

With a view to promote export of tea, Government and the Tea Board have been analysing country-wise exports of tea giving special attention to areas offering potential. Tea Board also acts to remove bottlenecks in exports to individual markets whenever these are noticed. Certain other steps taken to increase exports of tea include :

- (i) participation in major trade fairs/exhibitions abroad;
- (ii) field sampling at speciality stores and in principal markets.
- (iii) media campaign to increase consumer awareness of the speciality of Indian teas and to popularise the Tea Board marketing symbol which stands for pure Indian tea.
- (iv) exchange of tea delegations between India and tea importing countries.

With a view to compensate the small growers of tea for the low prices at the auctions, Government has implemented a Scheme through the Tea Board for providing subsidy for an amount equal to the shortfall between the auction price and Rs. 55 per kg. The extent of such subsidy will be limited to a maximum of Rs. 5 per kg of tea or to the extent it is less than Rs. 55 per kg at the auctions whichever is less.

Sale of Units of SAIL

*592. SHRI SATISHCHANDRA SITARAM PRADHAN : Will the Minister of STEEL be pleased to state :

(a) whether Government are aware that Steel Authority of India Ltd. (SAIL) in order to clear its debt of Rupees twelve thousand crores proposes to sell its seven units;

(b) if so, the details thereof with details of debts;

(c) whether the SAIL has been incurring losses regularly;

(d) whether Government propose to take some measures to check its losses in future and convert it into a profitable venture;

(e) if so, the details thereof; and

(f) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF STEEL (SHRI DILIP RAY) : (a) and (b) As part of its business and financial restructuring

programme and with a view to concentrating on its core business, SAIL has initiated the process of conversion of the following assets into joint ventures :

- (i) Power Plants at Bokaro, Durgapur and Rourkela
 - 2×60 MW Captive Power Plant-II at Rourkela Steel Plant and the Central Power Training Institute at Rourkela
 - 2×50 MW Captive power plant-II at Durgapur Steel Plant
 - 122 MW (2×55 MW + 12 MW back pressure turbine) Captive Power Plant-I, 3×60 MW Captive Power Plant-II and steam generating capacity of 660 MT/hour at Bokaro Steel Plant
- (ii) Oxygen Plant-II of Bhilai Steel Plant
- (iii) Salem Steel Plant (SSP), Salem
- (iv) Alloy Steels Plant (SP), Durgapur
- (v) Visvesaraya Iron & Steel Plant (VISL), Bhadravati
- (vi) Fertilizer Plant at Rourkela
- (vii) Indian Iron and Steel Company (IISCO).

SAIL has debt of Rs. 20,851 crores as on 31-3-1999.

(c) SAIL has been earning profits since 1984-85, though it incurred losses in 1998-99 and 1999-2000.

(d) to (f) Steps taken by SAIL to check losses and become profitable include, *inter alia*, financial restructuring, rightsizing of the organisation, reduction in operating costs, change in market strategy and reprioritising of capital expenditure, besides the assets restructuring mentioned above.

Request for Transponder from A.P. Government

*593. SHRI SOLIPETA RAMACHANDRA REDDY : Will the Minister of INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government have received any request from the Govt. of Andhra Pradesh for providing a transponder on the INSAT-3B for providing high band-width communication for socially-relevant programmes;

(b) if so, when did Government receive the request;

(c) what steps the Ministry has taken so far in this regard.