

THE MINISTER OF LABOUR (DR. SATYANARAYAN JATIYA): (a) to (c) The Beedi Workers' Cess (Amendment) Bill, 1998 was passed by both the Houses of Parliament enhancing the lower and upper ceiling to be levied from 10 paise and 50 paise respectively to Re. 1 and Rs. 5 per thousand beedis rolled. However, the rate of cess has been kept at Re. 1 per thousand beedis rolled. This would create a corpus of about Rs. 42 crore annually as against Rs. 21 crore being generated presently. Some of the welfare measures to be effected out of these additional funds include opening of new hospitals/dispensaries, enhancement of scale of benefit etc. with regard to the Minimum Wages Act, 1948, some amendments are under active consideration of the Government and they are in advance stage of finalisation. The proposed amendments would reduce the period of revision of minimum wages, change the amount of compensation, provide for compounding of offences, secure redressal of grievances of workers and ensure more decentralised mechanism in implementation of the law.

[English]

Prevention of Sexual Harassment

1432. SHRI BALRAM SINGH YADAV:
SHRI MADHAVRAO SCINDIA:

Will the Minister of SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether the National Human Right Commission had evolved a sexual harassment prevention code in line with the Supreme Court directions to prevent sexual harassment at place of work;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) the steps taken by the Government to ensure compliance with this code in respect of Government Departments, Public undertakings, and private employers; and

(d) the directions issued to State and UT Governments to ensure compliance with the Supreme Court directions?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT (SHRIMATI MANEKA GANDHI): (a) to (d) The information is being collected and will be placed on the Table of the House.

Coaching Institutes for SCs/STs

1433. SHRI MUNI LALL: Will the Minister of SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT be pleased to state:

(a) the number of Coaching Institutes set up for the students of Scheduled Castes & Scheduled Tribes for competitive examinations to enter into the Central and State Services;

(b) whether the Government propose to set up more Coaching Institutes in the country; and

(c) if so, the time by which the said coaching institutes are likely to be set up?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT (SHRIMATI MANEKA GANDHI): (a) The information is being collected from all the State Governments/UT Administrations and will be laid on the table of the House.

(b) and (c) Proposals for setting up new Coaching Institutes have to be initiated by the State/UT Governments.

[Translation]

Migration of Persons from Kashmir

1434. SHRI AMAR PAL SINGH: Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether a large number of persons have migrated to Himachal Pradesh from Kashmir due to sudden increase in terrorist activities in Kashmir since March, 1998;

(b) whether the Government are aware of the fact that some terrorists are infiltrating into Himachal Pradesh in this process; and

(c) if so, the scheme to identify such terrorists and the number of Kashmiri terrorists rounded up in Himachal Pradesh so far?

THE MINISTER OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI L.K. ADVANI): (a) No such report has been received in this regard.

(b) and (c) During the current year, there has been one major militancy related incident in Himachal Pradesh. The State Governments of Jammu & Kashmir and Himachal Pradesh have deployed security forces on the Doda-Chamba border to conduct anti-militancy operations and to prevent infiltration of militants into Himachal Pradesh.

[English]

Utilisation of Funds

1435. SHRI ARJUN SETHI: Will the Minister of SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT be pleased to state:

(a) the reply to SQ No. 187 dated 7.6.98 regarding the utilisation of funds has since been collected; and

(b) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT (SHRIMATI MANEKA GANDHI): (a) and (b) Allocation of funds and their utilisation under Tribal sub-Plan out of State Plan are made by the respective States/UTs. Upto-date information have not been reported by the State Governments and UT Administrations so far.

Prices of LPG and Petroleum Products

1436. SHRI R.S. GAVAI: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government propose to hike prices of LPG and Petroleum products in near future; and

(b) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI SANTOSH KUMAR GANGWAR): (a) and (b) The Government had decided in November, 1997 that subsidy on LPG (domestic) and SKO (PDS) will be reduced in phases to reach the level of 15% and 33.33% of the import parity price by 2000-01 & 2001-02 respectively. The subsidy will be transferred to the fiscal budget from the year

2002 onwards. It was also decided that henceforth the prices of HSD would be on import parity basis. Accordingly the ex-storage point price of HSD has been revised as under:

Effective dates	Ex-Storage point price (excluding excise duty etc.) Rs./KL
07.11.97	7918.04
25.12.97	7996.84
01.03.98	8939.24
04.04.98	7645.47
20.05.98	7536.89

Purchase of Paddy from Punjab

1437. SHRI MOHAN SINGH:
PROF. AJIT KUMAR MEHTA:

Will the Minister of FOOD AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government have purchased/proposed to purchase damaged paddy stock from Punjab;

(b) whether over two million tonnes of unsold paddy is already lying with the FCI;

(c) if so, the quantity of paddy with value thereof purchased/proposed to be purchased from Punjab; and

(d) the manner in which the Government propose to dispose off the damage stock of paddy?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FOOD AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS (SHRI SATYA PAL SINGH YADAV): (a) No Sir. Paddy conforming to prescribed specifications are procured by the public procuring agencies under minimum support price scheme. However, following unseasonal rains in Punjab during October, 1998 the Government of India relaxed the specification of paddy for Kharif Marketing Season 1998-99 w.e.f. 27.10.98 to mitigate the sufferings of farmers of Punjab on account of unseasonal rains. The revised specification of paddy applicable for procurement after 27.10.98 are as under:

"Paddy stocks can be procured with damaged, discoloured, sprouted and weevilled grains all put together upto a maximum limit of 8%".