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This issue in public interest

Sd:

(N.L. Lakhnupal)

Director General of Foreign Trade
and Ex-Officio
Additional Secretary to the Government of India

Copy to all concerned ;

By Orders etc..

Sd/-

(Ranjan Sudesh Ratna)

Deputy Director General of Foreign Trade

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[Translation]

Rubber Cultivation

1662. SHRI AJIT JOGI : Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) the area under rubber cultivation in each state in the north eastern areas;

(b) whether the Rubber Board had conducted any survey about the cultivation of rubber in the north eastern areas;

(c) if so, the details thereof; and

(d) the action taken by the Government to develop the cultivation of locally available rubber and its processing in this area?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMKRISHNA HEGDE) : (a) The total area under rubber cultivation in the different States of North-East at the end of 1997-98 is as under:

		(in hectare)
i)	Tripura	23,000
ii)	Assam	10,500

iii)	Meghalaya	4,400
iv)	Manipur	1,225
v)	Mizoram	950
vi)	Nagaland	1,200
vii)	Arunachal Pradesh	110
Total		41,385

(b) and (c) Yes, Sir. The Rubber Board has conducted exploratory surveys in different States in the North Eastern Region to assess the extent of agro-climatically suitable land available for rubber cultivation. The areas suitable for rubber cultivation in that region, is estimated as under:

		(in hectare)
i)	Assam	2,00,000
ii)	Tripura	1,00,000
iii)	Meghalaya	
iv)	Nagaland	1,00,000

v)	Manipur	
vi)	Andhra Pradesh	} 50,000
vii)	Mizoram	
Total		4,50,000

(d) The Rubber Board has been assisting small growers to set up processing facilities by supplying rollers and other estate equipments at concessional rates, assisting construction of smoke houses by providing technical and financial assistance in addition to special assistance being given to tribal/SC groups for community processing. The Rubber Board also conducts Entrepreneur Development Programme and Training Classes and offers technical advice to local entrepreneurs to start rubber goods manufacturing units in this region.

[English]

Foreign Direct Investors

1663. SHRI R. SAMBASIVA RAO : Will the Minister of INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government propose to enact a comprehensive law to attract foreign investors;

(b) if so, the steps taken by the Government to meet the persistent demands of institutional financial investors; and

(c) the time by which the final decision is likely to be taken in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF INDUSTRY (SHRI SIKANDER BAKHT) : (a) No, Sir.

(b) and (c) Does not arise.

Debt Recovery Tribunals

1664. SHRI S.S. OWAISI: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the work of debt recovery tribunals have not been satisfactory in the present legal system;

(b) if so, the main reasons therefor;

(c) whether Government propose to amend the RBI Act, Banking Regulation Act, Nationalisation of Sick Industrial Undertaking (Special Provision) Act and Bankers Book Evidence Act;

(d) if so, the details thereof and time by which these Acts are likely to be amended; and

(e) the other steps taken by Government to recover debt?

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) The Recovery of Debts Due to Banks and Financial Institutions Act, 1993 (DRT Act) received assent of the President on 27th August, 1993 and was deemed to have come into force with effect from 24th June, 1993. The Act was declared unconstitutional and void by Delhi High Court in the matter of Delhi High Court Bar Association Vs. Union of India on 10th March 1995. The Government by then had set up five Debts Recovery Tribunals (DRTs) at Calcutta, Delhi, Jaipur, Bangalore and Ahmedabad. Immediate steps were taken by the Government to move the Supreme Court by way of a Special Leave Petition (SLP) and the Hon'ble Court admitted the SLP and stayed the order of the Delhi High Court. Thereafter, vide its order dated 18th March 1996, the Hon'ble Supreme Court directed that, notwithstanding any stay order passed in any of the writ petitions, the Debts Recovery Tribunals (DRTs) established under the DRT Act shall resume their functions. The DRTs have started functioning in right earnest only after the said Supreme Court order. As on 31st December 1997, 1841 cases have been disposed of by them and an amount of Rs. 182.05 crores was recovered. The performance in respect of the number of cases settled and the quantum of amount recovered, though not significant, can be considered reasonable considering the initial problems such as arrangements of accommodation, selection of Presiding Officers, recruitment/deputation of necessary officers and staff and provision of other necessary infrastructure.

(c) and (d) The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has recently constituted a Working Group which is going into various problems associated with DRTs including legislative amendments. The Working Group has not yet submitted its report. It is only after the recommendations have been received from the Working Group have been processed by the Government, that a decision will be taken whether there is any need for amending of any existing laws for making DRTs more effective.

(e) Government and RBI have been emphasizing upon Bank Managements the need for improving recovery of loans and reduce the level of NPAs. In this direction, RBI have already advised banks to have documents on Loan Policy and Loan Recovery Policy prepared and vetted by their Board of Directors. Recovery Cells have also been set up by each bank at its headquarters under the charge of a General Manager. Branch-wise targets for recoveries are