

- * launch of a Quality Upgradation Programme in the Nilgiris district of Tamil Nadu for improving quality of tea manufactured by small growers.
- * increase in basic customs duty on tea from 35% to 70% in the Budget of 2001-2002.
- * ban on sale of tea in the Domestic Tariff Area by 100% Export Oriented Units (EOUs) and units in Export Processing Zones (EPZs).
- * increase in the allowance under Section 33 AB of Income Tax Act from, 20% to 40% in the Budget 2001-02, designed to enhance productivity and quality through rejuvenation and replantation.

Selection of SC/ST/OBCs on merit

2295. MISS FRIDA TOPNO : Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is a fact that as provided under para 11 of Explanatory Notes to DOPT OM NO. 36012/2/96-Estt (Res.) dated 2nd July, 1997, persons belonging to SCs/STs and OBCs who are selected on merit are not required to be shown against the quota of vacancies/posts reserved for their communities; and

(b) if so, the total number of persons belonging to SC, ST and OBCs who have been selected/recruited/promoted on merit to different categories of services and not counted against the 'reserved quota of vacancies/posts' for their communities during the last three years under his Ministry?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI RAJIV PRATAP RUDI) : (a) Yes Sir.

(b) Information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House.

Decline in tobacco export to Russia

2296. SHRI NANA DESHMUKH : Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state :

(a) whether the issue of export of tobacco to Russia which had fallen from 40,000 MT to 6,000 MT was taken up in the historic meeting on the 4th November, 2001 at Moscow;

(b) whether the tobacco farmers of Andhra Pradesh have made an earnest appeal to raise the issue at the meet; and

(c) if so, the details of the decision taken ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI RAJIV PRATAP RUDI) : (a) to (c) An appeal was published in various national newspapers on November 2, 2001 on behalf of the tobacco growers of Andhra Pradesh, seeking intervention at the highest level during the State visit of Prime Minister to the Russian Federation on November 4-7, 2001. The appeal spoke of distress caused to tobacco farmers by the decline in export of Indian tobacco to Russia. In response to this appeal, the need to ensure that Indian exports to Russia of traditional commodities like tobacco do not suffer because of lack of rupee repayment funds was mentioned at meetings with the Russian side during this visit. It was felt that the Inter Governmental Commission for Trade, Economic, Scientific, Technological and Cultural Cooperation shall look into this issue more closely.

Promotion of Border Trade

2297. DR. ARUN KUMAR SARMA : Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state :

(a) the finalized routes of the Trans-Asian Railways and the Trans-Asian Highway networks indicating its stage of implementation and exact location through the North-East;

(b) the details of infrastructure development plan proposed and being executed along the North-East boundaries of India indicating location-wise plan, allocation, executing agency, progress made and target set for each project; and

(c) the details of proposals being studied or programmes being executed through IIFT and other agencies for promotion of Border Trade and market development in NER ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI RAJIV PRATAP RUDI) : (a) The route is not yet finalised.

(b) The details are as follows :

(Amount in Cr.)			
Project	Executing Agency	Year of Sanction	Total Cost
1	2	3	4
(i) Trade Center at Sutarkhandi, Assam	Government of Assam	1999-2000	8.16