

in a systematic way. The veterans of 2nd World War are more than 80 years of age. So many of them have no support, there is no one to look after. I would like to know from the hon. Minister that whether you are going to make some arrangement for remaining period of their life so that they can spend their life with dignity.

SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES : Mr. Speaker, Sir, a few days before I have received an application in this regard which is under consideration. I can assure the House that the decision will be taken on that matter utmost sympathetically.

[English]

MR. SPEAKER : Q. 169. Dr. T. Subbarami Reddy.

SHRI DADA BABURAO PARANJPE : Sir, you must give me an opportunity. I am the only survivor here among the 500 War veterans of Azad Hind Fauj . . . (Interruptions) I may be given a chance . . . (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER : No. There are other Members who were in the Army.

(Interruptions)

SHRI DADA BABURAO PARANJPE : Sir, then I walk out in protest . . . (Interruptions)

11.46 hrs.

(At this stage, Shri Dada Baburao Paranjpe left the House)

[Translation]

SHRI SHIVRAJ SINGH CHOUHAN : Mr. Speaker, Sir, he has been a soldier of Azad Hind Fauz, therefore he may give a chance to ask a question. . . . (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER : Please understand. I understand his position. But I have gone to the next question. Next time, I will give his chance.

(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER : Please take your seat.

(Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER : Shri Paranjpe, please take your seat. I will consider your request later.

(Interruptions)

Revival Package for Steel Industry

*169. DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY : Will the Minister of STEEL AND MINES be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government propose to announce revival package for Steel Industry on the basis of recommendations of Expert Committee;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether the Committee has submitted its first report;

(d) if so, the action taken by the Government thereon; and

(e) the extent to which this revival package is likely to improve the functioning of the Steel Industry?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF STEEL AND MINES (SHRI RAMESH BAIS) : (a) to (e) A Statement is laid on the Table of the Lok Sabha.

Statement

Revival Package for Steel Industry

(a) to (c) A Working Group had been set up by Government to study the present slow down in the Steel Sector. The Group has since submitted its report. The recommendations of the Working Group, inter alia, include :

- (i) Rationalisation of DEPB (Duty Entitlement Pass Book) rates.
- (ii) To consider feasibility of converting ad valorem rate of import duty into fixed duties on certain finished steel items.
- (iii) To consider a combination of measures comprising levy of Special Import Duty on imports of seconds and defectives alongwith raising duties for certain types of steel up to World Trade Organisation bound rates.
- (iv) To consider removal of imports of Seconds and Defectives below a specific floor price from OGL.
- (v) To deal with cases of dumping by establishing a fast track mechanism.
- (vi) Withdrawal/Waiver of Special Customs Duty of 2% + 3% and Special Additional Duty of 4% on input items for the steel sector which are not available within the country.

(d) and (e) The details of action taken by Government on the recommendations and some of the results achieved so far to enable the steel industry to overcome the present problems are as under :

- (i) The import of several inputs such as coking coal (ash content < 12%), non-coking coal, metallurgical coke, ferro nickel, charge nickel and nickel oxide sinters, low silica limestone and graphite electrodes (> 28") have been exempted from Special Custom Duty of 2% + 3%.
- (ii) An appropriate anti dumping duty has been levied on imports of HR Coils/Strips/Sheets/Plates and Boiler quality plates from Russia & Ukraine.

The above measures alongwith steps being taken by Government to boost demand for steel, encourage steel exports by rationalising DEPB rates and enhance project financing to steel sector by All India Financial Institutions, are likely to improve the functioning of the steel industry.

DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY : Sir, the hon. Minister, in his reply, has given only general revival package. He has not considered the position of various steel plants in the steel industry. My first question is about Visakhapatnam Steel Plant where the Government of India has invested about Rs. 8,500 crore and till today, even though the steel plant is doing very well, it is not able to get the profit. It is a serious problem. I would like to know from the hon. Minister what steps he is taking.

Sir, even though the hon. Minister has converted the loan as equity recently, still there are so many internal problems. There is a fear among the workers and also the steel plant management of the public undertakings where a sum of Rs. 8,500 has been sunk that it might be closed. It may be disastrous. Therefore, my question to the hon. Minister is whether the Government is taking steps, at least, to solve the problems and see that such a gigantic steel plant is saved.

[Translation]

SHRI RAMESH BAIS : Mr. Speaker, Sir, R.I.N.L. Vizag Steel Plant is not mentioned in this question but if you require, I can give you detail of the question ask for. The name of that particular steel plant was not in the main question.

[English]

SHRI AJIT JOGI : The House wants to know and not the Member only . . . (Interruptions)

DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY : Sir, the Vizag Steel Plant is a sinking plant and the question relates to sinking plants in the steel industry . . . (Interruptions)

[Translation]

SHRI RAMESH BAIS : Mr. Speaker, Sir, this question is not regarding Vizag. I may give you other information if you need.

[English]

MR. SPEAKER : Mr. Minister, you can give him a written reply.

(Interruptions)

SHRI A.C. JOS : Sir, the other day, I brought to your notice that the Ministers are not coming prepared. We want your protection, Sir . . . (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER : No, Please.

SHRI A.C. JOS : Sir, this question relates to steel industry and the hon. Minister is not giving any satisfactory answer . . . (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER : He will give him a written reply.

SHRI A.C. JOS : Sir, none of the Ministers is coming prepared to answer the questions in the House. We want your protection in this matter. I would request you to give instructions to the hon. Ministers to come prepared in the House . . . (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER : The hon. Minister has already replied.

DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY : Sir, even though the hon. Minister may not have adequate information, he must have the policy in his mind as to how the present Government going to consider the serious and disastrous position of Vizag Steel Plant where Rs. 8,500 crore has been sunk. I would like to know the reaction of the hon. Minister to this. This is my first question.

[Translation]

SHRI RAMESH BAIS : Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Government is giving special care to R.I.N.L. Vizag and Rourkela in this case and also matter is being discussed with finance department so that as soon as possible, the steel industries running in loss could be made profitable. Decision will be taken soon in this regard.

[English]

MR. SPEAKER : Shri Shakuni Choudhary, please.

DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY : Sir, I have asked only one supplementary . . . (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER : No, please.- You are entitled to only one supplementary.

(Interruptions)

DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY : Sir, I am entitled to ask two supplementaries . . . (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER : No.

(Interruptions)

DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY : Sir, as per rules, a single Member listed on the question is entitled to ask two supplementaries. I am the single person listed for this question . . . (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER : You have already asked more than two supplementaries.

(Interruptions)

DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY : Sir, I have asked only half of the question . . . (Interruptions)

MR. SPEAKER : All right.

DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY : Sir, my second supplementary is that lakhs and crores of rupees are involved in the steel industry. I would like to know from the hon. Minister how is the present Government going to solve the problem. I want a categorical answer to my question. I would like to know when is the Government going to decide, apply its mind and solve this problem.

[Translation]

SHRI RAMESH BAIS : Mr. Speaker, Sir, it is difficult to fix a time limit for this but the government is worried about it. Efforts are on to make them profitable which are running in losses.

SHRI SHAKUNI CHOUDHARY : Mr. Speaker, Sir, I would like to know from the hon. Minister through you, Sir, that whether the Bokaro Steel Plant of Bihar had suffered a loss of 670 crores during the nine months. I would also like to know from the hon. Minister that whether steel worth of Rs. 245 crores, have been sold in loss this year?

SHRI RAMESH BAIS : Mr. Speaker, Sir, I have no information in this regard. If hon. Member have any information, then tell me. I am ready to investigate the matter.

SHRI SHAKUNI CHOUDHARY : Mr. Speaker, Sir, I have asked a simple question that whether there is a loss of Rs. 670 crore this year in 1998-99? . . . (Interruptions)

PROF. RITA VERMA : Mr. Speaker, Sir, I am surprised to see their concern in this matter because there was congress led government in 1991, that time when country's steel plants started to suffer. From that time the pattern was changed every year in import and excise duty for making

favourable condition, for export and adverse for domestic steel industries. Today when they make hue and cry, I feel ridiculous. Our government have taken so many measures and imposed 4 per cent special additional duty. I want to ask that today indogenous steel industry is facing bad days due to changes in taxes whether the government are contemplating to abolish this tax structure, which is the creation of Congress and to make it favourable so that steel industry may be made profitable?

SHRI RAMESH BAIS : Due to reduction in duties by the previous government in steel sector, import has increased and which has created a state of inbalance. Our Government have imposed taxes on H.R./C.R. Coil wages and anti dumping import duty on steel to stop the import of steel. In this way the economic situation of steel sector will improve and the problem of steel will also be rectified.

[English]

Losses by Air India

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*171. DR. ULHAS VASUDEO PATIL :
SHRI K.S. RAO :

Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state :

(a) whether Air India has incurred heavy losses during the current financial year;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor;

(c) steps proposed by the Government to revive the financial condition of Air India; and

(d) the number of new aircraft purchased by the Air India during last five years?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI ANANTH KUMAR) : (a) to (d) A Statement is laid on the Table of the House.

Statement

Losses by Air India

(a) and (b) Details of losses are as under :

1997-98	Rs. 181.01 crores
1998-99 (Estimated)	Rs. 340.72 crores

The losses are due to increase in expenditure on account of interest and depreciation on new aircraft, reduction in yield due to increased competition and cost of operations, increase in wage bill and other staff costs and landing, handling and navigational charges, depreciation of rupee value, etc.