

PROF. MADHU DANDAVATE: It is not within my power to give the ruling. The aspect which he has raised is no doubt an important aspect but it has nothing to do with the question which has been asked. Sir, I would like to seek your guidance whether it is within the ambit of the question or outside.

MR. CHAIRMAN: It is a suggestion.

SHRI SANTOSH BAGRODIA: He has mentioned about the extension counters in his reply and that is why I raised about it. Will he open extension counters in each industry from the nearby bank branches?

PROF. MADHU DANDAVATE: As far as my response is concerned, though it is not directly connected with this, I accept the suggestion and we will try to examine it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That is all.

PROF. SOURENDRA BHATTACHARJEE: Mr. Chairman, Sir, already a point was raised that there was some probe regarding loan melas organised in the preceding years. My question to the Finance Minister is, does he contemplate organising such loan melas in future and on a very well-defined basis in order to help the deserving population all over the country?

PROF. MADHU DANDAVATE: Sir, as far as loan melas are concerned—though they are not directly related to the question—since he has asked it and you have permitted it ..

MR. CHAIRMAN: Two Members have raised it.

PROF. MADHU DANDAVATE: I would say very clearly.

SHRI JAGESH DESAI: Though this is not within the ambit of this question, you want to answer it.

12.00 NOON

PROF. MADHU DANDAVATE: I am in the hands of the Chair. You need not listen to me. I say, Sir, I am in your hands.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I have permitted him.

PROF. MADHU DANDAVATE: Sir, you directed me and I do not defy the Chair. As far as the loan melas are concerned, we will have to wait and examine very clearly the organising of loan melas in public places where the machinery is shifted from banks to public places where all the details as to whom the loans are given and how much they have demanded are revealed, and whether according to the accepted norms and rules that would be acceptable or not and that is followed or not; that itself will have to be examined. Personally, I am not in favour of organising such loan melas in public places.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Question Hour is over.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

Review of long term Import/Export policy

*65. SHRI SURENDRA SINGH
THAKUR:

SHRI YASHWANT SINHA:

Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government propose to review the long term import/export policy with a view to eliminating non-essential imports; and

(b) if so, what are the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND TOURISM (SHRI ARUN KUMAR NEHRU): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. The review of the Import & Export Policy is being undertaken in conjunction with other related aspects which have a bearing on imports. The aims of the review include:—

(i) enhancement of exports with particular reference to higher value-added exports;

(ii) import compression; and

(iii) making available necessary inputs for the domestic economy in accordance with the Government's developmental priorities.

State funding of elections

*66. SHRI MURLIDHAR CHANDRAKANT BHANDARE: Will the Minister of LAW AND JUSTICE be pleased to state:

(a) what steps are being contemplated towards effecting electoral reforms as declared by the new ruling party in their election manifesto issued on the eve of the last Lok Sabha Elections, especially State funding of elections; and

(b) whether it would be possible to enforce State funding of elections for the Legislative Assemblies where elections are due shortly; if so, what are the broad features of the relevant scheme?

THE MINISTER OF STEEL AND MINES WITH ADDITIONAL CHARGE OF THE MINISTRY OF LAW AND JUSTICE (SHRI DINESH GOSWAMI): (a) Various proposals for introducing greater purity in the electoral process including the question of State funding of elections to reduce money power are under earnest consideration. Details are yet to be worked out.

(b) No, Sir. This is unlikely.

Exempting India from 'Super 301' provisions by the United States

*57. SHRIMATI VEENA VERMA:
SHRI KAPIL VERMA:

Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the statement of the outgoing U.S. Ambassador, Dr. John Hubbard expressing the belief that Bush Administration would remove India from the trade hit list under 'Super 301' provisions;

(b) if so, what is Government's information in the matter; and

(c) whether Government propose to negotiate bilaterally with the United States on 'Super 301'?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND TOURISM (SHRI ARUN KUMAR NEHRU): (a) Yes, Sir. Government of India is aware of reports appearing in the press to this effect.

(b) Government of India has no information regarding any move by the U.S. Government in this matter.

(c) Government of India has repeatedly made it clear that it will not participate in any negotiations, bilateral or otherwise under threat of retaliation.

Service facilities for L.I.C. policy-holders

*68. SHRI ASHOK NATH VERMA: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Life Insurance Corporation has increased its business manifold in recent years;

(b) if so, whether the policy holders have been provided with adequate and satisfying services;

(c) whether the present staff is adequate to meet the increasing demands of the policy holders;

(d) if the answer to part (c) above be in the negative, whether more staff is being recruited to meet the increased demands; and

(e) if not, how the Life Insurance Corporation proposes to provide satisfactory services to the policy holders?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (PROF. MADHU DANDAVATE) (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Yes, Sir.

(c) and (d) Yes, Sir. The workload is assessed regularly and whenever there is increase in workload additional staff is recruited.

(e) Does not arise.