

(b) whether we are increasingly becoming import-dependent on newsprint; and

(c) if so, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI MURASOLI MARAN): (a) The total import of newsprint during the period April to August, 1999 was 1.53 lakh MT as per the provisional import figures available with the Government. The import of newsprint is allowed without a licence to actual users. The total quantity expected to be imported this year will depend on demand and supply situation in the market.

(b) and (c) The demand for newsprint in the country is met both by import and indigenous production. It will be seen from these figures that the quantity of newsprint imported is not showing an increasing trend. The relevant figures for the last three years are as follows:

| Period | Imports Quantity (in lakh tonnes) | Value (Rs. crores) |
|---------|-----------------------------------|--------------------|
| 1996-97 | 5.47 | 1077.43 |
| 1997-98 | 5.39 | 1146.98 |
| 1998-99 | 4.26 | 1003.62 |

News-item captioned 'Desh mein Udyog ki halat chintajanak'

†1854. SHRI SWARAJ KAUSHAL: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the newsitem appearing in Dainik Jagran, dated 28th November, 1999, under the caption "Desh mein Udyog ki halat chintajanak";

(b) whether Government have prepared any action-plan to improve the condition of industries;

(c) if so, the details thereof; and

(d) by when the plan is likely to be implemented?

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

[20 December, 1999]

RAJYA SABHA

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (DR. RAMAN): (a) Yes, Sir. Data released subsequently by Central Statistical Organisation (CSO) on 10th December, 1999, reveal that the growth rate of industrial production has improved and that during October, 1999 the growth rate was 8.7% against 0.0% during October last year.

(b) to (d) The steps taken to improve industrial production, interalia, are:

1. special package announced for revival of growth in exports;
2. repeal of ULCRA and incentive to house ownership;
3. the Government has allowed buy back of shares and intercorporate loans to boost investment and revive the capital market;
4. a new power policy announced;
5. excise duties rationalized;
6. Income tax rate and custom duties on infrastructure projects reduced;
7. liberalization of inflow of FD1/NRIOCB investment and the guidelines for foreign equity investment in NBFC have further been modified;
8. setting up of Foreign Investment Implementation Authority (FIIA) to provide single point interface between foreign investors and Government machinery;
9. setting up of National Accreditation Boards including a National Patent Office and a National Benchmarking Patent House to promote integration of best practices in the Indian Industry;
10. restoration of 100% MODVAT credit;
11. reduction in CRR;
12. withdrawal of interest rate surcharge on import finance.

Trade Deficit

*1855. SHRI ONWARD L. NONGTUDU: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state: (a) the details of trade deficit of the country for the last five year