

**Allotment of Steel for building residential houses to Low and Middle Income Groups**

\*247. SHRI ARJUN SETHI: Will the Minister of STEEL AND MINES be pleased to state:

(a) whether in view of the increasing price of steel in the market, Government propose to allot steel for building residential houses to low and middle income groups people at a prescribed rate through the Steel Authority of India Limited or some other Government agency; and

(b) if so, the details regarding the policy of Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND CIVIL SUPPLIES AND STEEL AND MINES (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) and (b) A scheme laid down by the Joint Plant Committee for supply of steel to small house builders at stockyard prices and up to a maximum of 5 tonnes in each case, is already in existence. Under this scheme, applications, duly supported by a building plan sanctioned by the Municipal Corporation or the Local Body together with the Architect's Certificate, are considered by ad-hoc Committees set up for the purpose at important centres. Supplies are arranged according to availability. Certain quantities of bars and rods both plain and torsteel in sizes 6 mm to 20 mm are set apart for this purpose.

SHRI ARJUN SETHI: Mr. Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister has stated in his statement that supplies are arranged according to availability of the steel. We know the supplies are far too meagre as against the required quantity. So, may I ask the hon. Minister what specific steps does the Government propose to take so that steel is available to the low and medium income groups at the earliest so that their requirements or their needs can be fulfilled?

SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE: It depends on the availability as I mentioned. Unless we produce this particular item, it would not be possible

to augment the supply. So far as steel supply for the current year is concerned, we have been able to provide 21,000 tonnes for the house builders.

SHRI ARJUN SETHI: As you know the prices of steel are sky-high and it is beyond the reach of the common man and the middle income group. What specific steps does the Government propose to take so that the price of steel comes down to a reasonable level, so that it can be beneficial to the persons concerned.

SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE: As regards the supply from the stock yard, I have already mentioned in the text of my main reply that it is at the stockyard prices. But to have overall price reduction, it is just not possible for one particular category of consumers.

SHRI M. M. LAWRENCE: In view of the increase in the prices of steel goods, people in the country, especially, the small and medium farmers, are experiencing great hardships especially when there is a price rise in the agricultural implements. I want to know what steps does the Government propose to take to reduce the price and to control the price of agricultural implements so that the farmers can get them at the reduced price.

SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE: Sir, the question relates to the steel supply to the house builders.

SHRI CHHITUBHAI GAMIT: I want to know whether the Minister is aware that there is blackmarketing in the steel and whether Government propose to take any stern action against those people.

MR. SPEAKER: Well, naturally, they do it.

Next question. Mr. Lakkappa.