

SHRI C. SUBRAMANIAM: This decision was taken only recently, a few months back when we gave new licences for expansion we insisted on a condition that they should establish an R & D wing in the country in their units.

SHRI UNNIKRISHNAN: May I know if his Ministry has appointed a task force to assess the total demand for tyres, and if so, whether that was largely loaded in favour of the private sector and in their interest?

SHRI C. SUBRAMANIAM: The task force only makes an assessment of the requirements of tyres. Certainly it does not load it either in favour of public sector or private sector. They give the capacity which would be required by the end of the fifth plan. It is for the Government to take a decision where it will load it.

SHRI G. VISHWANATHAN: In view of the fact that we have to pay double the fixed price in the black market, I want to know what steps are being taken to expand production immediately without any ideological considerations coming in the way?

SHRI C. SUBRAMANIAM: There is no question of ideology involved in this. Either we produce it or we import it or we continue to suffer under scarcity conditions. We have taken the decision that in the existing units within the country, we should have quick production. That is why we have identified these companies and allowed them to expand.

SHRI DINEN BHATTACHARYYA: Permission has been given to Dunlop India for expansion to the extent of 2 lakh numbers of truck tyres. I want to know how many units Dunlop has got throughout India, what is their existing production capacity, whether that capacity is fully

utilised and whether there is idle capacity in their unit in Saugor which requires immediate attention of Government.

SHRI C. SUBRAMANIAM: That is not correct, because if he sees the answer to part (a) he will find that fuller utilisation approval was granted to Dunlop India. Over and above their authorised capacity, during the emergency we asked them to expand. They expanded and increased their production by 2,72,000 numbers. They came for recognition of this extra capacity, which has been recognised now. That shows that they have been producing above their capacity. Of course, there was a strike in Dunlop, when no capacity would have been utilised. I do not know if he is referring to that.

Expansion of Bharat Ophthalmic Glass Limited Durgapur

*151 **SHRI P. M. MEHTA:** Will the Minister of INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT AND SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state

(a) whether the Ophthalmic Glass Plant at Durgapur is going to be diversified and expanded so as to make it economically viable;

(b) whether Soviet equipment and technology which was appropriate for optical glass was used instead of ophthalmic glass and the result of which was disastrous;

(c) whether due to these reasons, India used to export these lenses to the U.S.S.R. at a very heavy loss of more than 60 per cent and if so, to what extent India was exporting these lenses at this loss and when was it stopped; and

(d) whether India has now found that foreign firms are willing to sell their know-how to Bharat Ophthalmic Glass Limited?

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT (SHRI PRANAB KUMAR MUKHERJEE): (a) to (d). A statement is laid on the Table of the House.

Statement

(a) Yes, Sir.

(b) No, Sir. The plant is designed to produce Ophthalmic Glass. However, looking to the requirements of Defence, production of Optical Glass for periscope prisms in small quantities has been taken up after adding certain ancillary equipment.

(c) Export of lenses to USSR is being made in the normal course of export promotion. The export price is 1/3rd of the cost of production (approximately). But even then export of lenses to USSR is advantageous as it fetches better price than the internal price in addition to earning foreign exchange. In 1972-73, lenses valued at Rs. 5.45 lakhs approximately were exported. For 1973-74, a contract has already been signed for export of lenses of the value of Rs. 7 lakhs approximately.

The possibilities of effecting improvements in technology and in the product mix to bring down cost of production are being looked into.

(d) The company is in touch with a number of foreign parties for obtaining the know-how for a more sophisticated technology. Some of the foreign firms have shown interest in the proposal.

SHRI P. M. MEHTA: The reply to part (b) is totally misleading. I would like to know whether the minister is aware of the fact that at the end of the two day seminar recently, the Managing Director of Bharat Ophthalmic Glass Ltd., Durgapur, has explained that when Durgapur plant was first mooted, the Soviet collaborators offered to supply equipment for optical glass which is used in instruments; however, it soon became apparent that

the demand in India was not for optical glass but for ophthalmic glass, which is needed for spectacles?

Ultimately, the Soviet equipment and technology which was appropriate for optical glass was used instead of ophthalmic glass."

I would like to know whether he is aware of the economic disaster we are facing because of this. The Managing Director of BOGL has stated:

"In economic terms, the result was disastrous. The BOGL is able to sell rough glass blanks, being the only producer in the country. But its cost of converting these to lenses is so high that it simply cannot compete with small-scale manufacturers. So it has instead been exporting lenses to the USSR at a very heavy loss of more than 60 per cent."

Therefore, I would like to know from the Minister how it happened that the plant was chosen for one thing and the Russian collaborators offered plant for optical glasses. How did it happen that the requirements of the country were not scrutinised and the plant was allowed to produce glasses which were not required in this country? Why were appropriate steps not taken to check the production of unrequired glasses resulting in loss?

SHRI PRANAB KUMAR MUKHERJEE: In fact, when the detailed project report was prepared it was first decided to have 200 tonnes of ophthalmic glass and 10 tonnes of optical glass in BOGL. Subsequently, it was revised and only ophthalmic glass blanks were manufactured. It is a fact that the lenses which are being manufactured in BOGL are exported to USSR at almost a third of the manufacturing cost. There are two reasons for it. The imported cost of the blanks are less and even the internal price per lens is 80 paise while we are exporting it to Russia at Rs. 1 per lens. In view of this fact, a technical committee has been appointed to look into the whole aspect of the pro-

ductmix of BOGL. That committee has submitted its report, which is under the consideration of the Government.

SHRI P. M. MEHTA: The reply of the Minister has proved that this is one of the biggest white elephants in the public sector. He has given two reasons for the present position. It is also a big drain on our foreign exchange resources. In order to tide over this difficulty and make the plant economically viable, is it a fact that the experts have stated that the existing batch process should be replaced by a continuous process? If so, what will be the total cost of this plant and what will be the total expenditure on this project?

SHRI PRANAB KUMAR MUKHERJEE: The technical committee has already stated that instead of the batch process the continuous process should be adopted in BOGL. The total cost of the project would be Rs. 1.25 crores. A technical team would be visiting certain countries to study the continuous process.

SHRI VISHWANATH PRATAP SINGH I would like to know whether Government is aware that the best silica sand for ophthalmic glass is available in the Shankargarh area of Allahabad? In the context of the expansion of the ophthalmic glass plants, would the Government consider installing a washing plant in that area for further refining the silica sand?

MR. SPEAKER It is an entirely new question. I have no objection if the Minister is prepared to oblige him.

SHRI PRANAB KUMAR MUKHERJEE: This question relates to BOGL. For the question of the hon Member I required separate notice.

SHRI S. M. BANERJEE: I shall confine myself to Bengal. The question pertains to a factory in Durgapur. I would like to know whether it is a fact that these glasses have been produced in the national Instruments

factory which is in Calcutta and, if so, whether they are suffering because of no work and, if that is so, what are the steps taken by the Government to have diversification in that particular factory.

श्री अटल बिहारी वाजपेयी : अध्यक्ष महोदय, श्री ज्योतिर्मय बसु वहाँ क्या कर रहे हैं? कम कांग्रेस पार्टी ने फैमला किया है कि उस के मेम्बरो का आप जीवन के साथ हावनाव करने का इजाजत नहीं होगी। उस तरह कांग्रेस के मेम्बर कठिनाई में फँस जायेंगे, यह टाक नहीं है।

SHRI AMRIT NAHATA: He is hobnobbing with our party. That is allowed.

MR SPEAKER: Yesterday, Mr. Atal Bihari Vajpayee was hobnobbing with Mr Jyotirmoy Bosu.

SHRI PRANAB KUMAR MUKHERJAE In fact, in 1972, a separate Company had been formed. I have already explained the reasons why the BOGL has become a losing concern and the steps already taken to make it an economically viable unit.

ग्रामीण क्षेत्रों में गरीबी के स्तर पर रहने वाले लोगों के लिए कम मूल्यों पर आवश्यक उपभोग्य वस्तुओं का उपलब्ध कराया जाना।

152. डा० लक्ष्मीनारायण पांडेय

श्री अटल बिहारी वाजपेयी :

क्या योजना मंत्री यह बनाने की कृपा करेंगे कि .

(क) देश में गरीबी के स्तर का ग्रामीण क्षेत्रों में क्या प्रतिशत है;