

(d) The amount of financial assistance provided from NRF during each of the last two years is as follows :

Year	Financial Assistance
1996-97	Rs. 195.63 Crore
1997-98	Rs. 330.45 Crore (Provisional)

[English]

Requirement of Gold

*453. SHRI GINGEE N. RAMACHANDRAN : Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state :

(a) whether the requirement of gold in the country had increased by 45 per cent in 1997;

(b) if so, the main reasons therefor;

(c) the quantity of gold came from outside the country through imports, NRI's etc. during the year 1997;

(d) the estimated increase registered in revenue through gold inflow in 1997 over the previous year; and

(e) the impact of this gold inflow on our economy?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PERSONNEL, PUBLIC GRIEVANCES AND PENSIONS AND MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (BANKING, REVENUE AND INSURANCE) (SHRI KADAMBUR M.R. JANARTHANAN) : (a) and (b) According to an unofficial estimate, the requirement of gold in the country has increased 45% in 1997 over the year 1996. The main reasons for this could be attributable to several factors including the latent demand for consumption of gold in the country and its easy availability at lower domestic prices under liberalised gold import policies adopted by the Government.

(c) and (d) During the year 1997, 527.857 tonnes of gold was imported through official channels and Rs. 1148 crores were collected as revenue as compared to 297.79 tonnes in 1996 involving duty amount of Rs. 655 crores.

(e) In addition to the higher collection of revenue, the import liberalisation has reduced the illegal import of gold and has made the gold easily available to the consumers in the country. In addition, the unofficial premium on the US\$ has also perceptibly come down. It is likely to have impact on invisible receipts on the current account of Balance of Payment as there would be reduced incentive for diversion of foreign exchange to unofficial market for financing illegal gold imports.

Use of Washed Coal

*454. SHRI ANUPLAL YADAV :
SHRI RAJ BANSHI MAHTO :

Will the Minister of COAL be pleased to state :

(a) whether the use of washed coal in power plants has been made mandatory recently by the Government;

(b) if so, whether this action of Government has been widely criticised by the experts in this field; and

(c) if so, the reaction of the Union Government thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COAL (SHRI DILIP RAY) : (a) The Government have issued a Notification on September 19, 1997, under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986 making mandatory the use of beneficiated coal with an ash content to exceeding 34% with effect from 1.6.2001 A.D. by the following coal based thermal power plants :

(i) Any thermal power plant located beyond 1000 k.m from the pit-head; and

(ii) Any thermal power plant located in urban area or sensitive area or critically polluted area irrespective of its distance from the pit-head except any pit-head power plant.

Further, the Government have made the following amendments in the said notification, *vide* notification GSR 378 (E) dated 30.6.98.

(i) For the words "Beneficiated Coal with an ash content not exceeding thirty-four percent", the words "raw or blended or beneficiated coal with an ash content not exceeding thirty-four per cent on an annual average basis" shall be substituted.

(ii) After clause (b), of the said notification, the following provision has been inserted, namely:

"provided that any thermal power plant using fluidised bed combustion or circulating fluidised bed combustion or atmospheric fluidised bed combustion or integrated gasification combined cycle technologies or any other clean technologies as may be notified by the Central Government in the official gazettee shall be exempted from clause (a) and (b).

(b) No, Sir.

(c) Does not arise in view of reply given to part (b) as above.

Import of Newsprint

*455. SHRI SUSHIL KUMAR SHINDE :
SHRI MADHAV RAO SCINDIA :

Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state

(a) whether the import of finished papers and newsprint has been increasing, while indigenous production is going down;

(b) if so, the comparative figures of imports of finished paper and newsprint and the indigenous production of these items during the last three years;