

- (b) if so, the details of the action taken;
- (c) whether the PESO is considering to revoke the explosives licences for violation of Explosives Rules; and
- (d) if not, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRIMATI NIRMALA SITHARAMAN): (a) Yes, Sir. A complaint against M/s. Noorjahan Enterprises, Deoghar (Jharkhand) for illegal sale of explosives in Jharkhand was received through email.

(b) On receipt of the complaint, an officer of Petroleum and Explosives Safety Organisation conducted surprise inspection of the magazine of M/s. Noorjahan Enterprises, Deoghar (Jharkhand) on 09.03.2016. The records were scrutinized, physical stock in the magazine was verified and compared with the online records. No illegal transaction was found. Records also revealed that no illegal blasting has been done by M/s. Noorjahan Enterprises in the district of Pakur.

(c) and (d) No violation of Explosives Rules, 2008 has been found by the officer of Petroleum and Explosives Safety Organisation, Ranchi. No report regarding illegal sale and blast of explosives has been received from Deputy Commissioner, Pakur. Hence, no action is being considered at this stage.

Closure of tea gradens in West Bengal

2094. SHRIMATI RENUKA CHOWDHURY: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

- (a) whether a large number of tea gardens in West Bengal have been closed, abandoned or are non-functional;
- (b) if so, the details thererof along with the reasons therefor; and
- (c) the steps taken by Government to reopen the tea gardens of the region and ensure that non-functional or abandoned tea gardens function properly?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRIMATI NIRMALA SITHARAMAN): (a) and (b) As per information available, six tea gardens in West Bengal are, at present, closed and seven tea gardens are not functioning properly. The closed gardens, namely Dheklapara, Bundapani, Dharanipur, Redbank, Surendranagar and Madhu are reported to be closed due to several reasons including, *inter-alia*, poor yields, poor garden management, excessive reliance of owners on debt with negligible equity infusion and poor condition of the gardens and factories resulting in low tea quality and price realization.

The seven gardens, namely Birpara, Garganda, Lankapara, Tulsipara, Huntapara, Dhumchipara and Demdima are reported to be under stress as the gardens have defaulted in payment of workers' dues in respect of P.F. Gratuity, Bonus, Wages and Salary etc. and are being managed in a manner detrimental to the tea industry.

(c) The Governemnt of West Bengal has cancelled the lease of gardens viz. Bundapani, Red Bank, Surendranagar, Dharanipur for handing over the management of the gardens to prospective buyers.

The Central Government *vide* notification dated 28.01.2016 has authorized the Tea Board to take steps to take over the management or the control of seven tea gardens, namely (i) Birpara Tea Estate, (ii) Garganda Tea Estate, (iii) Lankapara Tea Estate, (iv) Tulsipara Tea Estate, (v) Huntapara Tea Estate, (vi) Dhumchipara Tea Estate, and (vii) Demdima Tea Estate owned by M/s Duncan Industries Ltd. and M/s Santipara Tea Co. Pvt. Ltd.

Resumption of negotiations on ETA with EU

2095. SHRI VIJAY JAWAHARLAL DARDA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government proposes to resume negotiations on Free Trade Agreement with European Union;

(b) if so, what was the rationale of suspending the negotiations and under what conditions is Government resuming the negotiations;

(c) whether Government has consulted the industry associations and other stakeholders before resuming the free trade negotiations with EU; and

(d) if so, what are the apprehensions of domestic industry associations and how does the FTA propose to address these apprehensions?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRIMATI NIRMALA SITHARAMAN): (a) and (b) The Government of India is negotiating a Bilateral Broad Based Trade and Investment Agreement (BTIA) with the European Union (EU). Since May 2013, EU had disengaged from the negotiations. Now, on the request of EU side, the Government has agreed to hold further talks with a view to explore resumptions of negotiations.

(c) and (d) The Government consults stakeholders, including industry associations in order to assess the requirement of domestic industries and develops India's negotiation strategy which appropriately address their apprehensions.