

the cost of the ferrous scrap as also the sponge iron has become so high that it is difficult for the manufacturers of mini steel plants to compete with the major plants? Is it under the consideration of the Government to reduce further the import duty of the scrap? I would like to know, since the Hon. Minister has been pleading for the scrap not being used, but sponge iron being used more and more and making steel in these mini steel plants through sponge iron route how many of these 160 units have switched over to sponge iron route and the further licences of about 40 or 50 units which have been licenced recently, how many have gone into production and out of them how many are based on sponge iron and how many are based on scrap.

SHRI K. C. PANT : So far as import duty is concerned, as my Hon. friend said, import duty has been reduced on shedded scrap from 30 per cent to 20 per cent, on hot-briquetted iron and on sponge iron from 25 per cent to 20 per cent, also on heavy melting scrap from 80 per cent plus counterveiling duty of Rs. 365 per tonne to 20 per cent plus counterveiling duty. This is by way of relief to this sector. The mini steel plants have represented for greater relief. Studies have been conducted and ultimately this is the relief that has been given. They still say that the relief is not enough. But that is not a point which can be answered during the question-answer session.

The other question he asked was about sponge iron. Technology does not allow 100 per cent use of sponge iron. You cannot substitute scrap by sponge iron completely. Present day technology takes use of sponge iron to the level of 30 per cent. Some of the units are using sponge iron but not too many yet.

Allocation of funds for houses to plantation labourers

***556. SHRI ANANDA PATHAK :** Will the Minister of URBAN DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state :

(a) whether Government have received representation from the Darjeeling Tea

Planters' Association for making necessary allocation of funds for advancing loan and providing subsidy to the employers of tea gardens through Government of West Bengal for construction of houses for labour in tea plantations in Darjeeling hill areas;

(b) if so, when the funds would be made available to mitigate the problem of shelterless workers on priority basis; and

(c) whether Government propose to reive the scheme for all the tea plantations in India ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF URBAN DEVELOPMENT (SHRI DALBIR SINGH) : (a) The Government of West Bengal (Housing Department) has reported that no such representation has been received by them. No representation has been received in the Ministry of Urban Development or the Ministry of Labour.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) No, Sir.

SHRI ANANDA PATHAK : Sir, when the Prime Minister visited Darjeeling on 19th December, 1986 the Darjeeling Tea Planters' Association submitted a memorandum to the Prime Minister. I do not know how the Government is functioning when these people have submitted a memorandum and the Minister does not know about it. The position is that thousands and thousands of workers...

MR. SPEAKER : Please put the question.

SHRI ANANDA PATHAK : Because he does not know anything so I have to explain. There are about 9 lakh workers and their family members are about 11 lakh. According to Government's answer to my last question by now 39,864 houses have been constructed. That means for 50 workers only one house. It is very amazing. Government had scheme to provide subsidy and loan but recently that too has been withdrawn. In view of the seriousness of the situation I would like to know whether Government would re-introduce

the scheme immediately and come to a realistic assessment about the unit cost of such house for tea plantation workers throughout the country ?

[Translation]

SHRI DALBIR SINGH : Sir, the question of the Hon. Member is connected with the issue of tea gardens and in this connection, we have asked the State Government several times whether any proposals or representations have been received from the tea garden labourers, but no such representation has been received by the State Government or the Central Government from their Association so far. The Centre has been providing subsidy since 1971, but we have felt that the tea garden owners do not take any interest and only a few houses have been constructed for the workers. Besides central subsidies, loans were given by the State Government as well. Central subsidy was provided since the Fourth Five Year Plan, but later after much discussion it was discontinued, because the Government felt that it becomes the responsibility of the tea garden owners to take some measures for the welfare of their workers. So far as the second question of the Hon. Member is concerned, I want to make it clear to him that if some schemes or proposals are sent to us for financial assistance, we will look in to them and make loans available as well.

SHRI ANANDA PATHAK : The point is that we cannot do anything directly. The tea-garden labourers in the Darjeeling hill areas are facing acute problem of housing. First, earlier we received some subsidy from the Government, but how it has been discontinued. Presently, the Government has formulated a scheme by which maximum financial assistance will be provided to solve the housing problem and crores of rupees are being given for this purpose. A representation has also been sent by the Gorkha National Liberation Front demanding loan and other kinds of assistance for building houses for the teagarden workers. Now their Condition is such that they are totally ruined and there is no provision for construction of houses for them. I want to know from the Hon. Minister whether the Government will make some arrangements for providing special

assistance or subsidy at the earliest so that their problems are solved ?

SHRI DALBIR SINGH : Although it is upto the State Government to provide housing facilities and to decide as to where the houses are to be constructed, but so far as the question of financial assistance is concerned, I have also clarified earlier that if some proposals are sent to us, we will consider them and provide the loans. You must send proposals under our scheme. Earlier, Central subsidy was given, but we have not provided for in the Seventh Five Year Plan, because the Government felt that the tea-garden owners were not quite alert about the welfare of the labourers. Though earlier, subsidy was continuously being given by the Centre in the Housing sector, yet the workers were not benefited and they were not able to build houses for them. It was due to this very reason that we had to discontinue it. We believe that the owners of the tea-gardens also have certain duties towards their workers and it is their responsibility to provide houses for them. So far as loans are concerned, we are prepared to sanction them, but it is also essential that we receive formal proposals for them.

[English]

PROF. N. G. RANGA : It is an unsatisfactory state of affairs. Between these two Ministries, they seem to be doing nothing just because the State Governments are not doing anything and the planters themselves are not playing their own role. Government themselves admit that the conditions of housing for plantation labour are very unsatisfactory.

Will they try now between the Labour Ministry and this Ministry to take some initiative in cooperation with the State Governments to think so some schemes by which the housing conditions for the plantation labour would be improved ?

[Translation]

SHRI DALBIR SINGH : Mr. Speaker, Sir, as regards Hon. Shri Ranga's contention that nothing has been done, I want to submit that the Central Government has been

granting subsidies continuously for the last 18 years and it has been enhanced as well. But the State Government should prepare a plan about the housing requirements of the tea-garden labourers and send it to us. We are always ready to sanction loans accordingly. We are not rejecting the request for loans.

[English]

Policy on urban land ceiling

*557. SHRI HUSSAIN DALWAI : Will the Minister of URBAN DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state :

(a) whether Union Government propose to revise their policy on urban land ceiling; and

(b) if so, the details thereof ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF URBAN DEVELOPMENT (SHRI DALBIR SINGH) : (a) and (b). Certain proposals to amend the Urban Land (Ceiling and Regulation) Act, 1976 are under the consideration of Government.

[English]

SHRI HUSSAIN DALWAI : Sir, will the honourable Minister enlighten this House about certain proposals which, he says, are under active consideration of the Government ?

[Translation]

SHRI DALBIR SINGH : It has to be looked into deeply. In our Urban Ceiling Act there is nothing that provides benefit only to the big people and deprives the ordinary people. Those proposals as you have mentioned are under our consideration and we are looking into every aspect of them. The suggestion provided by the Correa Commission in this connection are also being looked into and we are paying attention to them.

[English]

SHRI HUSSAIN DALWAI : Is it a fact that the Correa Commission has already

submitted its first report ? Will the Hon'ble Minister enlighten us about the salient features of this report ?

[Translation]

SHRI DALBIR SINGH : There is nothing like it, Sir. I have said it in reply to an earlier question that it is an interim report. More reports have to come from them and 19 groups are working there. When all the reports are received from them, then we will look into them comprehensively and we will ask the State Government to give their comments and suggestions on them.

SHRI RAMSWAROOP RAM : Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Urban Ceiling Act has become very obsolete and we have not been able to pass it for the last 40 years. In the villages, ceiling laws have been enforced after an Act in that regard was passed, but in urban areas, we have not been able to do anything as a result of which people are in possession of 25 to 30 acres of land in the cities. As the Urban Land Ceiling Act has not been passed, land ceiling cannot be enforced there. Therefore, I want to know from the Hon. Minister whether you will direct the State Governments and the administration of Union Territories including Delhi to put restrictions on the sale of land in the urban areas till the Urban Land Ceiling Act is passed ? What is your difficulty in this regard ?

SHRI DALBIR SINGH : We understand the sentiments of the Hon. Member. We are constantly keeping a watch on it. We want that the common people should get more benefits. It should not happen that they are deprived and the influential people reap all the benefits. Therefore, the Government is considering all the aspects so that the common people may get maximum benefits.

SHRI BHAGWAT JHA AZAD : Mr. Speaker, Sir, if the matter was one or two years old, then we could have understood it, but it is not so. This matter has been pending for years. When land Ceiling laws were passed in regard to agricultural land, although their implementation was not very effective, still a limit was imposed. Why has the same not been done in the urban areas