

Loans above Rs. 2.00 lakhs Banks are free to determine the rate of interest.

(c) and (d) At present there is no such proposal.

(e) An aggregate amount of Rs. 172.38 crores was disbursed by the scheduled Commercial Banks to 32269 accounts during the year 1996-97.

Budgetary Support to Coir Board

1526. SHRI V.M. SUDHEERAN : Will the Minister of INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government have received any representation regarding enhancement of budgetary support to Coir Board; and

(b) if so, the step taken/proposed to be taken in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF INDUSTRY (SHRI SIKANDER BAKHT) : (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. In view of the importance of the coir industry in generating employment and for promoting export, IXth plan outlay for the Coir Board has been significantly enhanced as part of the overall strategy for expanding the coir industry on viable lines. In the annual budget for the year 1999-2000, a plan outlay of Rs. 20 crores has also been provided as against Rs. 13.00 crores for the year 1998-99.

Perishable Section
16 **Hindustan Copper Ltd.**

1527. SHRI K. PARYMOHAN : Will the Minister of STEEL AND MINES be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Hindustan Copper Ltd. was asked to close down its Ghatsila Smelter Unit due to financial crunch;

(b) if so, the details thereof and the losses incurred by the unit during each of the last three years;

(c) whether the Government have made any efforts to revive this unit; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF STEEL AND MINES (SHRI RAMESH BAIS) : (a) The Government of India have not issued any direction to Hindustan Copper Ltd. (HCL) to close down its Indian

Copper Complex (ICC) unit at Ghatsila. HCL has shut down its ICC, Ghatsila Smelter on its own for carrying out triennial overhaul of the Smelter and Refinery w.e.f. 15.12.98. The overhaul is likely to take 60-80 days for completion.

(b) ICC, Ghatsila including Rakha Unit of HCL has been incurring huge losses. Losses incurred by this unit of HCL during the last three years are as under :

Year	Rs. in Crores
1995-96	43.76
1996-97	57.41
1997-98	78.23

(c) and (d) Government have initiated several steps to make ICC, Ghatsila unit profitable which envisage closure of uneconomic mines and unviable operations with consequential separation of surplus manpower under VRS. The Government has also approved budgetary support of Rs. 414 crores in the form of interest bearing non-plan loan to HCL for Voluntary Retirement of surplus employees over 4 years starting from 1998-99, conversion of outstanding Government loan of Rs. 180.73 crores with HCL as on 31.3.98 into 7.5% non-cumulative redeemable preference shares to be redeemed at the end of 10th year from the date of conversion, waiver of the outstanding interest as on 31.3.98 amounting to Rs. 167.43 crores and raising of working capital term loans from financial Institutions/Banks by HCL to the tune of Rs. 75 crores against Government of India's guarantee.

Changes in the Exim Bank Policy

1528. SHRI LAKSHMAN SINGH :
DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY :

Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry has suggested that the Exim Bank Policy should be changed to reduce the import, intensity of exports and promote the growth of the recession to hit the Indian Industry;

(b) if so, the extent to which the Government has accepted the suggestions; and

(c) the steps being taken to implement the same?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE) : (a) to (c) Federation of Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry has not suggested any change in the Exim Bank Policy for reducing import intensity of exports. However, their suggestions along with those of other such Associations, have been received for improving the competitiveness of Indian industry in the global market. The Government is giving due consideration to all these suggestions while finalising the amendments to the EXIM Policy which is likely to be notified soon.

Reservation Bank ID
Backlog of Reserved Vacancies
Minister Hegde

1529. SHRI K.D. SULTANPURI : Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) the backlog of reserved posts in various nationalised banks, category-wise, as on March 31, 1998; and

(b) the steps taken to clear this backlog till 31st January, 1999?

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) The backlog of reserved posts for Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST) (as on 30.6.1998) and Other Backward Classes (OBCs) (as on 31.12.1997) in 19 nationalised banks is given below:—

Cadre	SC	ST	OBC
Officers	149	106	109
Clerks	601	835	959
Sub-staff	366	664	832

(b) Nationalised Banks have taken necessary action for recruitment of employees belonging to reserved categories in order to clear the backlog.

Cases of WCL and SECL in High Court/ Supreme Court

1530. SHRI BIJOY KUMAR "BIJOY" :
 SHRI SURENDRA PRASAD YADAV
 (JAHANABAD):

Will the Minister of COAL be pleased to state:

(a) whether a large number of cases registered with Labour Tribunal Boards have been challenged in the Jabalpur High Court and Supreme Court by the W.C.L. and S.E.C.L. units of Coal India Ltd. without the permission of the Ministry;

(b) if so, the details thereof and the steps taken by the Government in the matter;

(c) the number of cases filed by W.C.L. and S.E.C.L. against the Labour Tribunal Boards pending in Jabalpur High Court and Supreme Court, till date;

(d) whether some of the cases in the above courts are lingering for the last eight years;

(e) if so, the amount paid to advocates as fee by these companies during the above period; and

(f) the steps taken or being taken by the Government to settle the cases?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COAL (SHRI DILIP RAY) : (a) to (f) Information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the Sabha.

Export of Iron Ore

1531. MAJOR GENERAL BHUVAN CHANDRA KHANDURI, AVSM : Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) the quantity of iron ore exported during 1997 and 1998, country-wise;

(b) whether the Government propose to restrict the export of iron ore instead export of semi-finished steel items;

(c) if so, the details thereof; and

(d) if not, the reasons therefor?