

(c) the norms fixed for re-export of cigarettes?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE): (a) to (c) As per the Import Policy, cigarettes (IT CHS Code 24.02) fall under Restricted List of items. No proposal has been received for allowing import of cigarettes for the purpose of re-export. Under the Duty Exemption Scheme, there are no norms where import of cigarettes is allowed for re-export of cigarettes.

DEPB rates

2337. **SHRI S. AGNIRAJ:** Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) what is the total number of applications pending for fixation of DEPB rates as on date;

(b) whether it is a fact that exporters are not getting any benefit due to the delay in fixing DEPB rates;

(c) whether it is also a fact that due to stringent guidelines many small exporters are not able to get the rates fixed for these items; and

(d) if so, what steps are being taken to improve the system?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE): (a) Fixation of DEPB rates is a continuous process. As on date, 68 applications are pending for fixation of rates.

(b) All exporters are not covered by the DEPB scheme. For cases which are not covered by this scheme, two other alternative schemes are available, namely, the Duty Drawback Scheme and the Advance Licensing Scheme, under which duty relief is provided to the exporters.

(c) and (d) The guidelines are not stringent. A standard procedure to be followed for deciding the DEPB rates is laid down under para 7.25 of the Exim Policy, 1997—2000 and Appendix 52 of

the Handbook of Procedure Vol. 1, 1997—2000 as amended.

Fall in export of Pharmaceuticals

2338. **MISS MABEL REBELLO:** Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that the fall in export of pharmaceuticals by Rs. 200 crores is due to non-issuance of N.O.C. by the Ministry of Health;

(b) if so, whether Government have fixed responsibilities of the officers concerned; and

(c) if so, the names and designations of the officers and action taken against them?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE): (a) to (c) The information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House.

Trade Deficit

2339. **SHRI SITARAM KESRI:** Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the trade balance deficit has gone up from \$ 5.6 billion in 1997-98 to \$ 6.7 billion in 1998-99 having an adverse impact on the national economy;

(b) if so, what are the reasons therefor; and

(c) what steps Government have already taken or proposed to be taken to improve the position?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE): (a) As per the provisional data received from the Directorate General of Commercial Intelligence & Statistics (DGCI&S), the trade deficit during 1997-98 was to the tune of US \$ 6799 million. During April-October, 1998-99 the trade deficit has been estimated as US \$ 5797 million.