

(b) the details of steps being taken by Government in this direction?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI S.S. PALANIMANICKAM): (a) The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has reported that as per its extant branch expansion policy, it is left to the judgment of the individual Public Sector Banks to assess the need for opening additional branches. RBI has no information about new bank branches proposed to be opened by the nationalized banks in Nagaland during the years 2004-05 and 2005-06.

(b) The current policy guidelines of the RBI lay stress on the necessity of opening of new branches of Commercial Banks in hilly and tribal areas including North-Eastern (NE) States, having regard to the peculiar topography in the hilly/tribal areas and sparsely populated regions.

Representation of farmers in pre-budget discussions

2231. SHRI K. CHANDRAN PILLAI: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether he has called the farmers organization for the pre-budget discussions;

(b) if so, who are these organizations, what are their strength and credentials; and

(c) if not, why the representatives of 70 per cent of population are left out from the pre-budget discussion?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI S.S. PALANIMANICKAM): (a) and (b) The Finance Minister met eminent agricultural scientists and experts, representatives of co-operative banks, agricultural commodity organisations and chairperson of the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) for pre-budget consultations on 11th January, 2005.

(c) The interests of the agriculturists and farmers were adequately represented in the pre-budget discussions.