these proposals and suggestions; and

(c) if so, by when the Government are likely to take a decision in the matter?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE DEPARTMENT OF LEGAL AFFAIRS, LEGISLATIVE DEPARTMENT AND DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE (SHRI RAMAKANT D. KHALAP) : (a) A statement is laid on the Table of the House.

(b) Yes, Sir.

(c) Electoral Reforms being a continuous process, it is not feasible to indicate the exact time by which Government would take a decision in the matter. Government, however, is keen to finalise a comprehensive package on Electoral Reforms as early as possible.

Statement

Important Proposals of the Election Commission which are pending as on 1st January, 1997.

1. The Election Commission should have an independent secretariat and the expenditure on the Commission should be 'charged'.

2. No candidate should be allowed to contest from more than one constituency.
3. Automatic disqualification of a person found guilty of corrupt practice.
4. Enhancement of required minimum number of valid votes polled to save security deposit from 'one-sixth' to 'one-fourth' thereof.
5. Compulsory maintenance of accounts by political parties and audit thereof.
6. The existing provision in section 29A of the Representation of the People Act, 1951, relating to registration of political parties, should not be deleted and there should be a specific provision to de-register a party if it violates the undertaking given under the section. The power to de-register should vest in the High Court.
7. Mobilisation of employees of Public Sector Undertakings, autonomous bodies, statutory and non-statutory bodies aided by the Government etc., for election duties as also to provide that employees of such bodies including local bodies could also be deployed for election duties outside their State.
8. Restoration of pre- 1974 position in respect of election expenses.
9. Increase in the ceiling on election expenses as laid in Rule 90 of the Conduct of Elections Rules, 1961.
10. The officer nominated or designated as Chief Electoral Officer should not be allowed to do any other work except with the approval of the Election Commission.
11. Statutory backing to provisions of Part VII of the Model Code of Conduct.
12. Empowering Election Commission to issue instructions and to make recommendations in connection with elections.

Privatisation of Coal Sector

*116. SHRI K.P. SINGH DEO :
SHRI NAMDEO DIWATHE :

Will the Minister of COAL be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government propose to privatise different areas in the coal sector;

(b) if so, the details of the plan and areas under different coal companies identified for the purpose;

(c) whether the power and steel companies of public sector have also been offered some blocks for coal mining and allied activities; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?