

(a) whether the Ministry of Food has demanded a cut in import duty for pulses to boost imports to meet drought induced shortage; and

(b) if so, the action taken to bring down consumer prices for "dal" the common man's food?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS (SHRI GINGEE N. RAMACHANDRAN): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The Government has taken a number of measures under Technology Mission on Oilseeds and Pulses (TMOP) to increase the production and productivity of pulses in the country. Imports of pulses are allowed at lower rate (10%) of duty for augmenting its availability at reasonable prices. Imports have helped in maintaining the prices of different varieties of pulses in the country. In view of the above no change in import duty is contemplated for the present.

Reduction of retirement age

691. SHRI K. RAMA MOHANA RAO: Will the Minister of FINANCE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Central Government are seriously considering reducing the retirement age of the Central Government employees from 60 years to 58 years;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether the issue has been discussed at the recently held Chief Minister's conference; and

(d) if so, what is the outcome of the meeting?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS (SHRI ANANDRAO VITHOBA ADSUL): (a) and (b) No proposal is under consideration to reduce the age of retirement of Central Government employees from 60 to 58 years.

(c) and (d) No, Sir.

Early alert system for sub-standard accounts

692. SHRI K. RAMA MOHANA RAO: Will the Minister of FINANCE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS be pleased to state: