

board the aircraft on which they returned home, provided solace to all the released passengers who had been held hostage for over a week. His travel on the same aircraft as the three terrorist was solely on account of logistical compulsion brought about by the limited infrastructure facilities at Kandahar airport, and its incapacity to handle any more aircraft simultaneously.

Interest on delayed Payment

*15. SHRI P. PRABHAKAR REDDY: Will the Minister of SMALL SCALE INDUSTRIES AND AGRO AND RURAL INDUSTRIES be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Interest on delayed payments to the Small Scale and Ancillary Industrial Undertaking Act was enacted in 1993;

(b) if so, the purposes of the Act and whether the same were fully achieved;

(c) whether it is also a fact that the Act was further amended in 1998 to provide for the setting up of State Level Councils and if so, the purposes thereof;

(d) whether the aforesaid councils have actually been set up and if not, the reasons therefor; and

(e) what steps are contemplated to safeguard the interests of the Small Scale Industries?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF SMALL SCALE INDUSTRIES AND AGRO AND RURAL INDUSTRIES (SMT. VASUNDHARA RAJE): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The main purpose of this Act is to ensure payments to the SSI Units in time. This purpose has been partially achieved.

(c) Yes, Sir. The Act was further amended in 1998. One of the amendments provided for the setting up of State Level Industry Facilitation Councils (IFCs). The main purpose of this provision is to save the SSI Units from the botheration of instituting civil suits to

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recover the outstanding amounts. The IFCs are supposed to provide a speedy and simple redressal and recovery process.

(d) and (e) The IFCs have been set up in twelve States/UTs so far. Other States/UTs have also initiated the process. They have been requested to expedite the matter. It is too early to assess the impact of the IFCs.

Production of Foodgrains

†*16. SHRI BALWANT SINGH RAMOOWALIA:
SHRI RAJMOHINDER SINGH:

Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the rate of production of wheat, paddy, cotton, sugarcane, oilseed and pulses in the country is less than that of the foodgrains exporter countries like USA, Australia, Brazil, Canada etc";

(b) if so, what has been the average rate of production of the above foodgrains in India and in the said countries during last five years;

(c) whether Government have entrusted the responsibility of increasing the rate of production of foodgrains in the country to the agricultural scientists; and

(d) if so, by when the rate of production of foodgrains is likely to be at par with the above countries?

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI NITISH. KUMAR): (a) and (b) The yield rates of paddy, cotton, sugarcane, oilseeds and pulses in India are generally lower than those in countries like the USA, Australia and Canada. For wheat, the yield rates in India, though for some years lower than those in the USA, are better than those in Canada, Australia and Brazil. The crop-wise yield rates in India *vis-a-vis* other countries

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.