

Diamonds from Russia

2762. SHRIMATI JAYANTI PATNAIK: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government have a proposal to buy diamonds from Russia;

(b) if so, whether any negotiation has been made with Russia in this regard; and

(c) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMKRISHNA HEGDE) : (a) to (c) Indian manufacturers of cut & polished diamonds buy rough diamonds from various sources including Russia. Recently, a delegation from the Gem & Jewellery Export Promotion Council had visited Russia for exchange of information in Gem & Jewellery sector.

Suspension of Officials of SBI

2763. SHRI G.M. BANATWALLA : Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state :

(a) whether the State Bank of India had issued suspension orders of some senior executives allegedly involved in the National Fertilizers Ltd. scam and CRB Capital scam;

(b) if so, the number of such executives on whom suspension orders were served scam-wise;

(c) the number of senior executives from whom the suspension orders were lifted in case of each scam;

(d) the reasons for which the suspension orders were lifted, scam-wise;

(e) whether the orders were lifted even before the investigations by external agencies were completed; and

(f) if so, the reasons for lifting the orders, scam-wise?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (SHRI YASHWANT SINHA) : (a) to (f) State Bank of India (SBI) have reported that the bank had placed four officials under suspension for irregularities in remittances for import of Urea by National Fertilizers Ltd. The Appellate Authorities in the bank to whom the concerned officials made their appeals against their suspension ordered the lifting of the suspension without prejudice to the disciplinary proceedings if any, which may be taken up after completion of investigation by the external investigating agencies. Though the bank's internal investigations have been completed, the bank has taken a view that any substantive disciplinary action in the case will be initiated only after receipt of investigation report from the external agencies.

In respect of irregularities relating to encashment at par of warrants issued by the CRB Capital Market Ltd., SBI has reported that three officials were placed under suspension. Following the strike by the Officers of SBI, their suspension orders were reviewed and it was decided by the Appellate Authorities to revoke the suspension after taking into account all the aspects of the case including pendency of CBI investigations and the appeals submitted by the officials against their suspension. Major penalty proceedings have been initiated against the concerned officials.

UNDP Grant for researches in Jute

2764. SHRI MOINUL HASSAN : Will the Minister of TEXTILES be pleased to state :

(a) whether the major part of Rs. 80 crore grant received from the UNDP since 1990 has been spent for purposes other than conducting research in diversification of jute products;

(b) whether a high power team has been sent by the UNDP to enquire into gross violation of norms in the matter of utilisation of the said grant;

(c) if, so the details of the amount out of said grant towards research on jute development to various leading jute research institutes in the country and for payment to private jute mills and has been spent on foreign trips by officials of the Ministry for participation in trade fairs organised abroad; and

(d) the details of the research institutes and private jute mills which have received amount from the said grant during last eight years of UNDP Aid Programme?

THE MINISTER OF TEXTILES (SHRI KASHIRAM RANA) : (a) and (b) No, Sir.

(c) and (d) A Statement-I indicating the amount released to various jute research institutes in the country towards research on jute development is enclosed.

Payment to private jute mills are not grants but in the form of loans. Statements indicating assistance given to private mills and entrepreneurs are given at Statements-II and III.

An amount of US \$ 19193 was spent for the foreign tours of two officials from the Ministry for project activities.