

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO UNSTARRED QUESTIONS**Impact of rise in cement prices on housing industry**

3041. SHRI HARSHVARDHAN SINGH DUNGARPUR: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether the consumption trend of cement and the steady rise in cement prices have already affected the housing industry in last three years; and

(b) if so, the steps taken/proposed to be taken to tackle this problem?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRIMATI NIRMALA SITHARAMAN): (a) and (b) The Department does not monitor the consumption and price of cement in the country since the removal of price controls in the year 1989.

Need for import of cement

3042. SHRI HARSHVARDHAN SINGH DUNGARPUR: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that there is need to import huge quantity of cement from abroad for the country;

(b) if so, the details thereof, from 2013 to 2016;

(c) what steps are proposed by Government to improve the domestic production of cement or to reduce the price per bag;

(d) if so, the details thereof along with the targets fixed for production for the next three years; and

(e) the steps taken to achieve the targets fixed in the coming years?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRIMATI NIRMALA SITHARAMAN): (a) and (b) As per Foreign Trade Policy, cement is freely importable commodity and can be imported in the country without a licence. The details of import of cement from 2013 to 2016 are as under:-

Year	Qty (Ton)	Val (US\$)
2013-14	778323	60182639
2014-15	1100006	81044288
2015-16	1358861	93535440
2016-17	1132647	67824745
#(April to September)		

#Figures for 2016-17 (April to September) is Provisional

(c) Cement Industry has the required installed capacity to meet the domestic demand; at present capacity utilization is about 70% of the installed capacity in the country. Further, the Department does not control prices of cement after removal of price and distribution controls in 1989.

(d) No production target has been fixed by the Government.

(e) Does not arise.

Increase in fee for H-1B visa

3043. SHRIMATI SASIKALA PUSHPA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Indian service companies are facing many difficulties including increase in visa processing fee and high rejection rates in obtaining H-1B Visa;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether Government took any appropriate steps to remove the difficulties in getting H-1B Visa; and

(d) 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) and (b) Yes, Sir. On December 18, 2015, the United States (US) President signed into law the 2016 Omnibus Spending Bill (Public Law 114-113) which doubled the supplemental visa fees for L-1 and H-1B visas for a period of 10 years for companies employing 50 or more employees in the United States, 50% of which are on L-1 and H-1B visas (50:50 rule). With this legislation in place, 50:50 companies would now need to pay an enhanced fee of \$4,500 for each L-1 visa and \$4000 for each H-1B visa, as compared to \$2,250 and \$2000 previously. Also, as informed by the NASSCOM, visa rejection, especially for L-1B application from India are high.

(c) and (d) Yes, Sir. The Government of India continues to engage the US Administration for better access of its professionals in the US. H-1B and L-1 visa issues, including increase in visa processing fees, high rejection rates and other difficulties faced by the Indian services companies, have been raised with the US Government at various levels including the Strategic and Commercial Dialogue in August 2016 and the Trade Policy Forum in October, 2016. India has also taken up the matter on US visa fee hike in the Dispute Settlement Body of the World Trade Organisation (WTO).