

IT/BPO, leather and handloom-powerloom to assess impact of recession on employment. According to the study, an estimated 5 lakh workers lost their jobs during October-December 2008. However, employment in selected sectors has increased by an estimated 2.5 lakh during January-March, 2009.

(c) Several measures / initiatives have been taken by the Government to insulate the domestic industry from the impact of global recession and stimulate domestic demand.

The measures to stimulate domestic demand *inter-alia* include significant reduction in *ad valorem* CENVAT duty, incentives to the housing sector with a view to give a boost to affordable housing, and sector specific initiatives. For automobile sector an accelerated depreciation of 50% on commercial vehicles was announced and assistance to the States under the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM) provided for purchase of buses for urban transport system.

Further, a set of measures were announced for enhancing the flow of funds to the MSME sector.

The various measures to support exports included interest subvention of 2% for pre & post shipment export credit for identified labour intensive industries, additional allocation for export intensive schemes, additional funds towards providing guarantee by the Export Credit Guarantee Corporations (ECGC) and enhancements of duty draw back benefits on certain identified exportable items.

In addition, RBI has taken a number of steps to reduce the cost of credit and improve liquidity for the industry such as reduction of the Repo rates, reverse Repo rates, Cash reserve ratio etc.

The lowering of cost of credit, reduction in CENVAT, sector specific initiatives, have helped to stimulate domestic demand and generate higher employment. As a consequence of various measures taken by the Government, there are early signs of recovery of the industrial sector. The index of industrial production which registered a negative growth rate of (-) 0.7% and (-) 0.8% in February and March 2009 respectively has improved to 1.4% in April, 2009.

Settlement of claims pending in EPFO

*78. SHRI K.E. ISMAIL:

SHRI D. RAJA:

Will the Minister of LABOUR AND EMPLOYMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that more than 74 lakh settlement claims were pending at various offices of Employees Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) across the country at the end of the year 2008-09;

(b) if so, the details and the reasons for pile up of such a huge number of settlement claims with EPFO; and

(c) the steps being taken by Government to ensure speedy clearance of pending cases?

THE MINISTER OF LABOUR AND EMPLOYMENT (SHRI MALLIKARJUN KHARGE): (a) and (b) No, Sir. During the year 2008-09, a total of 99.58 lakh claims were received. Out of this, a total of 93.07 lakh claims were disposed off leaving a balance of 6.51 lakh claims as on 31.3.2009 pending with the Employees' Provident Fund Organisation.

As per provisions of the Employees' Provident Fund Scheme, 1952, claims received, complete in all respects are settled within 30 days. Settlement of claims is a continuous process. As there is a continuous inflow of fresh claims, certain claims are pending at any given point of time.

The main reasons for delay in settlement of claims are as under:-

(i) Submission of incomplete forms by the claimants.

(ii) Increased inflow of claims for 'Final Settlement'.

(c) Computerization project in Employees' Provident Fund Organisation is being implemented in collaboration with National Informatics Centre and after completion of the same, the time taken in settlement of claims will come down substantially.

Lack of infrastructure in Army Schools

*79. SHRI T.K. RANGARAJAN: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) how many Sainik Schools are there in India;

(b) whether the Ministry is aware of lack of infrastructure in Sainik School in Amravathi Nagar in Tamil Nadu; and

(c) the steps being taken to fulfil the needs of infrastructure of that school?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI A.K. ANTONY): (a) to (c) There are 24 Sainik Schools in the country under this Ministry. Sainik Schools are the dual responsibility of both the Central and State Governments. The State Government has the responsibility of providing maintenance of building, roads and installations and for major replacements. They are also required to release grants-in-aid sought for additional requirement of building and furniture, transport, laboratory equipment etc.

In the case of Sainik School at Amravathi Nagar in Tamil Nadu, the matter of infrastructure facilities was taken up with the State Government and during last three years, it has granted sanction(s) of Rs.4.25 crore for improvement/construction of classrooms, administrative block, employees quarters, isolation ward, gas plant, laboratories, water facilities etc.

An amount of Rs.15 lakhs is allotted to State PWD every year for maintenance of existing buildings. Proposals for additional projects to improve the infrastructural facilities for construction of staff quarters, cadets' hostels and auditorium have been submitted to the State Government for approval. Since 2000, the school has been receiving 50.4 lakhs every year in the form of block grant to be utilized for disbursement of State scholarships. Balance amount, if any, is to be utilised for deficit budget.