

(c) what are the general norms for investment in R & D in various fields under their control; and

(d) how this percentage of investment is comparable with similar undertakings and institutes of the developed countries?

THE MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI MURLI DEORA): (a) to (d) Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas encourages initiation of Research & Development Projects by the Oil PSUs as also by other technical organizations like Centre for High Technology, Directorate of Hydrocarbons and Petroleum Conservation and Research Association.

All these organizations have their own R&D wings which are Undertaking research projects with the aim to fulfil the energy security aims of the nation. During 2006-07, the PSUs and other technical organizations of the Ministry incurred an expenditure of Rs. 412.87 crore on research and development activities. This amount is approx 0.1% of the combined turnover of these companies.

There are no prescriptive norms for investment in R&D by Oil Sector Companies. Projects for R&D activities are taken up as per perceived needs for development of new products/technologies and resolution of technical issues encountered by the Companies. Over the year, expenditure on R&D activities is on the increase and the Oil PSUs/other technical organizations under this Ministry are being provided all kinds of encouragement for taking up more & more R&D activities.

Contractual workers in national carriers

*566. SHRI PRABHAT JHA: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government owned Indian Airlines and Air India are hiring manpower for their works on the contractual basis;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the department where this manpower has been utilized?

THE MINISTER- OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) The number of contractual employees in erstwhile Air India and Indian Airlines is 105 and 277 respectively. These contractual employees are now working in the National Aviation Company of India Limited (NACIL) into which erstwhile Air India and Indian Airlines have merged, in various departments namely Commercial, Finance/Audit, Security, Ground Supports etc.

Loan Waiver Scheme for farmers

*-567. SHRI PRAKASH JAVADEKAR: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether instructions have been issued by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) for the Loan Waiver Scheme announced in the annual budget;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether Government has taken any decision regarding inclusion of farmers in the scheme, who hold more than 2 hectares of land;

- (d) if so, the details thereof;
- (e) whether Government has taken any decision for inclusion of farmers in the scheme who have taken loan from private moneylenders; and
- (f) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): (a) to (f) The Debt Waiver and Debt Relief Scheme for farmers, announced in the Union Budget 2008-09, stipulates waiver of all loans disbursed by State Cooperative Banks, Regional Rural Banks and Cooperative Credit Societies before 31.03.2003, that were overdue on 31.12.2007 and which remained unpaid until 29.02.2008 for small farmers (land holding between 1 and 2 hectares) and marginal farmers (land holding upto 1 hectare). In respect of other farmers (land holding more than 2 hectares), there is a One Time Settlement (OTS) Scheme for all loans that were overdue on 31.12.2007 and which remained unpaid until 29.02.2008. The OTS provides a rebate of 25% against payment of the balance amount of 75%.

The guidelines, which are in the process of being drafted, will be issued by Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) to enable the implementation of the Debt Waiver and Debt Relief Scheme by June 30, 2008.

Closure of private company operated petrol-pumps

†*568. SHRI SATYAVRAT CHATURVEDI:
SHRI MOTILAL VORA:

Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

- (a) the number of petrol-pumps set up by private companies in the country, so far;
- (b) whether it is a fact that the petrol-pumps run by the private companies are being closed down due to incurring of losses;
- (c) if so, the number of petrol-pumps that have been closed down from 1st February, 2008 till date alongwith the details thereof, company-wise and State-wise; and
- (d) the steps taken by Government so that consumers do not suffer?

THE MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI MURLI DEORA):
(a) As on 1.04.2008, private sector companies have set up 2632 Retail Outlets (ROs) in the country.

(b) and (c) Essar Oil Limited (EOL) and Shell India Marketing Private Limited (SIMPL) have not dosed their RQs. Reliance Industries Limited (RIL) has informed that sales at their retail outlets (ROs) are negligible due to selling price differential between private and public sector ROs, leading to the closure of all their 1432 ROs in the country with effect from 15.03.2008 as per details given in the Statement (*See below*).

The prices of sensitive petroleum products are fixed by the Public Sector Oil Marketing Companies (OMCs) in consultation with the Government. Private oil companies are not subject to pricing restrictions by the Government and are free to take their pricing decisions on commercial considerations.

† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.