

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND STEEL AND MINES (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) Only the Government of Romania has evinced interest in setting up a Pelletisation Plant at Mangalore based on Kudremukh concentrate. As offer has been received in this regard from a Romanian State Organisation by the Kudremukh Iron Ore Co. Ltd.

(b) and (c). Only one out of the four production lines has been commissioning and testing of the equipment of personnel required for commissioning and testing of the equipment has been engaged. The Plant has not yet gone into commercial production.

The question of the machinery and components becoming rusty and the project incurring loss does not, therefore, arise at present.

(d) and (e). No offer has been made by the Government of Romania for setting up an integrated steel Plant in India based on Kudremukh Iron Ore concentrate.

Refusal of State Bank in Delhi to convert Gulf money into Indian currency

743. **SHRI R. Y. GHORPADE:** Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether State Bank Authorities at Delhi Airport refused to convert Gulf money into Indian currency when 600 passengers arriving from Gulf countries on 20th October requested for it;

(b) were the passengers put to great difficulties and they were unable to go to their homes in various parts of Northern India; and

(c) what action has been taken and what steps ensured for elimination of such situations arising in future?

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI MAGANBHAI BAROT): (a) to (c). State Bank of India has reported that it had to stop converting certain currencies into Indian currency temporarily but in order to avoid hardship to repatriates specially from the Middle East, the SBI has resumed purchasing quantities of some of these currencies. Above certain amounts the bank is prepared to accept these notes on collection basis and pay the proceeds on realisation from abroad without any restriction.

Tourist bookings on Indian Airlines

744. **SHRI R. Y. GHORPADE:** Will the Minister of TOURISM AND CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) what were the tourist bookings on Indian Airlines this winter season as compared to previous two seasons;

(b) has there been a sharp decline in the tourist bookings on Indian Airlines this year resulting in a drop of about 10 per cent and promoting Indian Airlines to cancel some of its flights,

(c) have efforts been made to find out the reasons; and

(d) if so, what are those and remedial measures proposed?

THE MINISTER OF TOURISM AND CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI A. P. SHARMA): (a) to (d). The information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the Sabha.

Excise duty on beedies

745. **SHRI E. K. IMBICHICHAVA:**
SHRI K. A. RAJAN:

Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware of the hardship to the Kerala Dinesh