

- (b) No, Sir.
(c) Does not arise.

(d) Yes, Sir. The Government has earmarked a separate export quota called Powerloom Exporters' Entitlement (PEE) quota for the decentralised powerloom sector for export of cloth since 1992 in addition to their entitlements under any other quota category such as PPE and NQE.

(e) The Government has fixed 10% of the annual levels of textile export quota for the decentralised powerloom sector.

(f) The percentage of India's participation in international textile market is around 3.1% as of 1996. The percentage of fabric production share of the powerloom sector is mentioned in the answer to (a) above.

[Translation]

Voluntary Retirement Scheme in PSUs

*360. PROF. PREM SINGH CHANDUMAJRA :
SHRI VIJAY GOEL :

Will the Minister of INDUSTRY be pleased to state :

- (a) the number of surplus staff in the Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs) during each of the last three years;
(b) the number of employees of PSUs who opted for Voluntary Retirement under Voluntary Retirement Scheme during the above period;
(c) the result achieved and amount released so far by the Government in this regard;
(d) whether the Government are rethinking over this scheme; and
(e) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF INDUSTRY (SHRI SIKANDER BAKHT) : (a) The number of surplus staff in the Public Undertakings during each of the last three years is not readily available.

(b) The number of employees of Central Public Sector Undertakings who opted for voluntary retirement under National Renewal Fund during the years 1995-96, 1996-97 and 1997-98 were 11,541; 4,074; and 4,822 respectively.

(c) Upto the end of 1997-98 a total number of 1,10,104 persons have availed the voluntary retirement scheme under NRF. As per provisional figures the amount released so far are Rs. 2020 crores.

(d) and (e) Government have decided to liberalise the voluntary retirement package in respect of units which are

facing closure. Workers will be allowed 45 days of wages for each completed year of service subject to the maximum wage or salary accruable on the basis of years of service left by way of compensation on Voluntary Retirement. As further improvement to the package the workers of these units will also be eligible upto a maximum of 60 months salary or wages in the case of all those who have completed not less than 30 years of service.

Export of Agricultural Products

*361. SHRI RAMPAL SINGH :
SHRI PRABHU DAYAL KATHERIA :

Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state :

- (a) whether Government have formulated any plan to give top priority to the export of agricultural products;
(b) if so, the details thereof; and
(c) the time by which it is likely to be implemented?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE) : (a) to (c) The policy of the Government to permit exports of agricultural products is governed principally by the concerns of India's food security, maximising farm incomes and earning foreign exchange. Export policy is being constantly updated and export regime in respect of agricultural products has been liberalised. Very few items are now either prohibited for exports or their exports restricted or are subject to quantitative ceilings. Major items for which the exports are banned include wheat and wheat products and sugar except under preferential quota to EU/USA.

Some of the steps taken/proposed to be taken to enhance exports of these products include :

1. Providing assistance for raising small and large nurseries for production of good quality planting material, upgradation of technical knowhow of farmers through demonstrations, trainings and publicity, rejuvenation of old orchards, area expansion, supply of minikits for vegetables, improving productivity and training of farmers.
2. Provision of soft loans for setting up of grading/ procession centres, auction platforms, ripening/ curing chambers and quality testing equipment.
3. Providing financial assistance to exporters/ growers/Cooperative Societies for development of infrastructural facilities such as purchase of specialised transport units, establishment of pre-cooling/cold storage facilities, integrated post-harvest handling systems (pack houses).
4. Grant of financial assistance for improved packaging and strengthening of quality control.