

August 1998. Against the Pound Sterling, the rupee had depreciated by 0.39 per cent in July 1998, but had appreciated by 0.17 per cent in August, 1998. The rupee had touched the lowest level of Rs. 43.42 per US dollar on August 19, 1998 and Rs. 71.06 per Pound Sterling on August 31, 1998.

(b) and (c) The exchange rate of the rupee in India is market determined, and is influenced by the trends in inflows and outflows of foreign exchange on both the current and capital accounts of India's balance of payments. The exchange rate movements of the rupee against the major currencies are also influenced by the movements of these currencies in the international currency markets. While the exchange rate volatility of the rupee in July and August, 1998 may, partly, be attributable to the turmoil in East Asian financial markets, the overall movements in the exchange rate of the rupee may be considered to be broadly consistent with economic indicators.

Recommendations of the Committee set up to Rationalise Excise Levels

965. **SHRI SATISH CHANDRA SITARAM PRADHAN:** Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Committee set up to rationalise excise levels has submitted its report to Government;

(b) if so, the details of the major recommendations made by the Committee;

(c) what is the reaction of Government and Industrial organisations thereto; and

(d) the details of decision taken/proposed to be taken thereon and present status of decision taken in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (BANKING, REVENUE AND INSURANCE) (SHRI KADAMBUR M.R. JANARTHA-NAN): (a) to (d) The information is

being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House.

Central Assistance given to DGHC

966. **SHRI DAWA LAMA:** Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) the central assistance given to Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council through Government of West Bengal, during 1987-88 to 1997-98 year-wise;

(b) whether Government have received proper utilisation certificates; and

(c) if not, the proposal of Government to obtain the same?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (SHRI YASHWANT SINHA): (a) the Central Government does not release any funds directly to Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council (DGHC). Funds are released to DGHC by State Government of West Bengal. Central Government releases special Central assistance under Hill Areas Development Programme (HADP) for the hill areas of West Bengal. Assistance released under HADP to Government of West Bengal for 1987-88 to 1997-98 is as follows:

Year	Amount (Rs. in crore)
1987-88	10.44
1988-89	12.14
1989-90	18.75
1990-91	21.00
1991-92	19.32
1992-93	19.32
1993-94	20.61
1994-95	10.43
1995-96	21.42
1996-97	33.35
1997-98	22.23

(b) and (c) Since funds are released to DGHC by the State Government under the State Plan, State Government has to obtain proper utilisation certificates from DGHC.