

(c) the provisions made by Government at central level with regard to benami deals; and

(d) the efforts made by Government to unearth benami deals till date?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI SHIV PRATAP SHUKLA): (a) Yes. One of the avenues for holding of tax evaded money is in the form of benami property.

(b) With a view to bridge the gaps and put in place appropriate effective legislation, the existing Prohibition of Benami Properties Transactions Act, 1988 was amended through Benami Transactions (Prohibition) Amendment Act, 2016, which came into force w.e.f 1st November, 2016. Relevant Rules relating to the Prohibition of Benami Properties Transactions Act, 1988 were duly notified. The Government has set up 24 Benami Prohibition Units (BPUs) across India for taking effective action under the Act.

(c) The Act defines a 'benami transaction' and 'benami property'. It also provides for exclusions and transactions which shall not be construed to be benami. It provides the consequences of entering into a prohibited benami transaction. It lays down the procedure for determination of a prohibited benami transaction and related penal consequences. The Act has enabled confiscation of benami property and provides for prosecution of *benamidars*, beneficial owners and abettors/inducers in respect of identified benami transactions.

(d) Due to intensive efforts undertaken by the Income-tax Department, till 31/01/2018, provisional attachment has been made in respect of more than 1000 properties under the Benami Act. These include plots of land, flats, shops, jewellery, vehicles, deposits in bank accounts, fixed deposits etc. The value of properties under provisional attachment is over ₹ 3800 crore.

Fraudulent transactions in PNB by a jewellery company

1158. SHRI RAM KUMAR KASHYAP: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has received complaints from Punjab National Bank (PNB) against a jewellery company about fraudulent transactions worth ₹ 10,000 crore;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether the shares of PNB tumbled more than 8 per cent after the fraud came to light and the investors in PNB lost over ₹ 4,000 crore; and

(d) whether some senior officers of PNB are involved in the fraud and if so, the details thereof and action taken against each one of them?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI SHIV PRATAP SHUKLA): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. As per CBI inputs, two cases have been registered relating to fraudulent transactions in PNB by jewellery companies and these are under investigation.

(c) The closing price of the shares of Punjab National Bank (PNB) on the National Stock Exchange on 14.2.2018, the day the fraud was reported to stock exchanges by PNB, was 8.24% lower than its opening price the same day, corresponding to a decrease in PNB's market capitalisation by ₹ 3,138 crore.

(d) The matter is under investigation.

Interest rates on small savings schemes

1159. SHRI RAM KUMAR KASHYAP: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) what are the reasons for reducing interest rates in small savings comprising of Postal Savings Schemes, Senior Citizen Savings Scheme and Public Provident Fund (PPF);

(b) whether drastic reduction in interest rates is impacting adversely upon the social security of senior citizens who are totally depended upon interest earnings for their survival;

(c) if so, whether there is any proposal to enhance interest rate on senior citizen savings scheme and PPF holders and if not, the reasons therefor; and

(d) the steps taken to address the genuine concern of small savers, particularly senior citizens and PPF holders while reviewing the interest rates?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI RADHAKRISHNAN P.): (a) Sir. The interest rates of small savings schemes are fixed on the basis of interest rates in the economy as determined by the yields on Government Securities of comparable maturities. The reduction in interest rates during the 4th quarter of 2017-18 was due to fall in the interest rates.