

Removal of Procedural Impediments for Speeding up Transaction Processes

2190. SHRI SHIV CHARAN SINGH: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether domestic exporters have demanded removal of procedural impediments for speeding up transaction processes.

(b) if so, details of their demands; and

(c) reaction of the Government thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI BOLLA BULI RAMAIAH): (a) to (c) Exim Policy and the related Handbook of Procedure is a document for facilitating the export promotion activities from the country. Regular meetings are held with Trade and Industry to elicit their response on the Exim Policy and the related procedures. The trade and industry raise their demand by way of individual representation, memorandum submitted to the Government and in the Open House meet organised regularly by the various apex bodies of Trade and Industry.

The Government carries out procedural simplifications wherever it is felt that the demand of the Trade and Industry on procedural simplification will promote exports either by speeding up of transaction process or by removal of hurdles.

Liberalised Scheme for Importers

2191. SHRI AMAR SINGH: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have chalked out any liberalised scheme for importers wherein 80 per cent of the goods would be cleared without any detailed examination;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) by when it is likely to be implemented?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI BOLLA BULI RAMAIAH): (a) to (c) Yes, Sir. There is a scheme called 'The Green Channel Assessment Scheme' in which importers with unblemished records and Super Star Trading Houses, Star Trading Houses etc. are allowed clearance without detailed examination. However, for other importers 10 per cent of the goods are subjected to examination.

Closure of TTCI Tea-gardens

2192. SHRI DAWA LAMA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state.

(a) whether Government are aware that thousands of labourers have been thrown out of employment due to virtual closure of three tea-gardens owned by TTCI e.g. Peshok, Vah Tukvar and Putung;

(b) what are the proposals of Government to open the tea-gardens; and

(c) whether Government are willing to save the tea-garden workers and their families from starvation immediately?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI BOLLA BULI RAMAIAH): (a) to (c) Pashok and Vah Tukvar tea gardens located in West Bengal, under Tea Trading Corporation of India Ltd., (TTCI) are not producing tea due to labour problems resulting from delay in payment of salary/wages etc. on account of acute financial problems of TTCI Ltd.

Potong Tea Estate owned by the Corporation is however in running condition and salary/wages and ration of workers of Potong Tea Estate are being disbursed out of the sale proceeds of the produce of the garden for the current period on monthly basis.

Government had decided to dispose of the gardens. The sale process could not be finalised due to legal constraints

and financial difficulties of the prospective buyers. The Government is seized of the position and is exploring various options.

Global Trade Powers Dragging India to dispute Settlement body of W T O

2193. SHRI RAMDAS AGARWAL:

Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the present Government have overlooked "risks of international isolation in global trade arena" as reported in an article published in the Times of India, New Delhi, dated 20th July, 1997;

(b) whether global trade powers are trying to drag India to the dispute settlement body of the World Trade Organisation (WTO);

(c) if so, the reasons therefor indicating why India wants to continue to maintain Quantitative Restrictions (QRs) and slow down the autonomous trade liberalisation process which began in 1991; and

(d) concrete steps taken so far by Government to avoid loss of India's export markets "abroad", "credibility" and "isolation" in global trade?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI BOLLA BULI RAMAIAH): (a) No. Sir.

(b) to (d) The news item referred to in the question mainly deals with the consultations held in the Committee on Balance of Payments Restrictions of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) with India on the quantitative restriction on imports maintained by India under the provisions of Article XVIII : B of the General Agreement on Traffic and Trade (GATT), 1994. The news item mentions that India risked isolation in the global trade arena by refusing to notify an internationally acceptable time frame for eliminating barriers, and that the collapse of the talks has prompted global trade

Question:

powers, including the EU, the US, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and Switzerland to initiate dispute settlement proceedings against India.

Government of India had presented to the WTO Committee on Balance of Payments Restrictions a plan for the elimination of residual quantitative restrictions on imports maintained under Article XVIII:B of the GATT. This plan was discussed at the meeting of the Committee held on 10-11 June 1997 and at the resumed meeting held on 30 June-1 July 1997, when due to divergence of opinion among Members of the Committee, the consultations concluded without consensus. Therefore, it may not correct to state that India was isolated during the deliberations of this Committee.

Some of the Members that had expressed the view that the time period under India's plan was too long, namely, Australia, Canada, the European Communities, New Zealand, Switzerland and the United State of America, in separate requests, have sought formal consultations with India under Article XXII of GATT 1994 and the Understanding in Rules and Procedures Governing the Settlement of Disputes (DSU) alleging that continued maintenance of quantitative restrictions on imports for balance of payments purposes by India when there have been improvements in India's balance of payments is inconsistent with India's obligations under the WTO. India has accepted the requests for consultations. There are indications that the complainants would like to work towards a mutually acceptable solution. India's approach to these consultations would also be similar.

Import of coffee under OGL

2194. DR. D. VENKATESHWAR RAO: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have decided to place coffee under Open General Licence import scheme;

(b) if so, reasons for increase in domestic coffee prices; and