

MOOKHERJEE): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

Irregularities in Subsidy to Fertilizer Companies

[†]2249. SHRI BRATIN SENGUPTA: Will the Minister of CHEMICALS AND FERTILIZERS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Expenditure Reforms Commission, in its latest Report, has pointed out the irregularities being committed while giving subsidy to fertilizer companies;

(b) whether Government have made an indepth study of this Report, focussing attention on its important issues;

(c) whether Government have established the fact regarding irregularities being committed; and

(d) the names of companies found involved in such irregularities?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CHEMICALS AND FERTILIZERS (SHRI SATYA BRATA MOOKHERJEE): (a) Expenditure Reforms Commission (ERC), in its report, has observed that the existing unit-wise Retention Price-cum-Subsidy Scheme (RPS) is a cost plus scheme and provides no incentive either to buy the cheapest plant or cut down operating costs. Besides, there is no pressure on fertilizer producers to be efficient.

(b) to (d) The recommendations of ERC are under consideration of the Government with a view to formulate a new pricing policy for urea units in place of existing RPS. Further, the issue relating to excess drawal of subsidy by urea units on account of under statement of installed capacities has already been referred to a Committee headed by Dr. Y.K. Alagh, constituted by the Government in May 2000 for giving recommendations to the Government. The details about the companies involved in under statement of capacities will

[†]Original notice of the Question was received in Hindi.

depend on the report of the Committee and the Government's decision thereon. However, pending the report of the Alagh Committee, an interim reassessment of capacities of urea units has already been carried out with effect from 1.4.2000, which would result in a saving of Rs. 450 crore per annum, approximately.

Smuggling of Sandal Wood

2250. SHRI C.O. POULOSE: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have estimated the total area of sandal wood forests and the wealth of sandal wood in these forests;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) the estimated smuggling of sandal wood reported; and

(d) the steps taken to stop such smuggling?

THE MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI T.R. BAALU): (a) and (b) As per the available information, Sandalwood species occur in 6.40 lakh ha. of forest area in the country.

(c) No such figures have been reported by the State Governments.

(d) The State Governments are protecting Sandalwood forests also through their protective staff as per provisions of their Forest Acts and Rules as applicable.

Decline in Elephant Population

2251. SHRI C.M. IBRAHIM: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the news report which appeared in the Indian Express dated the 11th February, 2001 under the caption "They want poachers-get fifth dead elephant";

(b) if so, how the elephant population has declined during the last five years and this year, indicating elephants' population, births and deaths since 1996-97, onwards; and