

SHRI SOMPAL: The hon. Member, Mr. Chaliha, is right. We have worked together under Dr. M.S. Swaminathan to go into the reasons and factors responsible for low productivity in agriculture in the North-Eastern States and to also devise means to improve it. And it was an important Expert Committee. We all had given our own inputs and the Committee visited the North-East twice at least to make an on-the-spot study of the various phenomena and factors and any recommendation given by the Swaminathan Committee will surely be considered by the Ministry.

SHRI S.R. BOMMAI: Sir, the hon. Minister, in his reply, has set out a number of steps to promote the food-processing industry in Statement III. As we know, many farmers have come forward to set up processing units and give employment to a number of people. But the Exit Policy announced by the Minister of Commerce has allowed multinationals to come in this field. The import duties have also been reduced. This will adversely affect the Indian farmers' processing units. Will the Ministry of Agriculture take up this matter with the ministry of Commerce and see that no adverse effect or impact is suffered by these processing units?

SHRI SOMPAL: Mr. Chairman, I may state that there is no restriction on the food-processing units being set up by anybody in India. And the view of the hon. Member, who had been a senior Minister in Governments at the Centre as well as in the States. Whosoever comes forward, is given assistance on a non-discriminatory basis. So far as his perception of the adverse impact of the multinationals coming is concerned, I may state that not many multinationals have come. Only Rs. 1,200 and some odd crores have flowed since 1991 when the large scale liberalisation programme was embarked upon. So, not many companies have come and they are not likely to have any adverse impact. If they come, we would rather welcome them because it will enhance the market policy and the indigenous investment initiatives are also not very encouraging so far.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Question Hour is over.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO STARRED QUESTIONS

Extension of Concessional Gas for TNGCL

*525. **SHRI KHAGEN DAS:**
SHRI DIPANKAR MUKHERJEE:

Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Tripura Natural Gas Company Limited (TNGCL) had requested Government to extend concessional gas for TNGCL;

(b) if so, whether the same has been acceded to;

(c) if not, the reasons therefor;

(d) whether the above concession is applicable in North-East, except Tripura; and

(e) if so, the reasons for this discrimination?

THE MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI K. RAMAMURTHY):

(a) Tripura Natural Gas Co. Ltd. (TNGCL) has requested for a further discount over and above the concessional price at which natural gas is supplied to consumers in North-Eastern region.

(b) No, Sir.

(c) TNGCL is buying the natural gas at a concessional price available for consumers in North-Eastern region but is selling the same to its consumers at a much higher price. In the circumstances, the rationale for asking a further discount in the price of natural gas is not justifiable.

(d) Concessional price of natural gas is applicable to all consumers in the North-Eastern region including Tripura. A further discount of Rs. 300 per thousand cubic meter is also available on a case to case basis for existing consumers as well as new consumers.

(e) The additional discount is available to the consumers only on a case to case basis. In view of (c) above, request of TNGCL was not agreed to.

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