

(b) The target fixed for export during the current financial year provisionally is Rs. 230.00 crores.

(c) India is exporting coir products to 62 countries. The U.S.A. is the largest importer of coir products from India followed by U.K., Netherland, Germany, France etc.

Export of Meat and Its Products

2447. SHRI RAGHUVANSH PRASAD SINGH: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Animal Rights International has requested to set up committee to evaluate socio-economic problems arising due to export of meat and meat products;

(b) if so, the reaction of the Government thereto;

(c) the subsidies being paid for export of meat/meat products by APEDA or any other organisation with amounts paid to each exporter during the current financial year;

(d) whether any consignment has been rejected by importers or claimed damages for inferior quality; and

(e) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMKRISHNA HEGDE) : (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. Exports of meat and meat products constitute only about 3% of the meat consumed in the country. A separate assessment of socio-economic problems arising due to export of meat and meat products by a committee proposed by the Animal Rights International would, therefore, serve no useful purpose.

(c) No direct cash subsidies are being paid by the Government for export of meat and meat products. APEDA has, however, formulated various schemes such as scheme for Development of infrastructure, Scheme to promote Quality and Quality Control Upgradation of Meat plants under which financial assistance is provided to the exporters of scheduled products of APEDA including meat and meat products. APEDA has not released any financial assistance to any meat exporter during the current financial year.

(d) and (e) Exports of meat and meat products are under taken by the private exporters as per the mutually agreed terms and conditions of the export contracts. Damages, if any, claimed by the importers are settled between the exporters and importers. Details of such claims are not maintained.

However, as per the details available, the damages claimed by importers are as under:

In January, 1997 M/s. Al-Baydi Restaurants and Catering services Co., Kuwait claimed a damage of US\$ 36,830 from PML Industries Ltd., Chandigarh on account of rejection of one container of frozen meat by Kuwait Health Authorities.

In December, 1997 M/s. European Arab Trading Co., Muscat claimed a damage of US\$ 2697 from Al-Quresh Exports, Mumbai on account of receipt of part of the meat consignment as partially defrosted.

Borrowings by State Governments

2448. SHRI G.M. BANATWALLA : Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Reserve Bank of India has suggested that State Government should borrow at competitive rate based on individual strength;

(b) if so, the details of the suggestions made;

(c) the reaction of the Government thereto;

(d) whether the State Governments have been consulted on the RBI's suggestions; and

(e) if so, the reactions of each of the State Government thereto?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (SHRI YASHWANT SINHA) : (a) In the meeting of the Finance Secretaries of State Governments held at the Reserve Bank on November 8, 1997, a consensus was reached that over a period of time all the State Governments should move over to a flexible approach to market borrowing in terms of method, timing and maturities.

(b) It was agreed that State Governments could be provided the option of raising resources in a flexible manner within the approved borrowing programme with a minimum (floor) of 5 percent and a maximum (ceiling) of 35 percent in 1998-99.

(c) The proposal of the flexible approach of borrowing a part of the amount allocated to the individual States in the range of 5 percent (minimum) and 35 percent (maximum) on optional basis has concurrence of Government of India.

(d) and (e) The suggestion has emanated in the meeting of State Finance Secretaries, as indicated in reply to (a).

Sweepers of RRB

2449. SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA : Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the benefits of Payment of Bonus Act and Employees Provident Fund Act are being extended to sweepers now working in many offices of Regional Rural Banks on monthly or daily fixed wage basis; and

(b) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PERSONNEL, PUBLIC GRIEVANCES AND PENSION

AND MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (BANKING, REVENUE & INSURANCE) (SHRI KADAMBUR M.R. JANARATHANAN): (a) and (b) The employees of Regional Rural Banks (RRBs) are governed by the Employees Provident Fund and Miscellaneous Provisions Act, 1952. In terms of Section 26 of the Act, an employee (daily wage or regular), who has completed 60 days service within the period of 3 months or less, is entitled and required to join the Provident Fund as a member. Further, the employees of RRBs are also entitled to be paid bonus by the RRB, in an accounting year, in accordance with the provisions of Payment of Bonus Act, 1965, provided such employees have worked in the RRB for not less than 30 working days in that year

Victimisation of Trade Union Functionaries

2450. SHRI BHERU LAL MEENA :

SHRI RAMPAL UPADHYAY :

Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government have received representations from the Employees Associations and Members of Parliament against discrimination and victimisation of Trade Union functionaries by the management of New India Assurance Co. Ltd. for highlighting corruption and malpractices at various levels in the last two years;

(b) if so, the action taken or proposed to be taken by the Government on the representations to restrain the management from victimising the Trade Union functionaries;

(c) whether representations have also been received against the management's vindictive actions on take ground with discrimination to block the promotions of Trade Union functionaries to higher cadre; and

(d) if so, the details thereof and the action taken or proposed to be taken to rectify the action of management?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PERSONNEL, PUBLIC GRIEVANCES AND PENSIONS AND MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (BANKING, REVENUE & INSURANCE) : (SHRI KADAMBUR M.R. JANARATHANAN) : (a) and (b) GIC has reported that as per preliminary enquiries made by them indicates no instance of alleged discrimination or victimisation of any trade union functionary has come to light.

(c) and (d) GIC has reported that no instance of victimisation or vindictiveness against any trade union functionary in the matter of promotion has come to light.

Conversion of Washing Coking Coal to Non-Coking Coal

2451. SHRI MOINUL HASSAN : Will the Minister of COAL be pleased to state:

(a) whether Giddi Washery is being converted from washing coking coal to non-coking coal;

(b) if so, the details thereof and the reasons therefor giving relative economy of these;

(c) whether the Government have considered all the pros and cons of the said decision on the employment opportunities of the unorganised sector workers engaged in loading; and

(d) if so, the alternative steps proposed to be taken to ensure that employment opportunities of unorganised sector workers are not affected?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COAL (SHRI DILIP RAY) : (a) Yes, Sir, Gidi washery of Central Coalfields (CCL) is washing non-coking coal instead of coking coal with effect from 26.5.1998.

(b) Gidi washery was originally built in the year 1970 for washing high volatile non-coking coal. Due to lack of market for washed non-coking coal at that time, the washery in 1973 was converted for washing medium coking coal from Kuju and Hazaribagh areas. However, because of flow-sheet and the process of the plant and characteristics of raw coal feed, it was not able to beneficiate medium coking coal to the desired level of ash content in the washed coal.

With the refusal, of late, of Steel Authority of India Limited (SAIL) to accept washed coal of higher ash than stipulated by them and commissioning of Kedla coking coal washery, the operation of this financial unviable washery for washing coking coal were discontinued. Operation losses incurred in Gidi washery during 1997-98 was about Rs. 35 crores.

With the market for washed non-coking coal gradually developing for power plants located far away from the supply sources of coal, both in view of economy in coal transportation as well for environmental reasons, it is expected that the washery financial viability will improve.

(c) Coal company has taken the decision after weighing all the pros and cons in switching over to washing of non-coking coal. This decision is not likely to have any adverse impact on the employment opportunity of unorganised sector workers.

(d) Does not arise in view of (c) above.