

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,