

(c) Studies were conducted to assess the working of Handloom Development Centres (HDC) and Market Development Assistance (MDA) schemes. Assessment made under these Studies have generally indicated socio-economic improvement in the condition of weavers, and the suggestions made in the studies are being implemented through the schemes.

(d) and (e) Wherever such delays have been brought to the notice of the Central Government, the matter has been taken up at appropriate level for expediting releases of financial assistance.

(f) and (g) State Governments have been repeatedly requested to take advantage of the development scheme with a view to ameliorate the condition of handloom weavers. The viable proposals received from the State Governments are promptly attended to.

Regional Office of Oriental Insurance Corporation

3285. SHRI MANIKRAO HODLYA GAVIT:
SHRI D.S. AHIRE:

Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government propose to open Regional Office-II of the Oriental Insurance Corporation Limited in Delhi in the near future;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether any site has been selected for the purpose;

(d) the time by which the New Regional Office is likely to start functioning; and

(e) the details of total Regional Offices of the Oriental Insurance Corporation Limited in the country alongwith their location?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (SHRI YASHWANT SINHA): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. Oriental Insurance Company Limited has reported that their company's Board has approved 2nd Regional Office at Delhi. Present Regional Office at Delhi has completed a premium of Rs. 206 crores in 1997-98 and is controlling 62 operational offices and satisfies the norms for having an additional Regional Office.

(c) It is proposed to start New Regional Office, as and when opened, from their existing premises.

(d) The New Regional Office is likely to start operations from 1st April, 1999.

(e) Total number of existing Regional Office is 18 and their location is as under:—

Name of R.O.	Location
R.O.-I Mumbai	Mumbai
R.O.-II Mumbai	Mumbai
R.O. Pune	Pune
R.O. Indore	Indore
R.O. Ahmedabad	Ahmedabad
R.O. New Delhi	New Delhi
R.O. Chandigarh	Chandigarh
R.O. Jaipur	Jaipur
R.O. Lucknow	Lucknow
R.O. Ghaziabad	Ghaziabad
R.O. Calcutta	Calcutta
R.O. Patna	Patna
R.O. Guwahati	Guwahati
R.O. Bhubaneshwar	Bhubaneshwar
R.O. Chennai	Chennai
R.O. Bangalore	Bangalore
R.O. Cochin	Cochin
R.O. Hyderabad	Hyderabad

TAFCO

3286. SHRI PRAMOTHES MUKHERJEE: Will the Minister of INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Tannery and Footwear Corporation Limited does not have any title over its purported immovable properties; and

(b) if so, the facts and details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF INDUSTRY (SHRI SUKHBIR SINGH BADAL): (a) and (b) The conveyance deed in respect of the immovable properties has not been executed in favour of Tannery and Footwear Corporation Limited (TAFCO) as the British India Corporation (BIC) had mortgaged the immovable properties with State Bank of India (SBI) as security for the loans it had taken from the Bank. However, TAFCO has undisturbed and uninterrupted possession of the properties since 1969 and has been exercising all rights of ownership over these properties.

Protection of Indian Patent

3287. DR. SUGUNA KUMARI CHELLAMELA: Will the Minister of INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government propose to introduce a new law to protect Indian Patents; and

(b) if so, the steps taken for early protection of national interest by interaction between the scientific establishments industries and Educational Institutions?

THE MINISTER OF INDUSTRY (SHRI SIKANDER BAKHT): (a) and (b) In India the grant of patents is governed by the Patents Act, 1970 which provides protection for Indian patents also.

In order to implement certain obligations contained in the Agreement on Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPs) which is a part of World Trade Organisation (WTO) Agreement, certain transitional arrangements are available to India. The government is exploring different options and strategies to fulfil the same in consultation with the organisations concerned.

Procurement of Cotton by NTC

3288. SHRI VAIKO: Will the Minister of TEXTILES be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government will direct all the NTC and cooperative spinning mills to procure cotton from the Cotton Corporation of India to avoid corruption;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) if not, the reasons therefor; and

(d) whether the Government are considering about yarn sales of NTC by cooperative spinning mills to be channelised through State cooperative societies to handloom weavers throughout India?

THE MINISTER OF TEXTILES (SHRI KASHIRAM RANA): (a) to (c) The NTC mills, except those under NTC (TN&P) and NTC APKK&M, have been directed not to purchase cotton from private traders. NTC(APKK&M) and NTC(TN&P) have been allowed with effect from 15.1.96 the flexibility to buy 60% of their total requirement of cotton from Cotton Corporation of India and State Cotton Federations and the condition stipulated earlier regarding minimum of 50% of purchase from Cotton Corporation of India was withdrawn. These two subsidiaries were also asked to ensure that their purchase from private traders was limited to 40%. No directions have been issued or is proposed to be issued on procurement of cotton by Cooperative Spinning Mills from Cotton Corporation of India.

(d) No, Sir.

Pending Income Tax Cases

3289. SHRI CHADA SURESH REDDY: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) the expected total income tax arrears in the country during the current financial year, till date, and the number of cases pending in the court;

(b) the measures taken to reduce the number of pending litigations; and

(c) the action proposed to expedite their realisation?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (SHRI YASHWANT SINHA): (a) The total expected income tax arrears during the current financial year cannot be estimated as such. However, the total arrear demand of Income Tax and Corporate Tax as on 31.3.98 is Rs. 45073.39 crores and the total outstanding demand as on 30th September, 98 is Rs. 37796.29 crores. As on 31.3.98, the number of cases pending in High Courts and Supreme Court are 54396 and 7788 respectively.

(b) The measures taken to reduce the number of pending litigations include bunching of cases in Supreme Court and High Courts for early hearing, meeting with concerned Chief Justices for expediting the disposal of cases, the Kar Vivad Samadhan Scheme etc.