

- (d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (SHRI YASHWANT SINHA):

(a) to (d) A Government servant is entitled to HRA as per rates notified from time to time if he/she pays rent or contributes towards rent or house tax or property tax.

However, a Government servant is not entitled to HRA, if he/she:

(i) shares a rent-free accommodation allotted to another Government servant; or

(ii) resides in accommodation allotted to his/her parents/son/daughter by the Government; or

(iii) the spouse has been allotted accommodation at the same station by the Government.

Export of Leather Goods

5587. SHRI MULLAPALLY RAMACHANDRAN: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) the amount of foreign exchange earned from the export of leather goods during 1997-98;

(b) the countries which imported leather goods from India during the last year;

(c) whether sanctions imposed on India have adversely affected the export of leather goods; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE): (a) Export of leather goods worth US \$ 259.66 million was effected during the year 1997-98, which is around 18% of the total foreign exchange earnings from the Leather Sector.

(b) Germany, USA, UK, Italy, France are on top of the list of the countries which imported leather goods from India during the last year. Australia, Netherlands, Russia, Spain etc. are the other prominent importers.

(c) As per the reports received from the industry, the exports of leather goods from India have not been affected by the sanctions.

(d) Does not arise.

[Translation]

Methane Gas

5588. SHRI SUSHIL CHANDRA VARMA: Will the Minister of COAL be pleased to state:

(a) whether any experiment of extracting Methane Gas through Pipelines from coal mines and its use has been conducted anywhere in the country;

(b) if so, the details thereof and the expenditure incurred on extracting Methane Gas and the ways in which it can be utilised; and

(c) whether the system of extracting Methane Gas is economically cheaper?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COAL (SHRI DILIP RAY): (a) and (b) No, Sir. However, a project titled "coalbed Methane Recovery & Commercial Utilisation" is proposed to be undertaken by Ministry of Coal and UNDP/Global Environment Facility (GEF) in Sudamdih and Moonidih mines of BCCL. Methane Gas can be utilised as an alternative source of energy for power generation and as fuel in the form of Compressed-Natural-Gas for dump trucks in opencast projects.

(c) Methane from coal seams is being extracted on a commercial basis in the USA.

[English]

Cachar Paper Mills

5589. SHRI AJOY MUKHOPADHYAY: Will the Minister of INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether any representation has been received from the Professional Workers' Trade Union Centre of India about the marketing problems of Cachar Paper Mills in the North East; and

(b) if so, the action taken by the Government thereon?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF INDUSTRY (SHRI SUKHBIR SINGH BADAL): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) State Governments and the major paper consuming Departments of Government of India have been requested to patronise the paper produced by Hindustan Paper Corporation which has two manufacturing units Nagaon Paper Mill and Cachar Paper Mill located in Assam.

Kumbh Mela, Nasik

5590. SHRI MADHAV RAO PATIL: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government have made any allocation in the budget for Kumbh Mela to be held in Nasik during the next year;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) if not, the reasons therefor;

(d) the amount provided by the Union Government for Kumbh Mela held in Haridwar; and

(e) the reasons for disparity in providing the Central assistance for the same purpose to Maharashtra?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (SHRI YASHWANT SINHA):

(a) No specific allocation has been made for Kumbh Mela to be held in Nasik during the next year;

(b) Does not arise.

(c) It is for the concerned State Government to provide for pilgrimage and fairs;