

[Translation]

Excise Duty Outstanding

1490. SHRI ARJUN SINGH YADAV:
SHRI MOHAMMAD ALI ASHRAFFATMI:
SHRI P. KUMARASAMY:

Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) the names of the companies against whom maximum amount of excise duty is outstanding;

(b) the total amount outstanding against these companies; and

(c) the steps being taken by the Government for the recovery of the amount outstanding?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI M.V. CHANDRASHEKHARA MURTHY):
(a) to (c) The information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House.

[English]

Strike in Banks

1491. SHRI ANNA JOSHI:
SHRI CHANDRESH PATEL:

Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) the number of strikes faced by banking industry since May, 1994 till now;

(b) the reasons therefor;

(c) the demands of the banks employees; and

(d) the action taken by the Government thereon?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI M.V. CHANDRASHEKHARA MURTHY):
(a) Indian Banks' Association (IBA) has reported that there have been three all India Strikes by bank employees since May 1994 viz. on 5th May, 11th May and 29th September, 1994.

(b) and (c) Reasons for resorting to strikes by the employees in banking industry were, *inter alia*, against alleged privatisation of banks, for grant of increments/fixed personal allowance to officers on account of computerisation and for early wage revision.

(d) IBA/Government has assured the banks' unions time and again that there is no move to privatise public sector banks and that their public sector character would not be compromised. They have also assured them that there is no threat to their jobs and job security. This position had also been explained personally by the Finance Minister in his meeting with the leaders of the Central Trade Unions on 29.1.1994. Further, the IBA has since signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the major trade unions on wage revision on 8.10.1994 providing for an overall increase in wage bill to the tune of 10.5% costing the banking industry Rs. 388 crores per annum in respect of the Award Staff employees in the public sector banks. Similar discussions with officers associations in the banking industry are in progress.

[Translation]

Balance of Payment and Balance of Trade

1492. DR. LAL BAHADUR RAWAL:
SHRI RAJVEER SINGH:

Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) the countries with which balance of payment/trade balance has been in favour of India during 1993-94;

(b) the countries having surplus and deficit trade balance with India during the above period; and

(c) the steps being taken by the Government to bring favourable balance of trade for India with countries with whom the trade balances are in deficit?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) and (b) India's balance of payments is compiled for only a limited number of countries. Data on the balance of payments are available upto 1990-91 only. As regards balance of trade, the major countries with which India had a surplus during 1993-94 are: Bangladesh, Hongkong, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, Russia, Singapore, U.S.A. etc. The major countries with which India had a deficit in the balance of trade accounting for a major percentage of the country's trade deficit are Australia, Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Iran, Nigeria, Republic of Korea, the U.K. etc.

(c) In order to increase exports, the Government have taken major steps for liberalisation of trade which include flexibility in export linked imports, reduction in import licensing, removal of procedural irritants through simplification of policy and procedures and pruning of negative list of exports. Export promotion is a continuous and ongoing process and a collaborative effort between Government and trade and industry. All possible steps are taken to boost exports in consultation with trade and industry. The States are also being increasingly involved in the export promotion process through schemes like EPIP etc.

Gatt Agreement

1493. SHRI NARAIN SINGH CHAUDHARI:
SHRI SOBHANADREESWARA RAO:
SHRI SIMON MARANDI:

Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) the details of impact of Dunkel proposals on Indian agriculture, subsidies, level of import content in consumption, scrapping of public distribution system, intellectual property rights and seed patenting;

(b) the reaction of the Government in respect of each of the items mentioned above; and

(c) the steps taken by the Government to ameliorate these adverse impacts?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) to (c) The thrust of the Agreement on Agriculture is to reduce trade distorting subsidies and to liberalise trade in agricultural products by reducing tariff

and non tariff barriers. As regards intellectual property rights our laws are mostly at par with international standards. We will be required to amend our patents law in accordance with the transition arrangements. We would need to consider fresh legislation in respect of geographical indications, layout designs of integrated circuits and undisclosed information. While there is no obligation to provide for patenting of seeds, a sui generis system of plant variety protection needs to be provided.

India has not undertaken any reduction commitments in respect of the domestic support to agriculture, nor has it taken any commitment on minimum market access. Thus the agreement does not affect our policies and programmes for the development of agriculture. The public distribution system is also not affected. Plant variety protection, as it does not affect the rights of farmers to re-plant and exchange seeds on the rights of researchers, would be in our own interest. The TRIPs Agreement provides a transition period and safeguards to deal with any abuse of intellectual property rights.

The Uruguay Round results on the whole would be advantageous to us in increasing our exports.

Value Added Tax System

1494. SHRI MOHAN SINGH (DEORIA):
SHRI TARA SINGH:
SHRI BRAHMANAND MANDAL:
SHRI PAWAN KUMAR BANSAL:
SHRI MANORANJAN BHAKTA:
SHRI MRUTYUNJAYA NAYAK:

Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government have constituted a Committee to examine all aspects of tax reforms especially the introduction of a new Value Added Tax System in the country;

(b) if so, whether this Committee has submitted its report;

(c) if so, the main recommendations thereof;

(d) whether the Government propose to introduce the Value Added Tax System;

(e) if so, the details of the plan worked out in this regard; and

(f) if not, the time by which the decision is likely to be taken in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI M.V. CHANDRASHEKHARA MURTHY):
(a) A Committee of State Finance Ministers has been constituted to go into all aspects of tax reform including introduction of the Value Added Tax.

(b) No, Sir.

(c) In view of (b) above, does not arise.

(d) to (f) All aspects of tax reform including introduction of Value Added Tax are being gone into by the Committee of State Finance Ministers. The report of the Committee is awaited.

[English]

Writing off of Bad Debts

1495. SHRIMATI GEETA MUKHERJEE:
SHRI INDRAJIT GUPTA:

Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether public sector banks follow a practice of writing off technically certain bad debts and keep them as debts under collection for the purpose of Pursuing recovery;

(b) if so, the amount of debts actually written off and technically written off by each of the last three years; and

(c) the amount of recoveries made during the above period and the manner in which these recoveries are accounted for?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI M.V. CHANDRASHEKHARA MURTHY):

(a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House.

(c) The amount of recovery of debts under collection year-wise is not available. The accounting of recoveries in respect of bad debts will depend on whether bad debt has been provided for leaving the account in the ledger intact or whether the bad debt has actually been written off in the ledger itself. In the former case, the recovery while being credited to the borrowal account in respect of which the recovery has been made, the provision made against the account is treated as excess and utilised for some other accounts at the year end or taken to profit and loss A/c. In the latter case, the amount will be credited to bad debt recovered account, or other account of a similar nature.

Foreign Tourists

1496. SHRI MANORANJAN BHAKTA:
SHRI K.M. PALA MATHEW:
DR. SUDHIR RAY:
MAJ. GEN. (RETD).
BHUWAN CHANDRA KHANDURI:

Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION AND TOURISM be pleased to state:

(a) whether a large number of officials have been frequently going abroad for wooing foreign tourists;

(b) if so, the details thereof during 1994 (till November 30) including the details of expenditure incurred;

(c) the results of such visits;

(d) whether the Government have any specific plan of action or policy framework with regard to methodology of wooing foreign tourists; and

(e) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION AND TOURISM (SHRI GHULAM NABI AZAD): (a) Tourism promotion is a continuous process and as such promotional delegations have been visiting tourism generating markets. In addition