

20. Times Bank.
21. UTI Bank.
22. Bank of India.
23. Bank of Baroda.
24. Punjab & Sind Bank.
25. India Bank.
26. State Bank of Travancore.
27. Deutsche Bank.
28. American Express Bank.
29. SBI Commercial and International Bank.

[*Translation*]

Scheme for Development of Steel Industry

772. DR. SUSHIL INDORA:
 PROF. PREM SINGH CHANDUMAJRA:

Will the Minister of STEEL AND MINES be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is need for the development of Steel Industry in the country;

(b) if so, whether the Government have implemented any scheme during the last year for activating the research work for the development of Steel Industry;

(c) if so, the detailed outline of the scheme; and

(d) the total amount allocated for the implementation of this scheme during the current year and the amount released out of it upto December, 1998?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF STEEL AND MINES (SHRI RAMESH BAIS): (a) Yes, Sir. To keep pace with the developments and competitiveness in the international arena, the Indian Steel industry needs to be backed up by comprehensive Research Development facilities.

(b) and (c) Yes, Sir. Cabinet approval has been obtained to spend upto Rs. 150 crores annually from interest process of Steel Development Fund (SDF) to supplement Research & Development activity in Iron & Steel sector. An empowered Committee under the

Chairmanship of Secretary to the Govt. of India, Department of Steel with members from Department of Science & Technology, Planning Commission, Department of Scientific and Industrial Research, main producers of steel, IIT, Kharagpur, National Metallurgical Laboratory, Jamshedpur, Development Commissioner for Iron & Steel and others has been set up with a view to providing overall direction to the total research effort on Iron & Steel in the country and approve specific research projects placed before it.

The Empowered Committee will *inter alia* examine all aspects of Research & Development in the Iron & Steel sector; co-ordinate and monitor the on-going research programmes in the iron and steel sector; review the progress of Science & Technology programmes of national importance in the Iron & Steel Industry periodically and advise Department of Steel on policies and programmes in developing domestic capabilities for Research & Development in the iron and steel sector.

Research & Technology Mission, which will work as Secretariat to the Empowered Committee is being set up.

(d) An amount of Rs. 30.00 crores has been allocated for implementation of the scheme during 1998-99. Out of this, Rs. 0.32 crores has been released for Research & Development (R&D) upto December, 1998.

[*English*]

Benami Transaction Prohibition Act

773. SHRI VITHAL TUPE:
 SHRI D.S. AHIRE:
 DR. ULHAS VASUDEO PATIL:
 SHRI R.S. GAVAI:

Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Benami Transaction Prohibition Act was promulgated about 10 years ago;

(b) if so, whether Government have not given powers to any authority to implement it;

(c) if so, the reasons therefor;

(d) the details of the cases registered and persons prosecuted under the said Act during the last ten years; and

(e) the action proposed to be taken by the Government to unearth the Benami transaction in the country?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PERSONNEL, PUBLIC GRIEVANCES AND PENSIONS AND MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (BANKING, REVENUE AND INSURANCE) (SHRI KADAMBUR M.R. JANARTHANAN): (a) Yes, Sir. The Benami Transaction (Prohibition) Act, was passed in September, 1988.

(b) and (c) The rules for implementing the Act could not be framed in view of the difficulties expressed by the Ministry of Law, relating to complexities in the law, which make it unworkable in its present form particularly having regard to agricultural properties which constitute the State subject.

(d) In view of the above, does not arise.

(e) The matter regarding the issues arising due to difficulties in implementing the Act in its current form is under consideration of the Government.

Export of Animals

774. SHRI SURESH CHANDEL: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the animals are being exported from the country;

(b) if so, the details of the countries to which the animals are being exported; and

(c) the manner in which these animals are used in those countries?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. Certain animals are exported from the country. The major destinations for exports are Bangladesh, Nepal, Oman, S. Arabia, Sri Lanka and UAE.

(c) This information is not maintained by the Government.

Bank Branches

775. SHRI U.V. KRISHNAMRAJU:
SHRI JAYARAMA I.M. SHETTY:

Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) the number of branches of nationalised banks operating in the rural areas of the country, State-wise;

(b) whether the Government propose to strengthen the banking operations in rural areas of the country;

(c) if so, the number of new branches of banks are likely to be set up in rural parts of the country during the current financial year, State-wise; and

(d) the criteria of setting up of bank branches in rural parts of the country?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PERSONNEL, PUBLIC GRIEVANCES AND PENSIONS AND MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (BANKING, REVENUE AND INSURANCE) (SHRI KADAMBUR M.R. JANARTHANAN): (a) to (d) State-wise number of branches of nationalised banks operating in the rural areas, as reported by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) is given in attached statement.

Under the extent Branch Licensing Policy of Reserve Bank of India (RBI), it is left to the judgement of the individual banks to assess the need for opening additional bank branches in rural areas including the underdeveloped hilly areas of the country and no State-wise/area-wise targets have been fixed. The proposals received from the banks for opening of additional rural branches at centres which fall in the service area of the applicant bank and which are recommended by the concerned State Government are considered by RBI on merits. The State-wise number of authorisations/licences issued to public sector banks for opening branches in rural areas is indicated in the statement enclosed.