

(c) As per extant FDI policy FDI up to 100% is permitted under the Government approval route in Single Brand Product Retail Trade, subject to specified conditions. No decision has been taken with regards the Multi-Brand Retail Trade (MBRT) policy.

Setting up of working group to boost exports

277. SHRI BAISHNAB PARIDA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is proposed to set up a Working Group to boost exports and promote competitiveness of the domestic industry;

(b) the thrust areas that have been identified to increase India's competitiveness; and

(c) the action plan to reduce the transaction costs to achieve the objective?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRIMATI NIRMALA SITHARAMAN): (a) At present there is no proposal to set up such a Working Group. However, an Inter Ministerial Committee was set up in 2013 to suggest short and medium term measures to enhance exports from MSME sector. The Committee examined the gaps/inadequacies/lacunae which may be obstructing the growth of exports of MSME in India and submitted its report in July, 2013.

(b) Department of Commerce had also prepared a strategy paper in 2011 for doubling Merchandise Exports in three years from US\$ 246 billion in 2010-11 to US\$ 500 billion in 2013-14. Subsequently, in view of the global slowdown of economy, export Target for the year 2013-14 was revised to US\$ 325 billion. An aggressive product promotion strategy for high value items that have a strong manufacturing base is the main focus of the overall growth strategy. The Strategy paper of 2011 had identified certain products like, engineering goods, drugs, pharmaceuticals, chemicals, electronic, leather products and textiles etc. to boost exports.

(c) The endeavour of the Government is to simplify the procedure and reduce transaction cost in exports. With this objective in mind, Government has set up the second Task Force on Transaction Cost to identify the reasons for high transaction cost in exports, to identify the areas where Indian exporters face administrative impediments that lead to increase in transaction cost and to suggest guidelines/steps for removal of procedural complexities and to move towards transparent and increasingly paperless processing through digital platform. The Committee is yet to submit its report.

Exports target for 2013-14

278. DR. R. LAKSHMANAN: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government had fixed export target for the financial year 2013-14, if so, the details thereof;

- (b) whether Government was able to achieve the fixed export target; and
- (c) if so, the details thereof, and if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRIMATI NIRMALA SITHARAMAN): (a) Yes Sir. Government had fixed a target of 325 billion US \$ for the year 2013-14 for merchandise export.

- (b) No Sir.

(c) The total merchandise exports in 2013-14 was 313.55 billion US \$. The short fall in export target was due to global economic slowdown.

Development of model salt farms in Gujarat

279. SHRI DILIPBHAI PANDYA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the Central Salt Marine Research Institute and Salt Commissioner have developed model salt farms in Gujarat;
- (b) whether State Government has proposed for Central assistance to set up more model farms in other areas; and
- (c) whether Government is providing assistance in such project?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRIMATI NIRMALA SITHARAMAN): (a) Yes Sir. Four model salt farms have been set up in Gujarat by Central Salt and Marine Chemical Research Institute (CSMCRI) with the help of NGOs and the State Government.

(b) Yes, Sir. The Central Government received a request from the Government of Gujarat in February, 2012 suggesting Central Government funding for various activities related to salt industry and workers including model salt farms. In the absence of any concrete and specific proposal, no decision could be taken. The State Government has been informed.

(c) Yes, Sir. The Central Government has sanctioned three model salt farms at Nawa in Rajasthan, Ganjam in Odisha and Markanam in Tamil Nadu, in collaboration with the CSMCRI and respective State Governments. For such projects, one-third financial assistance is given by the Central Government and the remaining amount is to be shared by the respective State Government and CSMCRI. In respect of model salt farm in Markanam in Tamil Nadu, two-third of the cost is being borne by the Salt Commissioner's Organisation (SCO) and the remaining one-third of the cost by CSMCRI.