

assessment, this number has come. I can assure the hon. Member that the final identification, when it is made, will take into account all the safeguards and all the requirements which the hon. Member would like.

Opening of farm trade

***88. SHRI MANOJ BHATTACHARYA:** Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether the trade representatives from different countries recently met at Geneva to discuss the rules for opening up of formal farm trade;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) the stand taken by Government to safeguard the interests of the Indian farmers vis-s-vis the policy of the Western countries of providing huge subsidies to their own farmers, making it impossible for the farming sector in the country to compete in the global market; and

(d) the success achieved by India in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI E.V.K.S. ELANGO VAN): (a) to (d) A Statement is laid on the Table of the House.

Statement

(a) to (d) Yes, Sir. Representatives of the Members of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) have been meeting in the WTO Committee on Agriculture, Special Session, from time to time to negotiate modalities for further commitments under the WTO agreement on agriculture. They met formally last on 25th June, 2004. The Committee has been working under the broader objective of reaching possible agreement on agriculture, which will then be considered, along with proposals on non-agricultural products and other areas included in the Doha Work Programme, by the General Council of WTO at its meeting scheduled for 27th—29th July, 2004.

India, working within the G-20 alliance on agriculture, and along with other like-minded countries, has been seeking substantial reduction in trade-distorting domestic support, elimination of all forms of export subsidies provided by developed countries and substantial market access improvements particularly in products of export interest to developing countries. Any further commitments in market access by developing countries has to fully take into account their rural development needs and food and livelihood security concerns. Special and differential

treatment for developing countries has also to be an integral part of all element of the negotiations in agriculture. These negotiations are formally scheduled to be concluded by 1 January 2005.

SHRI MANOJ BHATTACHARYA: Sir, thanks for the reply that has been laid on the Table. We have been hearing since quite some years that India has been seeking substantial reductions in trade-distorting domestic support, elimination of all forms of export subsidies provided by developed countries and substantial market access improvements particularly in products of export interest to developing countries.

Incidentally, you have referred in your reply that you are trying it within the G-20 alliance and nothing has come to the fore. This we have been hearing since a very long time. Would you please tell me whether you have achieved any of the objectives, as put in the reply, by initiating some discussions with the G-20 countries or you are examining some scopes of making further blocks within the G-20 countries. This is my first supplementary.

SHRI E.V.K.S. ELANGO VAN: Sir, the hon. Member has said that I have been repeatedly saying it, but, as far as I am concerned, this is the first time I am laying it on the table. Anyway...

MR. CHAIRMAN: You can read the written reply.

SHRI MANOJ BHATTACHARYA: You can send it in writing. I don't require the answer here. My second supplementary is, in the reply, the same department, Department of Commerce, on 15.12.2003, expressed a concern about the decline in tea exports. Sir, as you know, millions of workers and their families, millions of poor people belonging to SC/ST communities are simply languishing, and there are several death reports in different parts of the country, particularly in west Bengal, in Tamil nadu and in Kerala. Would the Minister please tell us in writing—he can kindly send the reply in writing because the senior Minister is not present—whether you are trying to resort to any particular action so that the tea exports, what you have lost to countries like even Kenya or Vietnam, are gained. I would like to know whether you can envisage some particular method or some particular process to enhance the tea exports and bail out these tea organisations or tea workers in general. That is my question; you can send the reply in writing and you need not tell it now. Thank you very much, Sir.

SHRI SHARAD ANANTRAO JOSHI: Mr. Chairman, Sir, through you intermediary I would like to get from the hon. Minister of Commerce

some supplementary information. In the negotiations and in the framework of WTO, and the discussions with the WTO officials, where do the negative aggregate measurement of support to India figure? As is known, in America, Europe and Japan, the farmers are heavily subsidised. On the other hand, it is on record that at least till 1996-97, the Indian farmers were subsidised in negative manner; in the sense that the farmers got a price which was much lower than the price they would have got in a free market. I would like to know whether this aspect figured in the negotiations in the framework of WTO and discussions with the WTO officials.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Question Hour is over.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO STARRED QUESTIONS

Revival of tea plantations in Himachal Pradesh

†*84. SHRI SURESH BHARDWAJ: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Tea Board is taking steps to revive the old tea plantations in Himachal Pradesh;

(b) the area of land covered under the old tea plantations in the State;

(c) whether the Tea Board is considering to give a package to the State to save the Kangra tea industry; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI KAMAL NATH): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The total area of land covered under old existing tea plantations in Himachal Pradesh is approximately 2294 hectares. This does not include approximately 2000 hectares of erstwhile tea areas.

(c) and (d) The Tea Board has no separate package for the Kangra area. However, Tea Board has allowed, as a special case, reclamation of the earlier abandoned tea areas in Himachal Pradesh for subsidy for rejuvenation and replacement planting. A specific certificate from the Institute of Himalayan Bioresource Technology (IHBT)/Palampur

† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.