

External Commercial Borrowings

384. SHRI K.C. KONDAIAH : Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government propose to relax norms for external commercial borrowings for telecommunication and oil sector; and

(b) if so, the norms and guidelines thereof?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE AND MINISTER OF COMPANY AFFAIRS (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM) : (a) and (b) In the guidelines on External Commercial Borrowings issued on June 19, 1996, Corporates engaged in infrastructure project in telecommunications and oil exploration and development (excluding refining) have been permitted to raise ECB at a minimum average maturity of 5 years for borrowings exceeding USD 15 million equivalent, as against a minimum average maturity of 7 years prescribed earlier. In addition, end-use of ECB in the telecommunications sector can be for project-related rupee expenditure, including licence fees

Water Transport from Banaras to Calcutta

386 SHRI RAMASHRAY PRASAD SINGH : Will the Minister of SURFACE TRANSPORT be pleased to state

(a) whether the Union Government propose to start water transport from Banaras to Calcutta

(b) if so, the details thereof, and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF SURFACE TRANSPORT (SHRI T.G. VENKATRAMAN) : (a) and (b) The stretch of river Ganga- Bhagirathi-Hooghly between Banaras and Calcutta is a part of the National Waterway No. 1 between Allahabad and Haldia. The Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWA) is maintaining navigability of the National Waterway through various river conservancy works executed every year. At present, in the phased development of National Waterway, the Haldia-Patna stretch is being developed for round the year navigation as the first phase with a view to provide channel of 45 mtrs. minimum width and 2 mtrs. minimum depth for a period of at least 300 days in a year. The National Waterway is open for plying of crafts by Govt. as well as private operators. Bed regulation to improve navigability up stream Patna to Varanasi and Allahabad and provision of other infrastructure facilities are proposed to be taken up during 9th Five Year Plan.

(c) Does not arise.

More Investment in Port Sector

387. SHRI KODIKUNNIL SURESH : Will the Minister of SURFACE TRANSPORT be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government have taken any decision to make more investment in Port Sector;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether the Government propose to increase the existing capacity of Cochin Port Trust, and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF SURFACE TRANSPORT (SHRI T.G. VENKATRAMAN) : (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. In addition to the 8th Plan outlay of Rs 3216 crores, the Port Sector has been opened for private sector participation in line with the liberalisation policy of the Government. Private Sector participation has been sought in the construction of berths/container terminals, tank farms, container freight stations, crane/handling equipments, captive power plants, dry docking & ship repair facilities, warehousing, taking on lease equipments & floating crafts & pilotage

(c) and (d) The following schemes have been commissioned at the Cochin Port to increase its existing capacity -

Name of the Scheme	Capacity addition (in million tonnes)
Deepening of COT Channel	2.00
Container Terminal	0.60
Total	2.60

D.A. to Central Government Employees

388 DR KRUPASINDHU BHOI : Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state

(a) the number of dearness allowance slabs are due for payment to the Central Government employees

(b) the rate at which the D.A. payment is proposed to be made to different category of employees.

(c) the date on which the D.A. payment is likely to be released, and

(d) the steps taken by the Government for the timely payment of D.A. slabs to the Central Government employees?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE AND MINISTER OF COMPANY AFFAIRS (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM) : (a) to (d) As per the existing formula relating to the