

*[English]***Losses suffered by Coffee Board**

*154. SHRI C.P.M. GIRIYAPPA : Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Coffee Board has been suffering losses for the last three years;

(b) if so, the factors responsible for such losses;

(c) whether the Government have formulated any action plan to make the Coffee Board viable; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

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

(b) to (d) Do not arise.

*[Translation]***Economic Reforms**

*155. SHRI RAJENDRA AGNIHOTRI :
SHRI RAMPAL SINGH :

Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government have assured the investors by removing their apprehension with regard to tardy progress of liberalisation and economic reforms that top priority would be given to implement the reforms;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the estimated increase in the investments as a result of assurances given by the Government?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (SHRI YASHWANT SINHA) : (a) The Government's commitment to economic reforms has been amply illustrated by the various measures undertaken in the year 1998-99 as well as in the Union Budget (1999-2000). The reform measures undertaken so far are aimed at providing a strong stimulus to infrastructure, boosting industrial growth, reviving capital markets and accelerating overall economic activity.

(b) Reforms initiated so far include delicensing of major industries, expanding the scope of foreign direct investment and liberalising norms thereof, implementing

specific steps for the small scale sector, disinvestment in select public sector enterprises, widening the scope of private investment in infrastructure, announcing measures like buy-back of shares for rejuvenating corporate growth etc. The Union Budget (1999-2000) has provided a fillip to housing and small scale sectors by announcing far-reaching measures. Foreign investment norms have been further simplified and liberalised. The excise and customs structures have been rationalised and a special thrust has been given to expenditure management.

(c) During January-November 1998, 2764 investment intentions were filed through IEMs and LOIs for proposed investment of Rs. 54,284 crore. FDI proposals worth Rs. 24,454 crore were approved during January-October 1998. Sanctions and disbursements by All India Financial Institutions (AIFIs) increased by 36.9 per cent and 12.5 respectively during April-December 1998.

*[English]***Export of Coffee**

*156. SHRI A. VENKATESH NAIK :
SHRI MADHAV RAO PATIL :

Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) the quantity of coffee exported during 1996-97, 1997-98 and 1998-99, till date;

(b) the names of countries to which coffee has been exported during the above period, year-wise;

(c) the foreign exchange earned therefrom during the above period;

(d) whether export of coffee during the above period has declined;

(e) if so, the reasons therefor;

(f) whether the coffee exporters have suggested some proposals to boost the export of coffee;

(g) if so, the details thereof and the action taken by the Government thereon; and

(h) the steps taken by the Government to boost the production and export of coffee?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE) : (a) to (e) During 1996-97,

1997-98 and 1998-99 (till February, 1999), a total quantity of 1.81 lakh MTs, 1.79 lakh MTs and 1.52 lakh MTs of coffee earning foreign exchange of US \$ 451 Mn, US \$ 477 Mn and US \$ 318 Mn respectively has been exported. The major countries to which Indian coffee has been exported are Russian Federation, Italy, Germany, USA, Japan, Middle East countries, Netherlands, Poland, Spain, Slovenia, Belgium.

(f) and (g) The Coffee Exports have given various suggestions like upgradation of quality controls, improvement of processing system, simplification of export documentation and procedures, exemption from various taxes and levies, development of logo for promotion of coffee etc. Action on most of the suggestions has already been taken by the Coffee Board.

(h) For increasing coffee production, the Coffee Board, besides operating several plan programmes and developmental activities aimed at intensive cultivation, replanting programme, quality improvement programme and water augmentation programme has also been providing necessary support in the form of (a) agricultural research, (b) extension, (c) arrangement for credit and finance and other necessary back-up support like supply of seeds for plantation purposes etc.

For boosting export of coffee, the Coffee Board is focussing on targetted import markets like USA, Japan, Russia, Middle-east countries etc. The Board also participates in selected food fairs, exhibitions abroad, releases advertisements on unique features on Indian coffee in selected overseas trade journals, sponsors trade delegations/invites delegations of roasters from all the target markets to India, arranges service of Indian Coffee abroad through our embassies, distributes gift packets of Indian Coffee through Indian Embassies on special occasions and festivals, promotes logo for Indian Coffee and publishes and distributes literature on Indian Coffee.

Financial Problems in Cement Industry

*157. SHRI R.S. GAVAI :
DR. ULHAS VASUDEO PATIL :

Will the Minister of INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is disparity in prices and the demand-supply imbalance in cement in various parts of the country;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor;

(c) whether cement industry is facing financial problems in their capacity expansion programmes;

(d) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(e) the steps proposed to be taken by the Government to provide financial assistance to cement industry?

THE MINISTER OF INDUSTRY (SHRI SIKANDER BAKHT) : (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. Inter-regional prices of cement vary on account of factors such as local demand and supply, distance of market from the cement producing centres, etc. On account of demand recession, at present there is a mismatch between the existing production capacity and demand for cement.

(c) and (d) Since there is excess capacity in cement industry at present, there is no major capacity expansion plan on anvil by the Cement Industry.

(e) Question does not arise.

[Translation]

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P.F. Scheme

*158. SHRI BAGHUVANSH PRASAD SINGH : Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) the details of the Provident Fund Scheme of the Government;

(b) whether Provident Fund Policy is being changed;

(c) if so, whether the changed policy would provide more benefits to the employees as compared to old one; and

(d) if so, the full details in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (SHRI YASHWANT SINHA) : (a) Details of the Provident Fund Schemes of the Government are as follows:

(i) General Provident Fund

The General Provident Fund (Central Services) Rules, 1960 are applicable to pensionable Central Government servants. The minimum monthly rate of subscription is 6% of the emoluments of an employee and not more than his total emoluments. Interest is allowed at the rate of 12% per annum compounded annually. The employees