

minerals with special emphasis on conservation and protection of environment and ecology. Twelve minerals such as bauxite, barytes, dolomite, kyanite, limestone except when it is used in kilns for the manufacture of lime as building material, magnesite and sillimanite, which had since assumed national importance, were added to the First Schedule.

While the State Government continues to be vested with the power to grant minerals concessions in respect of all Scheduled minerals, the approval of the Central Government has to be obtained before grant of mineral concessions in such cases. This has been done to regulate the development of these important minerals from an all-India point of view.

(c) and (d). The power to grant mineral concessions in respect of minerals already vests with the State Governments.

[*Translation*]

Violation of FERA by Birla Group of Companies

339. SHRI HUKMDEO NARAYAN YADAV: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether there was violation of the provisions of the Foreign Exchange Regulation Act by Birla Group of Companies during the last three years;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether any action was taken by Government against these companies for these violations;

(d) if so, the details thereof; and

(e) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (PROF. MADHU DANDAVATE): (a) to (e). During the last 3 years namely 1987, 1988 and 1989, in one case relating to M/s Keshoram Rayons and M/s.Keshoram Industries & Cotton Mills Ltd., Calcutta, a show cause notice for contravention of the provisions of FERA, 1973 was issued on 1.9.1989.

Pension Scheme for employees of Insurance Corporations

340. SHRI HARISH RAWAT: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased as to state:

(a) whether Government propose to introduce a pension scheme for the employees of various Insurance Corporations;

(b) if so, when this proposal will be implemented; and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (PROF. MADHU DANDAVATE): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) Liberal retirement benefits already exist in the form of gratuity and contribution to the provident fund at the rate of 10% each by the employee and the employer. There is therefore no proposal to introduce a third retirement benefit.

Himalayan Tourism Development Authority

341. SHRI HARISH RAWAT: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND TOURISM be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government propose to set up a Himalayan Tourism Development Authority;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) if not, the steps proposed to be taken by Government for the development and expansion of tourism in the areas adjoining the Himalayas?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND TOURISM (SHRI ARUN KUMAR NEHRU):

(a) No, Sir.

(b) Question does not arise.

(c) Department of Tourism has set up a Voluntary forum called Himalayan Tourism Advisory Board (HIMTAB) which provides a common platform for mutual inter-action between the representatives of the public and private sectors in the Himalayan States from time to time with regard to tourism programmes and activities, which can be undertaken through inter-state co-operation.

Opening of Branches of Punjab National Bank in Hill Areas of Uttar Pradesh

342. SHRI HARISH RAWAT: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Punjab National Bank has opened a regional office in the hill areas of Uttar Pradesh;

(b) the number of its branches functioning in the three districts of this area; and

(c) whether the Bank proposes to open some more branches in the area and if so, the location thereof and when these branches are likely to be opened?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (PROF. MADHU DANDAVATE): (a) and (b). Punjab National Bank has reported that it has set up two Regional Offices at Dehradun and Kashipur to look after its 74 branches located in the districts of Almora, Nainital, Pithoragarh, Rampur, Chamoli, Dehradun, Pauri Garhwal, Tehri Garhwal and Uttarkashi.

(c) According to Punjab National Bank, it has licences pending for opening of branches at Akhori (Tehri Garhwal), Mukkhu (Chamoli), Trishula (Chamoli) and Rudoli (Uttar-Kashi). The bank proposes to open these branches by 31.3.1990.

Curtailment of Non-Development Expenditure

343. SHRI HARISH RAWAT: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have decided to take some comprehensive measures to curtail non-developmental expenditure; and

(b) if so, the details thereof and the extend to which this expenditure is proposed to be curtailed?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (PROF. MADHU DANDAVATE): (a) and (b). Government are continuously making efforts to reduce non-developmental expenditure to the barest minimum. A number of measures have been taken to bring about reduction in the expenditure. These include curbs on creation of posts, travel expenses, entertainment, inessential seminars, conferences, publications, purchase of furniture/furnishings, fuel consumption etc. Further Ministries and Department of Government have been instructed to review all their programmes and prioritise them adopting the zero base budgeting technique so that expenditure on low priority items can be reduced/eliminated. The results of all these efforts can be assessed only over a period of time.

[English]

Improvement in Programmes of Radio Station at Nagarcoil

344. SHRI N. DENNIS: Will the Minister of INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING AND PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS be pleased to state: