

In a recent review of the policy, Government has amended the sectoral caps and/or entry routes in some sectors *viz.* petroleum and natural gas; commodity exchanges; power exchanges; stock exchanges; depositories and clearing corporations; asset reconstruction companies; credit information companies, tea sector including tea plantations; single brand product retail trading; test marketing; telecom services; courier services and defence.

Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) policy is reviewed on an ongoing basis, with a view to making it more investor friendly.

#### **Need for cohesiveness in trade policy formulation**

2191. DR K.P. RAMALINGAM: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that there is a need for cohesiveness in the process of trade policy formulation;

(b) whether it is also a fact that there is a need to strengthen institutional structure at federal, State and local levels of Government for formulating a coherent long term vision of India's trade policy; and

(c) whether it is crucial to identify relevant variables, establish a mechanism for monitoring development in respect of each variable and inputting the variables in the process of trade policy formulations, if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (DR. E.M. SUDARSANA NATCHIAPPAN): (a) to (c) Foreign Trade Policy (FTP) is formulated after consulting various stake holders including State Governments, Central Government Ministries/Departments and Apex Bodies representing Trade and Industry. Though the Policy is announced for a period of five years at a time, to incorporate our responses to emerging world trade situation and challenges, supplements are announced as and when necessary. The current Policy is for the period 2009-2014. The last supplement was published in June, 2012. In the foreword of the Annual Supplement announced on 5.6.2012, the Hon'ble Minister of Commerce and Industry reiterated that the Foreign Trade Policy provides over reaching framework for catalyzing India's exports. Subsequently, some more measures announced on 18.4.2013.

#### **Widening trade agreement with MERCOSUR bloc**

2192. SHRI. T.M. SELVAGANAPATHI: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government is considering widening its trade agreement with MERCOSUR bloc comprising Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay and Paraguay with an aim to enhance economic engagement with these countries, if so, the details thereof; and

(b) whether it is also a fact that Government has signed a preferential trade agreement with MERCOSUR, if so, the details thereof, and whether Government is looking at expanding this?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (DR. E.M. SUDARSANA NATCHIAPPAN): (a) and (b) Yes Sir. A Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA) between India and MERCOSUR (a trading bloc of Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay in South America region) was signed on 25th January, 2004 and came into operation from 1st June, 2009. The Indian list contains 450 items and the MERCOSUR contains 452 items. Through IBSA (India, Brazil and South Africa) Declaration in 2006, it was agreed that the India-MERCOSUR PTA would be expanded by increasing the number of products covered and increasing the tariff concessions agreed by each side. The process of expansion of India-MERCOSUR has been initiated. The inclusion of Venezuela in the said PTA is also underway. Venezuela became part of MERCOSUR in July, 2012.

#### **Increase in prices of salt**

2193. SHRI PIYUSH GOYAL: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether salt prices have significantly increased in certain parts of the country;

(b) if so, the names of such States where salt is being sold at exorbitant price and the reasons therefor along with the steps being taken by Government to control the rising prices;

(c) whether there is a shortage of salt in the country due to the insufficient production of salt; and

(d) if so, the details thereof along with the measures taken by Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (DR. E.M. SUDARSANA NATCHIAPPAN): (a) The salt prices were reported in media to have increased significantly in certain parts of the country in the second week of November, 2013.