

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI S.S. PALANIMANICKAM) :
(a) to (d) The Software Technology Park (STP) Scheme is an ongoing scheme as per the Foreign Trade Policy. So far as indirect taxes are concerned, presently there is no proposal to stop indirect tax benefits to IT companies located in Software Technology Park of India. So far as direct taxes are concerned, the tax benefit to units located in software technology parks under the provisions of section 10A of the Income Tax Act, 1961 which was initially available upto assessment year 2010-11 has been extended upto assessment year 2011-12. Therefore, formulation of special schemes for Small and Medium IT companies is not envisaged.

Bringing rural poor under banking net

1447. DR. K.V.P. RAMACHANDRA RAO : Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that in spite of the nationalization of banks and Government's thrust on financial inclusion, large number of rural people still remain without banking access;

(b) if so, the main reasons therefor; and

(c) what steps are proposed to be taken to bring all the rural poor under the banking net?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI NAMO NARAIN MEENA) : (a) to (c) There are approx. 6 lakh rural habitations in India. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has reported that as on June 30, 2010 there are 88,363 offices of Scheduled Commercial Banks (SCBs) in the country. The numbers of offices in semi-urban and rural areas constitute around 61 per cent of the total number of bank offices in the country. The RBI has also reported that the all India average population per office as on June 30, 2010 was 13,400. In spite of the presence of these banking offices, a significant proportion of the households, especially in rural areas and in remote and inaccessible areas, remain outside the fold of the formal banking system.

To extend the reach of banking to those outside the formal banking system, the Government of India, in consultation with the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), has decided to provide appropriate banking facilities to habitations having a population in excess of 2000 (as per 2001 census) by March, 2012. These services will be provided using the Business Correspondent and other models, with appropriate technology back up. The State Level Bankers Committees (SLBCs) have

accordingly drawn up plans for Financial Inclusion for each State and have identified approx. 73,000 habitations with a population of 2000 and over for providing banking services. The Banks have already initiated action to implement these plans.

Misuse of bank lockers

1448. SHRIMATI JAYANTHI NATARAJAN : Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that bank lockers are being misused for stashing black money by corrupt Government employees and others in the country;

(b) if so, the details thereof with number of such misuse which came to light during the last three years, year-wise and State-wise; and

(c) what remedial measures Government proposes to take in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI NAMO NARAIN MEENA) : (a) and (b) Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has reported that they have no information in this regard. However, RBI has reported that in a recent incident explosives and weapons were found in a locker in a bank branch. This emphasised that banks should be aware of the risk involved in renting safe deposit lockers.

(c) In order to ensure due diligence in allotment of lockers, RBI Master Circular on Customer Service, *inter-alia*, states that :-

i) Banks should carry out customer due diligence for both new and existing customers at least to the levels prescribed for customers classified as medium risk. If the customer is classified in a higher risk category, customer due diligence as per Know Your Customer (KYC) norms applicable to such higher risk category should be carried out.

(ii) Where the lockers have remained unoperated for more than three years for medium risk category or one year for a higher risk category, banks should immediately contact the locker-hirer and advise him to either operate the locker or surrender it. This exercise should be carried out even in the locker hirer is paying the rent regularly. Further, banks should ask the locker hirer to give in writing, the reason why he/she did not operate the locker. In case the locker-hirer has some genuine reasons as in the case of NRIs or persons who are out of town due to a transferable job etc., banks may allow the locker hirer to continue with the locker. In case the locker-hirer does not respond nor