

convertible currency has been raised to Rupees 25 crores for Indian investments in Nepal in Indian rupees;

- (x) In the case of all SAARC Member countries, including Nepal, the general limit of US\$4 million for fast track clearances for investment in US \$ has been raised to US \$8 million.

Production of Cardamom

2554 SHRI A. VENKATESH NAIK : Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

- (a) the per hectare production of cardamom in India;
- (b) the steps taken to raise the per hectare production;
- (c) whether new high yielding varieties of cardamom have been developed by Scientists in India; and
- (d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMKRISHNA HEGDE) : (a) Productivity of Cardamom (Small) in 1997-98 is estimated to be 149 Kg/ha.

(b) Some of the steps taken to increase productivity include:-

- i) supply of high yielding planting material;
- ii) assistance for replantation;
- iii) assistance for irrigation and land development;
- iv) extension services; and
- v) modernising agricultural practices.

(c) and (d) Indian Cardamom Research Institute (ICRI) has released three high yielding varieties of Cardamom viz. ICRI-1, ICRI-2, and ICRI-3, Kerala Agriculture University has released PV-1, Indian Institute of Species Research and University of Agricultural Sciences, Bangalore have also released CCS-1 and Mudigere-1 varieties.

Revamp of FIPB

2555. SHRI S.S. OWAISI : Will the Minister of INDUSTRY be pleased to state.

(a) whether the Government had revamped the Foreign Investment Promotion Board (FIPB) and laid down transparent guidelines for the fast disposal of investors' applications;

(b) if so, even after the revamping there is welcome pace of foreign investment proposals;

(c) whether there is a great differences between his Ministry and administrative Ministry on the procedure of vetting cases for foreign investors;

(d) if so, the details thereof; and

(e) the steps taken by the Government to minimise the differences?

THE MINISTER OF INDUSTRY (SHRI SIKANDER BAKHT) : (a) Yes, Sir. The Government have reconstituted the Foreign Investment Promotion Board (FIPB) in July, 1996 and laid down clear objectives and functions for the Board. Elaborate guidelines have been issued for the consideration of foreign direct investment (FDI) proposals by FIPB so as to make the process transparent, non-discriminatory and time-bound.

(b) With the aforesaid steps, there has been an encouraging trend in FDI.

(c) Recommendations on foreign investment proposals are made by the FIPB taking into consideration the policy applicable to the sector, the comments of the Administrative Ministries concerned and the general policy on FDI.

(d) and (e) Does not arise.

Export Promotion Council

2556. SHRI ANNASAHEB M.K. PATIL : Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) the details of Export Promotion Council presently operating in the country for promotion of export and the functions of such councils;

(b) whether performance of these Export Promotion Councils have been reviewed recently for the last three years ending on 31.3.1998;

(c) if so, the details of the performance. Council-wise, in terms of set norms of assessment;

(d) the details of fresh initiatives taken proposed during 1998-99 for restructuring the functioning of various export promotion councils and strengthening their network to cater the interests of exporters more effectively; and

(e) the details of proposals received from the Government of Maharashtra in this regard and the action taken by the Government thereon?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMKRISHNA HEGDE) : (a) There are 11 Export Promotion Councils under the Ministry of Commerce and 9 falling under the purview of Ministry of Textiles. A list of these councils is given in Statement J. Functions of Export Promotion Councils are listed in Statement II enclosed.

(b) to (e) The performance of these Councils is reviewed on a regular basis especially when their budget proposals are discussed and also while reviewing their