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| (5) Tuticorin Port Dredging Project | 7,003 | T.N. |
| (6) Punjab Afforestation Project | 6,193 | Punjab |
| (7) Madhya Pradesh Sericulture Project | 2,212 | M.P. |
| (8) Manipur Sericulture Project | 3,962 | Manipur |
| (9) Rengali Irrigation Project | 7,760 | Orissa |
| (10) SIDBI(VI) | 30,000 | All Over India |

Policy for Unemployment

2561. DR. SANJAY SINH : Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government have formulated any policy to tackle the growing unemployment as a result of raising the age of retirement;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (SHRI YASHWANT SINHA) : (a) to (c) Increase in the age of retirement of Central Government employees does not have direct relation with the unemployment situation. Even after increase in the age of retirement, adequate vacancies would be available to fill up the posts which are considered functionally necessary.

Decline in the Export of Agricultural and Marine Products

2562. SHRI G. GANGA REDDY : Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether there has been a sharp decline in the export of agricultural and marine products during the first nine months of the last fiscal year;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the steps proposed to be taken to boost the exports of these products?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMKRISHNA HEGDE) : (a) to (b) Yes, Sir. There has been a decline of approximately 1% in value terms in the export of agricultural and marine products during the first nine months of 1997-98 as compared to the corresponding period of 1996-97.

Percentage decreases in value terms in case of agricultural products was around 8.2% while marine products registered an increase of 11.6%. There have been increases in the export of pulses, basmati rice, tobacco, spices, sesame & niger seeds, HPS groundnut, guar gum meal, meat & meat preparations, floriculture, fruits and vegetables, processed fruits and juices, tea and coffee in value terms. On the other hand, export of Non-basmati rice, wheat, oil meals, sugar and miscellaneous processed item have shown a decline.

(c) Some of the steps taken/proposed to be taken to enhance exports of these products include:-

- (i) Providing assistance for raising small and large nurseries for production of good quality planting material, upgradation of technical knowhow of farmers through demonstrations, trainings and publicity, rejuvenation of old orchards, area expansion, supply of minikits for vegetables, improving productivity and training of farmers.
- (ii) Provision of soft loans for setting up of grading/processing centres, auction platforms, ripening/curing chambers and quality testing equipment;
- (iii) Providing financial assistance to exporters/growers/Cooperative Societies for development of infrastructural facilities such as purchase of specialised transport units, establishment of pre-cooling/cold storage facilities, integrated post-harvest handling systems (pack houses);
- (iv) Grant of financial assistance for improved packaging and strengthening of quality control;
- (v) Establishment of vapour heat treatment facilities for improving the acceptability of the product especially the mangoes in overseas markets;
- (vi) Grant of Air-Freight Subsidy for exports of selected fresh vegetables and fruits;
- (vii) Arranging promotional campaigns such as buyer-seller meets and participation in important international fairs and exhibitions;
- (viii) Setting up of integrated cargo handling and cold storage facilities at various International Airports for handling export of perishable items such as fresh fruits and vegetables.
- (ix) Providing assistance in development of data base and dissemination of market information.

Conversion of SSIs into Private Ltd. Companies

2563. SHRI S.S. OWAISI : Will the Minister of INDUSTRY be pleased to state: