

[13 March, 2000]

RAJYA SABHA

(c) The import of rice during the last three years is as under:—

| Year | Quantity(MT) | Value (Rs.Lakhs) |
|-----------|--------------|------------------|
| 1997-98 | 54 | 6.16 |
| 1998-99 | 6213 | 568.96 |
| 1999-2000 | 2190 | 364.72 |

(Apr.—Nov., 1999)

Source: DGCI&S, Calcutta.

The above imports are insignificant when compared to our production. The concerned Department has been directed to step up inspections to verify/ensure that the varieties being imported are only common/coarse and that the broken percentage are 50% or more.

Wokers Affected by closure of Tea Gardens in Darjeeling

1869. SHRI DAWA LAMA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) how many workers and employees have been affected by closure of Pashok, Vah Tukvar and Potong Tea Estates of Darjeeling (Garden-wise);

(b) the amount of dues payable to them by TTCI on account of different heads (salary, bonus, PF, Gratuity); and

(c) what action Government propose for revival of the gardens?

MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI MURASOLI MARAN): (a) the number of workers and employees of non-functional Pashok and Vah Tukvar tea estates are as under:—

| | | |
|------------|---|-----|
| Pashok | — | 959 |
| Vah Tukvar | — | 747 |

Potong tea estate with a strength of 344 workers/employees is in operation.

(b) The amount outstanding for payment to employees and/or other concerned agencies for Pashok, Vah Tukvar and Potong tea estates is provisionally estimated around Rs. 6.75 crores.

(c) Tea Trading Corporation of India Ltd. which is a wholly owned subsidiary of STC is facing an acute financial crunch being a loss making Company and has been unable to discharge its obligations. The total liability of the Company is estimated around Rs. 36 crores as on 31.1.1997.

TTCI management filed a petition in Calcutta High Court for liquidation of the Company. The case is pending in the Court. TTCI is unable to generate funds for the revival of its gardens.

Shifting of Office of Salt Commissioner from Jaipur to Ahmedabad

1870. SHRI ANANTRAY DEVASHANKER DAVE: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that Kutch Saurashtra Region produces nearly 65 per cent Salt of total Salt production in the country;

(b) whether it is a fact that large number of representations have been received by Government over the years to shift the office of Salt Commissioner from Jaipur to Ahmedabad;

(c) if so, whether the proposals to shift the office is under consideration of Government; and

(d) if not, how would Government ensure easy access of the salt producers to the Salt Commissioner's office to resolve their problems quickly?

MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (DR. RAMAN): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) to (d) There had been a persistent demand from the Salt Manufacturers' Associations of Gujarat as well as the State Government of Gujarat for shifting the Salt Commissioner's Office from Jaipur to a suitable location in Gujarat on the ground that Gujarat contributes about 70% of the total salt production in the country. After careful consideration of the matter, orders were issued by the Government in 1994 to shift the Salt Commissioner's Office from Jaipur to Gandhi Nagar (Gujarat). However, the all India Salt Department Employees' Union filed a writ petition in the Rajasthan High Court at Jaipur against the orders of the Government. While admitting the writ petition, High Court stayed the operation of Government's orders. The matter is still pending before the High Court and is, therefore, sub-judice.

Measures for fungus and Bacteria free agricultural products

1871. SHRI SOLIPETA RAMACHANDRA REDDY: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether farm exports have shrunk during the last two financial years;