

departmentally as well as through prosecution in Courts. Apart from confiscation of smuggled goods and imposition of personal penalty, preventive detention under the COFEPOSA Act is also resorted to in appropriate cases.

Besides, certain endangered species of snakes have been got included in Appendix-III of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species, through an amendment which took effect from January, 1984. As a result, international trade in snake skins of Indian origin has been restricted all over the world. This has helped in curbing smuggling of snake skins out of India as will be evident from seizure figures of 1985.

News Item Captioned 'Sarkar Cigaretton Ke Daam Ghatane Nahin Deti'

831. SHRI SARFARAZ AHMED :

SHRI JAGANNATH PATTNAIK :

Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state :

(a) whether his attention has been drawn to the news item captioned "Sarkar Cigaretton ke daam ghatane nahin deti" appearing in the 'Jansatta' of 13 October, 1985;

(b) if so, the extent to which reduction in the prices of cigarettes was proposed by the companies; and

(c) difficulties being experienced by Government in accepting the proposal ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI JANARDHANA POOJARY) : (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c). Prior to 2-9-1985, the excise duty on cigarettes varied with every five-paise change in the prices of cigarettes. It was found that some manufacturers of cigarettes were clearing identical brands at two prices paying duty on the lower price and selling these at the higher price. In order to minimise the scope for such manipulation, the Government introduced a revised duty structure on cigarettes on 2-9-1985 with

only five rates of duty, followed by a stipulation that the surface design of each brand of cigarette should be got approved by a central authority.

After the excise duty rates were restructured on 2-9-1985, cigarette manufacturers had declared for certain brands of cigarettes lower prices as printed on the packages as compared to the printed sale price prevailing prior to 2-9-1985. This was mainly with a view to availing of the lower rate applicable to the lower slab. The extent of reduction proposed varied as between different brands.

In the context of the earlier experience, the Government had reasons to believe that the declaration of lower printed prices for certain brands of cigarettes, when the consumers were used to paying higher prices for such brands, would result only in reduction in revenue with no benefit to the consumers. Against this background, approval was not accorded where the manufacturers declared prices for brands lower than the prices prevailing for such brands prior to 2-9-1985, as also where the brands were found to be deceptively similar.

Visit of Foreign Tourists to Bihar

832. SHRI SIMON TIGGA : Will the Minister of PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS AND TOURISM be pleased to state :

(a) the names of the places in Bihar which attract foreign tourists; and

(b) the amount spent by Union Government to develop tourism in Bihar, in comparison to other States ?

THE MINISTER OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS AND TOURISM (SHRI H.K.L. BHAGAT) : (a) According to the Govt. of Bihar, places attracting foreign tourists are (1) Patna (2) Buxar (3) Sasaram (4) Maner Sharif (5) Rajgir (6) Nalanda (7) Pawapuri (8) Bihar Sharif (9) Bodhgaya (10) Gaya (11) Vaishali (12) Vikramsila (13) Natarhat (14) Betla (15) Ranchi (16) Balmikinagar (17) Lauria-Nandangarh (18) Raxaul (19) Bokaro (20) Dhanbad (21) Jamshedpur (22) Parasnath (23) Sitamarhi (24) Madhubani (25) Jiradei (26) Sonapur (27) Hazaribagh (28) Bhimbandh (Monghyr).

(b) The amount spent by the Deptt. of Tourism and ITDC in Bihar to develop tourism during the VIth Five Year Plan (1980-81 to 1984-85) is Rs. 152.05 lakhs in comparison to a total expenditure amount of Rs. 606.63 lakhs spent by the Deptt. of Tourism and ITDC for all the rest of the States and Union Territories.

Changing of the Financial Year

833. SHRI SANAT KUMAR MANDAL : Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state :

(a) whether Union Government have finally decided to stick to the present financial year (April to March) and has rejected the Jha Committee recommendation to switch over to the calendar year;

(b) if so, the considerations which have weighed with Government in arriving at this decision; and

(c) the merits and demerits of changing over the financial year to January to December or July-June as suggested by the Jha Committee, as compared to the present set-up ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI JANARDHANA POOJARY) : (a) to (c). The matter is under consideration of the Government, in consultation with the State Governments, keeping all relevant factors in view.

[*Translation*]

Loans Advanced to Bogus Firms by Calcutta Based Branch of Allahabad Bank

834. SHRI MOHD. MAHFOOJ ALI KHAN : Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Calcutta-based branch of Allahabad Bank has advanced loans to some bogus firms;

(b) if so, the names of these firms and the amount of loan given in an irregular manner;

(c) whether the officers of this bank are also involved in this deal;

(d) if so, whether any action has been taken against those bank officers/employees who are involved in this fraud; and

(e) if not, the reasons therefor ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI JANARDHANA POOJARY) : (a) and (b), S/Shri R.K. Jain, S.K. Poddar and J.P. Poddar, in collusion among themselves and in connivance with some officials of Bank of Baroda at its different branches in Calcutta, managed to obtain large credit facilities in the nature of kite flying and group transactions and subsequently through letters of credit facilities granted to them. The three branches of the bank at Calcutta had also co-accepted the bills to facilitate their discounting through other banks in Calcutta, including Allahabad Bank. However, the transactions involving Allahabad Bank do not appear to be fraudulent.

(c) to (e). Do not arise.

[*English*]

'India on the House Scheme' for Attracting Tourists in the Country

835. SHRI BALASAHEB VIKHE PATIL : Will the Minister of PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS AND TOURISM be pleased to state :

(a) whether his Ministry has announced a new scheme called "India on the House" to attract more tourists;

(b) whether the scheme has been published without properly tying up the details and making full arrangements with the concerned authorities; and

(c) expectations/targets for generating more tourist inflow in the country and the financial gains expected ?

THE MINISTER OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS AND TOURISM (SHRI H.K.L. BHAGAT) : (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) No, Sir.

(c) In the first year of operation we