

Due to a global over-supply of opiate raw materials, Indian opium has been facing increasing competition from alternate raw materials, particularly, the concentrate of poppy straw. This has resulted in the accumulation of huge stocks in the Government Factories. The estimated stock of opium as on 31.7.1984 is 2478 Metric Tonnes at 90⁰ Consistence.

The Government have been constrained to reduce the area licenced for poppy cultivation in the last few years in view of the acute competition faced in the international market and consequential accumulation of large stocks of opium in our factories. However, to safeguard the interest of opium growers, the reduction in the area has been brought about in a gradual manner by applying percentage cuts on the holdings of individual cultivators rather than de-licencing the cultivators. Further, cultivators with small holdings under poppy cultivation have been exempted from such percentage cuts.

In order to make it attractive to the buyers to make their purchases of Indian opium, the export price of opium has been reduced from time to time and incentive rebates have also been offered.

The matter regarding accumulation of stocks has also been taken up in the international forum and the socio-economic significance of opium production in the poppy growing region has been forcefully projected therein by Indian delegations over the years.

The Indian delegations to the U.N. Commission on Narcotic Drugs have been successful in getting certain resolutions passed which enjoin upon the various importing countries to support the traditional producers of opiate raw materials viz. India and Turkey and call upon the new producer countries to restrict their production mainly to meet their domestic requirements.

With the efforts of the Indian delegation, a project entitled, "Reduction

of excessive stocks of licit opiate raw materials" has also been included in the United Nations Basic Five Year Programme of Action for the biennium 1984-85.

The matter is also under constant review for appropriate action.

Arms Training to Customs Staff to Tackle Gangs of Smugglers

*476 SHRI AROUN SETHI : Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:—

(a) whether there is any proposal under consideration of Government to give arms training to the Customs staff by the Police to tackle armed smugglers along the borders and other sensitive areas; and

(b) if so, the details thereof ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI S M. KRISHNA) : (a) and (b) Training in the handling and use of fire-arms is imparted to the newly recruited officers of the Indian Customs and Central Excise Services, Group 'A' during their probationary period and Inspectors of Central Excise as a part of their Induction Training Programme. The training in respect of Group 'A' probationers is organised by the Staff College attached to the Directorate of Training, New Delhi and to the Inspectors of Central Excise by the four Regional Training Institutes located at Delhi, Bombay, Calcutta and Madras. The arms training at these places is given with the assistance of local Police authorities.

In addition, arms training is also organised by the Collectorate/Customs Houses to executive staff of Customs and Central Excise on a selective basis and in batches, according to requirements and subject to availability of the requisite facilities.