

(b) if so, the details of the proposed scheme; and

(c) the steps proposed for profitability and sustainability of the tea industry?

**THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI KAMAL NATH):** (a) and (b) A package for rehabilitation of closed/sick tea gardens is being worked out in consultation with concerned Ministries, Departments and Organizations.

(c) The Government has set up Special Purpose Tea Fund (SPTF) for financing replantation and rejuvenation of old tea bushes aimed at improving the productivity of the tea gardens. Under the Scheme, the borrower is required to contribute only 25% of the cost, 50% will be loan from SPTF and 25% subsidy from the Government. The scheme is expected to result in increasing the yield, lowering the cost of production and in improving the quality of teas leading to higher price realization. Further, to improve value addition process, financial assistance to the extent of 25% of the cost is given for modernization of machinery under the Quality Upgradation & Product Diversification Scheme (QUPDS). To create market for Indian Tea, extensive promotional programmes are undertaken both within the country and internationally. These steps would result in higher profitability for the tea sector.

### **Attainment of cognizable regional power**

**\*495. DR. ABHISHEK MANU SINGHVI:** Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that our Naval Chief had said in February, that 'Indian Ocean region has become the *de-facto* home of global terrorism with regional powers covertly or overtly, aiding and abetting subversive elements'

(b) if so, whether our avowed aim to become cognizable regional power would be achieved, in the foreseeable future; and

(c) whether a synergy syndrome would be created through collective efforts of all the associated agencies, to quicken this process?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI A.K. ANTONY): (a) to (c) During a seminar on "Freedom of the Seas", the Chief of the Naval Staff had expressed his concern over acts of piracy and terrorism affecting the maritime environment in the Indian Ocean.

India has neither any territorial ambitions nor it seeks to establish any form of hegemony over any given region. However, the country's geo-strategic location astride major maritime trade routes, the need for rapid and sustained growth of its economy, and its many maritime interests give it an automatic point of vantage within the Indian Ocean Region. The regional power status is automatically conferred upon India by these factors. Recognizing its status and responsibilities, India contributes meaningfully towards stability, peace and harmony in the region.

Coordination and cooperation among various agencies of the Union Government as well as of State Governments are continuously encouraged to achieve synergy in planning and action. The same principle of coordination and cooperation with neighbouring countries governs India's international defence cooperation.

### **Samman Pension to freedom fighters**

\*496. SHRI SHANTARAM LAXMAN NAIK: Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the number of cases of Samman Pension for freedom fighters pending with Government, State-wise;

(b) the number of cases in which Samman Pension has been granted, State-wise, during the period of 1st April, 2006 to 31st March, 2007; and

(c) the reasons broadly, as to why such cases are pending with Government?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI MANIKRAO GAVIT): (a) to (c) Pensions to freedom fighters are sanctioned on fulfillment of specified evidentiary requirements which establish eligibility prescribed for sanction of pension. About 1.70 lakh pensions have been sanctioned under the regular scheme, which is in