

brought to the notice by the Coir Board to all concerned. Unless Government of India is satisfied that necessary corrective steps have been taken, it is not possible to release any grants for the KCWWFB.

Supply of outdated and obsolete technology

39. SHRI VED PRAKASH P. GOYAL: Will the Minister of INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have conducted any survey to ascertain that foreign companies have provided outdated and obsolete technology to India;

(b) whether any think tank organisation or monitoring agency is working to check if,

(c) if so, the details thereof;

(d) whether Government are aware that the practice of making India a dumping ground of out-dated technologies is very old; and

(e) if so, whether any of the Governments have discovered and acted on it?

THE MINISTER OF INDUSTRY (SHRI SIKANDER BAKHT): (a) to (e) No specific survey has been conducted by the Government in the Ministry of Industry to ascertain whether foreign companies have provided outdated and obsolete technology to India.

In the liberalised technology import regime, market competitiveness of a product is the crucial determinant. Hence, technologies being provided to Indian Companies are dependent on the commercial acceptance of such technology in a competitive environment.

Shifting of the Office of Salt Commissioner

40. SHRI PRAFULL GORADIA: Will the Minister of INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have received any representation for shifting of Salt Commissioner's office from Calcutta to Ahmedabad;

(b) if so, the reaction of Government thereto; and

(c) by when it is likely to be shifted to Ahmedabad?

THE MINISTER OF INDUSTRY (SHRI SIKANDER BAKHT): (a) to (c) 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 Gandhinagar (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, the High Court stayed the operation of Government's orders. The matter is still pending before the High Court and is, therefore, sub-judice.

Conversion of SSIs into private limited companies

41. SHRI PRAFULL GORADIA: Will the Minister of INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is any proposal to convert small scale industries into private limited companies in order to lend them transparency in their operations;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the measures taken by Government to check the increasing sickness in SSI units?

THE MINISTER OF INDUSTRY (SHRI SIKANDER BAKHT): (a) and (b) No, Sir. There is no such proposal as entrepreneurs are free to establish a business organization most appropriate to their need viz. Proprietorship, firm or company.

(c) Following measures have been taken to check sickness in SSIs:

1. Modified definition of sick SSI Units.
2. Reduced rate of interest for rehabilitation.
3. Prompt viability studies/nursing programmes of identified sick units, setting up of cells at important regional centres, Head Office to deal with the sick industrial units, provision of expert staff, including technical personnel to look into technical aspects.

4. State Level Inter Institutional Committees exist under the Chairmanship of Secretary (Industries) of the State Govts, for revival of sick units.
5. RBI has advised its regional offices (Convenor of SLIICs) regarding setting up of the Sub-Committees of the Forum wherein the individual cases can be discussed.

Industrial Growth

42. SHRI C. RAMACHANDRAIAH: Will the Minister of INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

- (a) the projected industrial growth for the current fiscal year;
- (b) the actual industrial growth during the first six months of the year; and
- (c) the reasons for decline in the industrial growth?

THE MINISTER OF INDUSTRY (SHRI SIKANDER BAKHT): (a) and (b) The overall industrial growth in terms of the Index of Industrial Production (Base 1993-94=100) was 3.6% during April-Sept., 1998 as compared to 6% during the comparable period of the previous year. No projection of industrial growth for the current fiscal year has been carried out. However, it is expected that the growth in industrial production would pick up during the second half of the financial year as a result of various measures taken by the Government to boost production.

(c) The slow down in industrial growth can be attributed to both the domestic and external factors. Domestic factors include weak demand on account of inadequate investment in infrastructure sectors, like power, ports and transport, and slow down in general investment mainly due to capital market conditions and partly due to corporate restructuring in some industries in order to become internationally competitive. On the external side, the export growth has been negative which has been aggravated by fall in world exports.

The demand has been slackening for basic goods like steel, cement, commercial vehicles, capital goods as well as consumer durables. This has resulted in cut back of production by the industries and build-up of inventories.

Export growth declined to (-) 3.28% during April-September, 1998 following significant declaration from 21.4% in 1995-96 to 4% in 1996-97 and 2.6% in 1997-98. As exports constitute 39.7% of total manufacturing output in the country, the decline in exports has adversely impacted industrial production.

Amendment of the Patent Act, 1970

43. SHRI P. PRABHAKAR REDDY: Will the Minister of INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

- (a) whether his attention has been drawn to the observation of the Finance Minister made abroad that Government are committed to the obligations under World Trade Organisation (WTO) regarding Trade-related Intellectual Property Rights;
- (b) if so, whether it is proposed to amend the Patent Act, 1970 shortly;
- (c) whether a legislation for the purpose would be brought in the winter session of Parliament;
- (d) if so, the details thereof; and
- (e) whether adequate safeguards would be provided for protecting India's bio-diversity?

THE MINISTER OF INDUSTRY (SHRI SIKANDER BAKHT): (a) to (e) In order to implement the obligations contained in TRIPs Agreement of WTO Agreement, India has time till January 01, 2000 and a further time till January 01, 2005 to introduce product patent protection to areas of technologies not protected so far.

However, in order to comply with the obligations which came into force from January 01, 1995 and also to comply with WTO rulings in the Indo-US Dispute on Patent Protection for Pharmaceutical and Agro-Chemical Products, Government is exploring different options and strategies for protection of public interest.

Rate of industrial growth

44. SHRI P. PRABHAKAR REDDY: Will the Minister of INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

- (a) the rate of Industrial production in the country during April-September, 1998, as compared to the growth rate in the corresponding period of the last year;