

(a) whether the Government propose to remove Quantitative Restrictions (QRs) for import of some items from South Asian Countries;

(b) if so, whether the United Planters Association of Southern India urged the Government to retain the quantitative restrictions for sometime keeping in view that the plantations have facing a glut and prices of Tea, Rubber, etc. have crashed to lowest level; and

(c) if so, the steps taken by the Government to protect the domestic plantation industry?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMA-KRISHNA HEGDE) : (a) With effect from 1st August, 1998 India have removed Quantitative Restrictions imposed on BOP considerations, on 2307 items for import from SAARC countries only. This has been done to give fillip to intra-regional trade.

(b) and (c) Tea industry including UPASI have expressed apprehension about entry of sub standard tea into the Indian market and Indian tea being out priced by tea from SAARC countries. However, Orders and regulations under the Foreign Trade (Development and Regulation) Act 1992 and the Safeguards built into the SAPTA Agreement including Rules of Origin are considered sufficient to prevent surge of imports as also to ensure that only quality products are brought into the country.

#### Agricultural Export

1064. SHRI R.S. GAVALI :

SHRI PRASAD BABURAO TANPURE :

SHRI S.S. OWAISI :

DR. MADAN PRASAD JAISWAL :

Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government have developed crop specific strategy and customer markets abroad for boosting export of agricultural produces;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether some foreign countries have shown interest and have offered to cultivate some vegetables for exports;

(d) if so, the details thereof and location chosen by them in this regard;

(e) whether some countries have also asked India to give help in growing pulses;

(f) if so, whether the Government propose to lift some restrictions on agriculture produces; and

(g) if so, the likely benefits by lifting restriction?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMA-KRISHNA HEGDE) : (a) and (b) Strategy for export of agricultural products is determined by international demand and supply position, domestic surpluses, domestic and international prices, consumer preferences etc. The purpose of the strategy is primarily designed for enhancing productivity and production thereby generating exportable surpluses, producing goods meeting the international quality standards, technology upgradation, improvement in packaging, quality upgradation and product promotion in overseas markets through participation in fair/festivals and encouraging visits of business delegations.

(c) No, Sir.

(d) Does not arise.

(e) No, Sir.

(f) and (g) The Policy of the Govt. of permit exports of agricultural products is governed principally by the concerns of India's food security, maximising farm incomes and earning foreign exchange. Export Policy is being constantly updated and export regime in respect of agricultural products has been liberalised. Very few items are now either prohibited for exports or their exports restricted or are subject to quantitative ceilings. Major items for which the exports are banned include wheat, onions and sugar except for sugar, under preferential quota to European Union/USA.

#### Technical Committees

1065. SHRI DILEEP SANGHANI : Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government have constituted Technical Committees (TCs) in every district of the country to work out the crop loans and their uniform adoption by banks;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the steps taken by the Government to ensure easy flow of loans to farmers from the banks, particularly in Gujarat?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PERSONNEL, PUBLIC GRIEVANCE AND PENSIONS AND MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (BANKING, REVENUE AND INSURANCE) (SHRI KADAMBUR M. R. JANARTHANAN) : (a) to (c) In terms of the standing instructions of Reserve Bank of India (RBI)/ National Bank for agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD), credit institutions are required to adopt a production oriented system of lending in regard to disbursement, supervision and recovery of crop loans. According to these guidelines, Technical Committees consisting the representatives of State Government, banks and progressive farmers have been constituted in every district for, *inter-alia*, fixing the scale of finance for each crop grown in the district. Cost of opera-