

MMRD, Act, 1957 during the last three years and number of cases pending as on 1.4.1999 is given below :-

	No. of mineral concession cases disposed of during			No. of cases pending as on
	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99	1.4.1999
i) Part "A" minerals	5	1	--	1
ii) Part "C" minerals	335	362	354	155

In certain cases, the proposals received from the State Governments are found incomplete and consequently in such cases, State Governments are asked to furnish the complete information/additional information for expeditious disposal of mineral concession cases by the Central Government. However, all efforts are being made to expedite clearance of the remaining proposals.

#### Upgradation of BSMTTC at Lahunipara

3705. SHRI JUAL ORAM : Will the Minister of TEXTILELS be pleased to state :

- the basic bivoltine area in regard to production of Tasar cocoon;
- whether since the inception of the basic seed multiplication training centre at Lahunipara in Orissa, no suitable technical person and staff have been posted there; and
- if so, the reasons therefor;
- the details of the production targetted year-wise and achievement made by the unit during the last three years;
- whether Government proposes to upgrade the above; and
- if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF TEXTILE (SHRI KASHIRAM RANA):

(a) Singbhum District of Bihar, Sarguja and Bastar Districts of Madhya Pradesh, Sonbhadra District of Uttar Pradesh are some of the important bivoltine tasar silkworm basic seed production zones.

(b) and (c) No, Sir. BSMTTC Lahunipara is a sub unit of Basic Seed Multiplication and Training Centre (BSMTTC), Pallahara. The main unit at Pallahara has 14 staff and is headed by a qualified Assistant Director, who is also controlling the activities of the sub-unit at Lahunipara. Only the minimum staff required for the sub-unit has been deployed from the main unit depending on the workload.

(d) The table below indicates the details of basic tasar seed production target and achievement by the sub-unit of BSMTTC, Lahunipara:

Year	Target	Achievement
1996-97	40000	15310
1997-98	40000	13333
1998-99	40000	7323

(e) and (f) There is no proposal with the Government of India to upgrade the BSMTTC sub-unit at Lahunipara.

#### Mining Activities in Karnataka

3706. SHRI ANANT KUMAR HEGDE : Will the Minister of STEEL AND MINES be pleased to state:

- whether there is any proposal to start mining activities in the western ghat forest areas of Karnataka;
- if so, whether the Government are aware that mining in these sensitive Bio-rich areas will cause irreparable damage to the Eco-system of the region; and
- if so, the details thereof and the action being taken by the Government in this region ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF STEEL AND MINES (SHRI RAMESH BAIS) : (a) As per information available with Indian Bureau of Mines, there are six working mines and four non-working mines in Western Ghat forest areas in Karnataka. There is no information about any new mining proposal in the area.

(b) and (c) The Government is aware of the damages caused by mining activities. The general environmental damages caused by mining are land damage, deforestation, air, water and noise pollution and ground vibration etc. Besides the action being taken by the Ministry of Environment and Forests, State Pollution Control Board and the concerned State Governments, Indian Bureau of Mines is ensuring compliance of statutory provisions for cleaner environment.

For all mining leases for major minerals beyond 5 hectares area, environmental clearance has to taken under Environment Impact Assessment Notification dated 27.1.94 issued by the Ministry of Environment and Forests. Further, if the mining area involves forest land, clearance under Forest Conservation Act, 1980 is also mandatory. As per the provisions of Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 no 'non forest' activity including 'mining' can take place in forest areas including Western Ghat forest areas.

Further to abate the adverse impact of mining on environment, the Indian Bureau of Mines is approving mining plans alongwith the Environment Management Plans in all areas including Western Ghat areas in which all possible protection measures are in-built for implementation so that minimum damage takes place to the environment and eco-system. This includes stabilisation of waste dumps by afforestation, creation of more and more green belts by plantation, reclamation

of mined-out areas, arresting wash-offs from waste dumps during rainy season by erecting protective stone walls around dumps, check dams, silt arresting ponds. The mines are also regularly inspected by officers of Indian Bureau of Mines to ensure implementation of measures in-built in Mining Plans and Environment Management Plans.

#### Tobacco Seeds

3707 SHRI SATNAM SINGH KAINTH :  
SHRI S. SUDHAKAR REDDY :

Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state :

(a) whether Philip Morris of USA has entered into an Agreement with the CTRI, Rajahmundry to develop seeds for tobacco nurseries in the country; and

(b) if so, the details of the Memorandum of Understanding concluded between Philip Morris of USA and the CTRI, Rajahmundry ?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE) : (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

#### Foreign Exchange to Students

3708. DR. SAROJA V. :

SHRI N.K. PREMCHANDRAN :

Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government have liberalised the regulations relating to foreign exchange provided to students going abroad for studies;

(b) if so, the salient features thereof; and

(c) to what extent it will be helpful to the students ?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (SHRI YASHWANT SINHA) : (a) Yes Sir.

(b) The salient features are :

(i) Authorised dealers have been permitted to release exchange in excess of US\$ 30,000/- if the requirement is indicated in the letter from the overseas institution.

(ii) In case where the student is in the receipt of full sponsorship from a close relative, he will be eligible for full exchange, if he desires not to avail of the relative's hospitality.

(iii) Where the student is in the receipt of scholarship abroad the amount thereof may be adjusted against the amount of exchange admissible to him only to the extent desired by the applicant.

(iv) In case letter of confirmation of admission received

by a student does not indicate the amount of exchange requirement, authorised dealers have been permitted to release exchange upto US\$ 15,000/- for first six months and necessary adjustments may be made while releasing exchange for the subsequent period on the basis of the documentary evidence produced by student in this regard.

(v) The authorised dealers have been permitted to release the entire amount of exchange, including tuition fees, in favour of the student concerned.

(vi) The application form has been revised and simplified.

(c) With these changes, the students will be able to avail of foreign exchange to meet the genuine requirement with minimum paper work.

#### Housing Bank Act

3709. SHRI NADENDLA BHASKARA RAO : Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is any proposal to amend the National Housing Bank Act, 1987;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(c) the steps being taken by the Government to boost housing activities?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (SHRI YASHWANT SINHA) : (a) and (b) Yes Sir. The reasons for proposed amendments to National Housing Bank Act, 1987 are as under :

(i) to further strengthen the regulatory function of the National Housing Bank (NHB) in the matter of deposit acceptance activities of the Housing Finance Institutions (HFIs) to protect the interests of depositor on the lines of the powers available to Reserve Bank of India (RBI) in respect of non-banking finance companies (NBFCs) as conferred by the Reserve Bank of India (Amendment) Act 1997;

(ii) to augment the capacities of HFIs to provide more finance by adopting asset securitisation and development of secondary mortgage market;

(iii) to provide a simple, speedy and cost effective method of recovery of overdues from the defaulting borrowers by HFIs; and

(iv) to provide for the smooth working of NHB in light of experience gained in operating of the Bank since its inception.

(c) In addition to the amendment proposals to NHB Act to provide for simple speedy and cost effective method of recovery of overdues from the defaulting borrowers by HFIs, asset securitisation and development of secondary markets,