

over Rs. 2 lakhs, including SSI units, are being charged interest @ 25% p.a. in working capital accounts and 24% p.a. in Bills purchased/discounted accounts except in the following cases :

- (i) Advances accounts having credit rating 'AAA';
- (ii) Export Finance;
- (iii) Term Loans; and
- (iv) Sick units under nursing programme.

As regards advances below Rs. 2 lakhs, interest rates range between 10% to 18.5% p.a. based on the size of the loan.

(b) The Reserve Bank of India has prescribed a minimum interest rate of 18.5% p.a. in respect of short term loans over Rs. 2 lakhs, and banks are allowed to charge a higher rate of interest over and above such a floor rate as a matter of policy.

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Export of Basmati Rice to Gulf Countries

2353. SHRI GOVINDRAO NIKAM : Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government propose to export Basmati rice to Gulf countries;

(b) if so, the names of countries to which it is proposed to be exported;

(c) the amount of foreign exchange expected to be earned as a result thereof; and

(d) the steps the Government propose to take to increase the production of basmati rice ?

THE DEPUTY MINISTER OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI SALMAN KHURSHED): (a) to (c) : The export of basmati rice is freely allowed subject only to a Minimum Export Price (MEP) and pre-shipment inspection.

Basmati rice is exported to Gulf countries in substantial quantities Saudi Arabia, UAE, and Bahrain are major markets. Export target

fixed for Gulf market for 1991-92 is over Rs. 300 crores.

(d) For increasing production of Basmati rice, 20 major Basmati rice producing districts have been identified in Haryana (2), Punjab (7), and Uttar Pradesh (11) and a production programme is being implemented in these states under the ongoing Centrally Sponsored Scheme on Integrated Programme in rice development (being implemented in 239 selected districts in major rice producing states). For propagating the adoption of improved Basmati rice production technology assistance is being provided to the farmers of the identified districts for use of inputs like seeds, micronutrients, pesticides, farm implements, plant protection equipment, etc. Besides, field demonstrations in Basmati rice production are being organised and training programmes for the farmers and farm labourers are conducted.

The seed of Basmati rice is being provided to the farmers of 20 selected districts on subsidy of Rs. 200/- per quintal. Assistance through this scheme is being provided mainly to the small & Marginal farmers. However, other category of farmers also get assistance to some extent under this programme.

58 Inland Waterways  
Navigability of Hooghly River

2354. SHRI SATYAGOPAL MISRA : Will the Minister of SURFACE TRANSPORT be pleased to state :

(a) the steps taken by the Government to improve navigability of the Hooghly river for the benefit of the Calcutta and Haldia Ports; and

(b) the results achieved so far ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF SURFACE TRANSPORT (SHRI JAGDISH TYTLER) : (a) A comprehensive scheme for the improvement of draught in the Hooghly Estuary was sanctioned in August, 1982 at an estimated cost of Rs. 42 crores. Under this scheme the works being undertaken are river training works, procurement