

extent of credit flow from the NMDFC and Banks in each of these States is given as under:—

State	NMDFC share	Estimated control of banks
	(Rs. lakhs)	(Rs. lakhs)
Andhra Pradesh	264.77	635.44
Himachal Pradesh	4.73	18.55
Karnataka	277.09	665.01
TOTAL	546.59	1319.11

(c) and (d) NMDFC has not received such specific reference of non-participation of Banks in NMDFC schemes so far. Since the direct financing scheme of NMDFC ensures quick and easy flow of credit, the beneficiaries prefer direct finance scheme over the Margin Money Scheme.

With a view to achieve more credit flow to minorities through Banks, Reserve Bank of India was approached for issue of instructions to all the Banks to participate in the Margin Money Scheme of NMDFC. Such instructions have since been issued by RBI to all the Banks.

National Policy for Elderly Persons

600. SHRI P. PRABHAKAR REDDY: Will the Minister of SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether the year 1999 has been declared as the 'International Year' for elderly persons, by the United Nations;

(b) if so, whether a National policy addressing to the old age problems, like financial security, health care, protection of life and security has been declared by Government in relation to the old persons in India;

(c) if so, the details thereof; and

(d) the steps taken, so far, to implement the said policy?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT (SHRIMATI MANEKA GANDHI): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir.

(c) Besides providing financial security, health care, protection of life and security, the National Policy seeks to assure older persons that their concerns are national concerns and they will not live unprotected, ignored or marginalised. The Policy visualises that the state will extend support for financial security, shelter, welfare and other needs of older persons. The policy values an age integrated society. It will endeavour to strengthen integration between generations, facilitate two way flows and interactions, and strengthen bonds between the young and the old. It recognises that older persons, too, are a resource. The Policy also firmly believes in the empowerment of older persons so that they can acquire better control over their lives and participate in decision making on matters which affect them as well as on other issues as equal partners in the development process.

(d) A statement is enclosed.

Statement

- (i) A National Council for Older Persons (NCOP) was constituted in May, 1999 to operationalise the National Policy.
- (ii) Both the schemes for older persons were reviewed and revised during 1998-99 to make them more flexible and to allow a wide range of initiatives to promote best interests of older persons. The other scheme of grant in aid for construction of old age homes/multi-service centres was revised to enhance the one time construction grant from Rs. 5 lakh to Rs. 30 lakhs to eligible organizations.
- (iii) In order to examine the policy questions connected with old age income security a national project titled "OASIS" (Old Age Social and Income Security) was commissioned in August, 1998. The first Report of the Committee was formally released by MOS(SJ&E) in February, 1999. It contains recommendations which will enable the members of Provident Funds and

Employee Pension Scheme, as well as Public Provident Fund subscribers to greatly benefit from increased returns through professional fund management and prudently liberalised investment guidelines. This report is being examined by the Ministry of Finance and in the meantime second and final report of project OASIS is being finalised.

- (iv) On the request of MOS to Union Law Minister, Chief Justice of India and Chief Justices of all the High Courts in the country, instructions have been issued by the Hon'ble Chief Justice of India to all Chief Justices of High Courts for expeditious disposal of cases involving older persons 60 years and above.
- (v) On the request of this Ministry, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare have issued instructions to all State Governments to ensure provision of separate queues for older persons in hospitals at every stage and the other request of the Ministry for inclusion of geriatrics in the medical curricula of the country is under their consideration.
- (vi) At the initiative of this Ministry, a Telephone Helpline has been started by an NGO called Age Well with the financial assistance from this Ministry.
- (vii) A Secretariat for NCOP which would also process and take follow-up action on the representations/complaints/grievances of older persons has been established by Age Well Foundation on the initiative and with the financial assistance of this Ministry.
- (viii) Ministry of Telecommunications has announced grant of telephone connections to older persons on priority basis.
- (ix) Ministry of Rural Development is considering launching of a new scheme called ANNAPURNA under which free foodgrains upto 10 Kgs are to be provided to older persons

Re-scheduling of Various Ethnic Groups as STs in Assam

601. SHRI DRUPAD BORGHAIN: Will the Minister of SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT be pleased to state:

- (a) whether there was a recommendation by the Select Committee of Parliament that Koch Rajbanshis, Chutia, Moran, Muttodh, Tai,