

(b) whether the Government propose to raise the gratuity ceiling;

(c) if so, whether the Government have any proposal to amend the Gratuity (Amendment) Bill, 1997, pending in Rajya Sabha; and

(d) if so, details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (SHRI YASHWANT SINHA) : (a) and (b) The Fifth Central Pay Commission had recommended removal of ceiling on gratuity. The Government have, however, decided to increase the ceiling on gratuity from Rs. 2.5 lakhs to Rs. 3.5 lakhs.

(c) and (d) The Government have decided to raise the ceiling on maximum amount of gratuity payable under the Payment of Gratuity Act, 1972 to Rs. 3.50 lakhs w.e.f. 24.9.1997.

#### Compulsory use of Jute Bags

2474. SHRI ANIL BASU:

KUMARI MAMATA BANERJEE:

Will the Minister of TEXTILES be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government have received any proposal to extend the time for compulsory use of jute bags;

(b) if so, the action taken on such proposal;

(c) whether Government have received any representation from the Jute Laminators Association, Calcutta;

(d) if so, the details thereof; and

(e) the action taken by the Government thereon so far?

THE MINISTER OF TEXTILES (SHRI KASHIRAM RANA) : (a) to (e) Yes Sir, the Government have received proposals to extend the time for Compulsory use of Jute bags. The Government have also received the representation of Jute Laminators Association urging inter-alia, for extension of the reservation order for Urea by five to ten years with increase in the percentage of reservation to 100%, ensuring strict compliance by all fertilizer companies, unsuitability of laminated jute bags for use for any other purpose except for packing Urea, apprehended closure of their units if reservation order is diluted, re-imburement of higher cost of jute bags for packing urea under retention pricing schemes, and reservation of manufacture of such bags for small scale sectors. The Standing Advisory Committee have recently considered in detail the various pros & cons of the evidence and views expressed by different organisations and representation of various Ministries/Depts. in its meetings held on 30.4.98, 15.5.98 and 2.6.98 for putting its recommendations to the Government.

[Translation]

#### Construction of Yatri Niwas in Bihar

2475. SHRI PRABHASH CHANDRA TIWARI : Will the Minister of TOURISM be pleased to state:

(a) the details of proposals received from Bihar for construction of Yatri Niwas in the State;

(b) the funds allocated to the State during 1997-98 and 1998-99 for the purpose; and

(c) the places where the Yatri Niwas proposed to be constructed in the State?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF TOURISM (SHRI OMAK APANG) : (a) No proposal has been received from the State Government during 1997-98 for the construction of Yatri Niwas in the State.

(b) During the 1997-98 the Ministry of Tourism sanctioned Rs. 233.07 lakhs for the implementation of 11 tourism projects in the State. The project proposals for 1998-99 have not been prioritized.

(c) The Ministry of Tourism provides financial assistance to State Governments on the basis of specific project proposals received from them and availability of funds.

[English]

#### Chinese Ties with India to boost Tourism

2476. SHRI RAMPAL SINGH : Will the Minister of TOURISM be pleased to state:

(a) whether China has shown keenness to boost tourism with India;

(b) whether any concrete proposals in this regard have been worked out by both China and India;

(c) if so, the details thereof;

(d) whether any Indian delegation visited China in this regard; and

(e) if so, to what extent both India and China have reached at an agreement for boosting the tourism trade between the two countries?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF TOURISM (SHRI OMAK APANG) : (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) No, Sir.

(c) Does not arise.

(d) and (e) The then Minister of State for Tourism along with the representatives of travel trade visited China in October 1995 to familiarise themselves with the tourism potential of the Chinese market. However, no formal agreement has been reached in this regard.