

vehicles for disabled passengers have also been provided at some of the major railway stations.

Provision of escalators at 'A1', 'A' & 'C' category stations and stations of tourist importance is a part of Desirable Amenities and are planned on need basis depending upon techno-commercial feasibility and availability of funds. Provision of lifts has also been planned at important stations.

(c) and (d) Four categories of physically challenged persons are eligible for concession in the railway passenger fares. One escort with each such person is also eligible for same element of concession. Total revenue forgone by Railways due to concession to physically challenged persons during 2013-14 was approximately ₹ 91.54 crores.

**Appointment of persons to the posts of Chairman and
Executive Director of WVEPC**

*130. SHRI JAVED ALI KHAN: Will the Minister of TEXTILES be pleased to state:

(a) the procedure for the selection/appointment of the Chairman and Executive Director of Wool and Woollen Export Promotion Council (WVEPC);

(b) the tenure-wise and name-wise details of persons selected/appointed against the said posts during the last five years; and

(c) whether guidelines of foreign trade policy have been followed while making selection/appointment to the said posts?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF TEXTILES (SHRI SANTOSH KUMAR GANGWAR): (a) to (c) To promote exports in Textiles Sector, 11 Export Promotion Councils including Wool & Woollen Export Promotion Council (WVEPC) have been set up as per provision under Companies Act/ Societies Registration Act.

As per the provisions under Memorandum and Article of Association (MoA) of Wool & Woollen Export Promotion Council (WVEPC), Chairman is elected by the members of the Committee of Administration of the Council. Further, MoA states that the tenure of the Chairman would be for a period of two years and he/she would not be subjected to retirement by rotation *i.e.* the Chairman is eligible for re-election.

However,, this situation has been taken care of *vide* the New Foreign Trade Policy (FTP) that came into effect from 1st April, 2015, which restricts the tenure of any head of any EPC to two years. WVEPC has been directed to follow provisions of new FTP.

During the last five years, Shri Ashok Jaidka has been the Chairman of the Council. Elections to the post of Chairman were conducted every two years and as there were no nominations, Shri Jaidka was elected unanimously.

As per Memorandum and Articles of Association, Secretary of the Council is appointed by the Chairman in consultation with the 'competent authority'. The post of Secretary in W&WEPC was converted to Executive Director during the year 1995-96.

During the last five years, Shri R.K.Gupta has been the Executive Director of the Council.

Institutional credit to small farmers

*131. SHRI PRAMOD TIWARI: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

- (a) whether it is a fact that the farmers, who have committed suicides, mostly borrowed money from moneylenders and not from institutional sources;
- (b) the action taken for providing institutional credit to small farmers by adopting innovative methods to rescue them from the clutches of moneylenders; and
- (c) the measures proposed for a big push to public investment in rural areas to assist farmers in getting loans liberally?

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI RADHA MOHAN SINGH):

(a) According to National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) report 2014, 5650 farmers (figure does not include agricultural labourers) committed suicide during the year 2014. Bankruptcy/indebtedness accounted for 20.6% of farmers suicide, in 2014.

(b) As per December, 2014 report based on National Sample Survey, 70th Round 52% of the agricultural households in the country were estimated to be indebted. Further, at All India level, about 60% of the outstanding loans were taken from institutional sources, which included government (2.1%), cooperative societies (14.8%) and banks (42.9%). Among the non-institutional sources, agricultural/professional moneylenders (25.8%) had the major share in terms of outstanding loans.

In order to reduce the dependence of farmers on private moneylenders for meeting their credit needs and providing relief to the indebted farmers, Government has taken several measures to increase institutional credit flow and to bring down the rate of interest on farm loans. These measures, *inter alia*, include fixation of annual targets for improving agricultural credit flow, provision of crop loans upto ₹ 3.00 lakh @4% per annum to such