

Nigam Limited (MTNL) have been disinvested in the GDR Market.

(b) to (d) Trade Unions of some Public Sector Undertakings have given representations against some of the recommendations of the Disinvestment Commission. These are examined and the Government keeps in view the interests of the employees while deciding about disinvestment in any PSU.

Free Trade Area

1644. SHRI SUSHIL KUMAR SHINDE : Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether India and Russia had reached an agreement to forge a free trade area, which may also include other CIS countries, at the Joint Indo-Russian Commission meeting held in December, 1997; and

(b) if so, the details thereof, indicating the other CIS countries which are likely to join the Free Trade Area arrangements?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMKRISHNA HEGDE) : (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

Export Oriented Agriculture Policy

1645. SHRI ASHOK NAMDEORAO MOHOL :

DR. RAMKRISHNA KUSMARIA :

DR. LAXMINARAYAN PANDEY :

SHRI PANKAJ CHOUDHRY :

Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government propose to introduce a new Export Oriented Agricultural Policy and to ensure reasonable prices for agricultural products;

(b) if so, the details thereof and the agricultural items likely to be included in this policy;

(c) the time by which this policy is likely to be implemented;

(d) whether any export target has been fixed for farm products during the Ninth Plan; and

(e) If so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMKRISHNA 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. Review of export performance of agricultural products is an on-going process and accordingly policy interventions are made, as and when considered necessary, with a view to making agricultural export increasingly viable.

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 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.

The agricultural products exported from India include tea, coffee, raw cotton, rice (basmati and non-basmati), coarse grains, tobacco, spices, cashew, sesame and niger seeds, oil meal extractions, sugar, horticulture and floriculture products, fresh fruits and vegetables, processed fruits and juices.

(d) and (e) No Sir.. as the Ninth Five year Plan is still to be finalised. However, during the Ninth Five Year Plan exports of agriculture and allied commodities are proposed to be given special attention as this area offers vast potential for increasing farm incomes, tackling unemployment and earning foreign exchange.

Setting up Industries in Backward Areas

1646. SHRI NARENDRA BUDANIA : Will the Minister of INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government have formulated any scheme to set up industries in the backward, hilly and desert areas of the Country for their development;

(b) if so, whether any survey has been conducted to implement the said scheme; and

(c) if so, the names of areas alongwith the types of the industries likely to be set up, State-wise?

THE MINISTER OF INDUSTRY (SHRI SIKANDER BAKHT) : (a) Three centrally sponsored schemes, namely (i) the Growth Centre Scheme (ii) the Integrated Infrastructure Development Scheme and (iii) the Transport Subsidy Scheme are being implemented by the Ministry of Industry for promoting industrialisation of backward, hilly and inaccessible in the country. Backward areas of Rajasthan are also included in the first two schemes.

(b) and (c) 71 Industrial Growth Centres have been announced to be set up under the Growth Centre Scheme spread over 25 States and one Union