

Prescribed duration of LoUs for precious stones

3567. SHRI K.T.S. TULSI: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) total period for which Letters of Understanding (LoUs) for precious stones such as gems and diamonds can be opened, as per the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Guidelines;

(b) whether any action was taken by the Ministry against the companies of Nirav Modi and Mehul Choksi including the bank officials for issuing LoUs to them for periods beyond the prescribed duration as per the said guidelines; and

(c) if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI SHIV PRATAP SHUKLA): (a) to (c) As per RBI Master Direction on External Commercial Borrowings, Trade Credit, Borrowing and Lending in Foreign Currency by Authorised Dealers *et al*, the maturity period for trade credit for non-capital goods is up to one year from the date of shipment or the operating cycle whichever is less. As per RBI Master Direction on Import of Goods and Services, Suppliers' and Buyers' credit (trade credit) including the usance period of Letters of Credit opened for import of gold in any form, including jewellery made of gold/precious metals or/and studded with diamonds/semi-precious/precious stones, should not exceed 90 days from the date of shipment. The Master Direction further provides that for import of other precious metals, viz., platinum/palladium/rhodium/silver/rough, cut and polished diamonds/precious and semi-precious stones, the period of Suppliers' and Buyers' credit (trade credit) including the usance period of Letters of Credit opened for import of platinum, palladium, rhodium and silver and rough, cut and polished diamonds, precious and semi-precious stones should not exceed 90 days from the date of shipment.

As regards action for issuance of LoUs with reference to durations prescribed in the said Master Directions, as per CBI inputs, the matter is under investigation.

Posts lying vacant in Banking Department

3568. SHRI MANAS RANJAN BHUNIA: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether there are a number of vacancies in the Departments under different wings including Banking sector;

(b) if so, the number of posts lying vacant in the Departments including Banking sector, as on date; and

(c) the steps the Department and Government are going to take to fill up the vacancies?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI SHIV PRATAP SHUKLA): (a) to (c) There are total 59 number of posts vacant at various levels in the Department of Financial Services. Filling up of vacancies is an ongoing process and vacancies are filled up through concerned recruiting agencies of the Government of India.

Opening of bank branches in rural backward areas

3569. SHRI HARSHVARDHAN SINGH DUNGARPUR: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government has taken note of lack of banking facilities in rural/backward areas;

(b) if so, the details thereof along with the norms/guidelines laid down by the Reserve Bank of India for opening of bank branches in rural/backward areas of the country; and

(c) the number of bank branches proposed to be opened in unreserved rural/backward areas along with the steps taken or being taken by Government to open bank branches in unserved areas including the time-framed fixed thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI SHIV PRATAP SHUKLA): (a) to (c) Pradhan Mantri Jan-Dhan Yojana (PMJDY) was launched *inter alia* with the objective to provide universal access to banking facilities. Under the scheme all rural and semi-urban areas were mapped into 1.59 lakh Sub-Service Areas (SSAs) where one SSA catering to 1,000 to 1,500 households. While 0.33 lakh SSAs have been covered with bank branches, 1.26 lakh SSAs, have been covered by deployment of interoperable Bank Mitras.

Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has rationalized its Branch Authorisation Policy and granted general permission to domestic Scheduled Commercial Banks (excluding Regional Rural Banks), including Public Sector Banks, to open banking outlets at any place in the country, without seeking prior approval of RBI in each case, subject to at least 25 per cent of the total number of banking outlets opened during a financial year being in unbanked rural centres (Tier 5 and Tier 6 centres). For this purpose, banking outlets opened in any centre having population less than 50,000 in North Eastern States and Sikkim and also Left Wing Extremism (LWE) affected districts as notified by the Government of India are also considered as equivalent to opening of banking outlets in unbanked rural centres.