

(d) whether both the countries have asked one another to lift barriers, to push two-way trade in goods and services; and

(e) if so, to what extent both India and US have taken decisions in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE, MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH): (a) In the first Indo-US Trade Policy Forum Meeting held in November, 2005 in New Delhi, both sides had agreed that India and US will aim at doubling bilateral trade to at least US \$ 40 billion by 2008.

(b) to (e) The Third Ministerial level Trade Policy Forum (TPF) Meeting Co-chair by Union Commerce and Industry Minister and the United States Trade Representative (USTR) was held at Washington DC on June 22, 2006. Steps to address sanitary and phytosanitary issues (SPS), tariff structures, emission standards were discussed in this meeting. During the meeting both sides agreed on a number of initiatives to strengthen and deepen the bilateral trading relationship. Among the various decisions taken, India and United States agreed to initiate a Bilateral Infrastructure Investment Programme that will focus on identifying investment opportunities, incentives and challenges in key infrastructure sectors.

MFN status to India by Pakistan

2746. SHRI B.J. PANDA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) what is the position regarding grant of Most Favoured Nation (MFN) status by Pakistan to India, after ratification of South Asia Free Trade Agreement (SAFTA);

(b) whether Pakistan has put forward certain pre-conditions, before grant of MFN status to India; and

(c) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE, MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH): (a) India has granted Most Favoured Nation (MFN) status to Pakistan, but Pakistan has so far not granted MFN status to

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India despite its obligations, including under the WTO, and has cited extraneous political, economic and other reasons for this. Pakistan maintains a positive list of importable items from India which currently consists of 773 items.

The Agreement on South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA) has come into force from 1st January, 2006 and its phased Tariff Liberalization Programme from 1st July, 2006 (Nepal from 1st August, 2006). Under Article 7 of the SAFTA, this TLP would cover all tariff lines except those in the Sensitive List of each member State. India has issued notification for tariff concessions for the first phase of SAFTA TLP with effect from 1.7.2006. Pakistan has also issued notification but with a rider that imports from India would continue to be as per their positive list of importable items from India.

(b) and (c) Government of Pakistan has not communicated any preconditions for grant of MFN status to India.

Revival of closed plantations in Kerala

2747. SHRI K.E. ISMAIL: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Kerala Government has submitted any proposal for revival of the closed plantations, if so, the details, thereof and the response of the Central Government thereto;

(b) whether Government are aware that Managements of some of these closed plantations are selling the movable properties, cutting of trees and selling the same; and even demolishing buildings and selling them, while they do nothing to revive the plantations nor help the starving workers; and

(c) whether Government would consider proposal of the Trade Unions expressing their willingness to take over and run plantations, provided Government extend support to them?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE, MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH): (a) No specific proposal has been received from the Government of Kerala.

(b) Certain reports have been received in this regard.

(c) Some proposals have been received.