

102. [The questioners (Shri Bir Bhadra Pratap Singh and Shri Bhagatram Manhar) were absent. For answer vide Col 31 infra]

Modernisation/expansion of Indian Rare Earths Ltd.

*103. SHRI M. VINCENT: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state;

(a) what is the stage of modernisation and expansion of the Indian Rare Earths Limited, at Manavalakurichi, Tamil Nadu; and

(b) whether this work would be accomplished within the time schedule?— ■

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY WITH ADDITIONAL CHARGE OF THE MINISTER OF STATS IN DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION IN THE MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (PROF. M. G. K. MENON) (a) The scheme of Modernisation/Expansion of Manavalakurichi Plant consists of setting up of Concentrate Upgrading Plant (CUP) and Modernisation of existing Mineral Separation Plant by addition to and replacement of certain plant and machinery. The Concentrate Upgrading Plant is expected to be completed by April 1990 while the modernisation is scheduled to be completed by December 1990.

(b) Yes, Sir.

SHRI M. VINCENT. Mr. Chairman, Sir, in reply to my question on the 18th July, 1989 the then Minister had stated that only Rs. 9 lakhs had been spent out of the total allotment of Rs. 625 lakhs. That means that only 2 per cent of the total target was attained up to July 1989. So, I would like to know from the Minister what amount has been spent till date? Is there any proposal to introduce cup system by importing high technology machines from Australia

which will give 100 per cent more production? By the modernisation and expansion what is the expectation of the Government in its exports, profits and employment opportunities?

PROF. M. G. K. MENON: Sir, the cost of concentrate upgrading plant is Rs. 317 lakhs and as I have mentioned it will be completed next month, i.e., April 1990. The modernisation, of Manavalakurichi plant involves replacement of old equipment and installation of new equipment and the cost of the project is Rs. 616 lakhs. The work is proceeding as per schedule and it will be completed by December this year. An additional sale revenue of Rs. 802 lakhs and the net profit of Rs. 416 lakhs is expected through this process. I would also like to point out, Sir, since the Hon. Member has raised the question of performance, in terms of both export earnings as well as sales that the export earnings of Indian Rare Earths Ltd. has gone up on a very steady basis to quite high levels. I can give the exact figures if the Hon. Member so desire.

SHRI M. VINCENT; Mr. Chairman, Sir, the coastal line all along the Kanyakumari District is rich in the deposits of high valued minerals like ilmenite, rutile, monazite, zircon, thorium and garnet. We export about 75,000 tonnes of ilmenite to foreign countries like France, Japan and England to manufacture titanium dioxide. But we are in acute shortages of high quality of titanium dioxide and its byproducts. We are importing titanium, from Russia. We are having 75,000 tonnes of raw materials to produce 30,000 tonnes of titanium dioxide per year. We have 40,000 tonnes of monazite for the production of thorium oxide used for the manufacture of atom bombs. We have 6,000 tonnes of zircon for the production of zircon oxide. I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether the Government would take steps to set up a titanium dioxide plant, a zircon oxide plant and a

thorium oxide plant in Kanyakumari district by using the available minerals.

PROF. M. G. K. MENON: Sir, first of all, as the hon. Member has pointed out, we have record of the actual production of the various minerals like ilmenite, zircon, garnet, monazite, rutile, etc., from Manavala-kurichi as well as (from Chavara. Apart from this, this has been a major area of export and, as I have mentioned, exports have been rising very steadily. At the present moment, there is also the intention to put up downstream units in the vicinity of the plant to make use of the materials from the plant as the production increases.

SHRI G. SWAMINATHAN: Sir, there are other areas in Tamil Nadu, specially, in Thanjavur district—there is an area known as Tranquebar — where we have plenty of all these minerals like ilmenite, monazite, etc. These have not been properly explored. Will the hon. Minister go into the possibility of exploring the minerals available in the other coastal areas of Tamil Nadu? They are abundantly available. Will they be explored and steps taken to put up factories or unearth them and make use of them?

PROF. M. G. K. MENON: Sir, basically, what we have, as far as the Indian Rare Earths is concerned, are plants which are located near the coast. The reason for this is that the ocean does a very good job for us.

SHRI G. SWAMINATHAN. I am also talking about it only.

PROF. M. G. K. MENON: What the ocean really does is to bring the rare earth sands, and have them deposited because the density of all these materials is much higher than that of the normal sand. One has, therefore, been able to use the materials above the high water-line, have them scooped and make them available for production purposes.

There is also a division called the Atomic Minerals Division which looks at the availability of all atomic minerals and materials, throughout the country. Therefore, wherever they are available in adequate concentration, we will certainly look at it. That is how we have the most recent of the plants of the Indian Rare Earths in Orissa which is called OSCON which has now gone into production.

SHRI G. SWAMINATHAN. My point is that there are other areas. I would like to know whether any survey has been done in the other areas, including the areas in Tamil Nadu. In the coastal areas, availability is there. I would like to know whether any mapping out has been done regarding the availability of these materials and whether certain areas have been identified for this purpose.

PROF. M. G. K. MENON: The answer is that this is a continuous process of exploration and evaluation done by the Atomic Minerals Division and it depends entirely on the availability of materials of the right concentration in order to make it viable commercially.

SHRI SHABBIR AHMAD SALA-RIA: Mr. Chairman, Sir, I would like to know from the hon. Minister, what is the total number of personnel employed for this purpose, what has been the total amount of profit (it earned and in case there has been profit, what is the share of the relevant States, in this profit. Then, I would also like to know whether such an exploration would be undertaken in other areas or States where such minerals are available in abundance, such as Udhampur in Jammu and Kashmir State and other areas in the valley of Kashmir.

PROF. M. G. K. MENON: So far as the area of rare earths is concerned, which is the item specifically under discussion, we have so far operated only in the coastal areas

because of the very specific advantage which accrues in terms of beneficiation through the action of the sea. Then, as I have already answered in reply to the point raised by the hon. Member earlier, we have what is called the Atomic Minerals Division, which does the exploration throughout the country for a whole range of atomic minerals and materials including uranium, beryllium, thorium and various other materials which required for the atomic energy programme.

In regard to the profit made and foreign exchange earnings, the figures are there in the C&A.G. report on IRE. This is for the period from 1979-80 to 1988-89. And the notable feature is the very high level increase in export earnings from 1979-80, when it was Rs. 543 lakhs, it has gone up to almost Rs. 3,000 lakhs more exactly Rs. 2994.30 lakhs in 1980-89. There have been continuous profit. However, there have been losses in the last three years because a new major plant which is the Orissa plant, has just gone into commission and it will take some time before one gets over the teething troubles and it comes into full-scale operation and profitability.

PROF. SHABBIR AHMED SALA-RIA: Is there any provision for making any contribution to the funds of that State from where the minerals are coming apart from the Central fund?

PROF. M.G.K. MENON: As the hon. Member is aware, plants are set up in various parts of the country not only for rare earths but in all other areas whether it is coal, oil, iron ore and so on and so forth. First of all, they use the available, natural resources and provide employment in those areas. Secondly they offer an opportunity for setting up downstream capabilities in those areas for final manufacture also a formula for sharing. The Indian Rare Earths, if you look at his-

torically arose out of a large number of companies established in the British days put together as a joint venture with what was the then Travancore and Cochin State. Now of course, it is the Indian Rare Earths wholly under the Department of Atomic Energy.

DR. YELAMANCHILI SIVAJI: It is reported that some rare minerals and ores that are valuable are available in the coast as well as deep sea of Andhra Pradesh. In view of that is there any proposal under Government's consideration to use the Indian Rare Earths Ltd. to set up concentrate upgrading plant and minerals operation plant in Andhra Pradesh to explore the above minerals and ores?

PROF. M. G. K. MENON: If I may say so, this gets into a completely different area which is of concern to the Geological Survey of India, the Department of Ocean Development etc. from the viewpoint of use of coastal sands. I have already dealt with the point earlier.

MR. CHAIRMAN: He wants to know whether you will put up a plant for rare earths in Andhra Pradesh.

SHRI G. SWAMINATHAN: For Tamil Nadu.

MR. CHAIRMAN: One is in Tamil Nadu. He wants in Andhra Pradesh.

PROF. M.G.K. MENON: As I mentioned in my answer to the query of the earlier hon. Member, this consideration will apply also in the case of Andhra Pradesh, namely when the actual exploration shows that the content enables commercial viable exploitation, it will certainly be done. That is the answer to the point. I might also add that there are various types of taxes, duties on final products but royalty is also paid to the State where such exploitation is carried out. This is the answer to the question raised by the earlier hon. Member.

SHRI SHABBIR AHMAD SALARIA: What is the percentage earmarked so that the people of Tamil Nadu could know what they are getting out of that?

MR. CHAIRMAN: There is no percentage fixed. Next Question.

Scrapping of the perspective plan for Women

*104. SHRI PAWAN KUMAR BANSAL: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state •'

(a) whether Government propose to scrap the Perspective Plan for Women, formulated last year;

(b) if so, what are the reasons therefor; and

(c) what are the details of any alternative plan prepared by the Government?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY WITH ADDITIONAL CHARGE OF THE MINISTER OF STATE IN DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION IN THE MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (PROF. M.G.K. MENON): (a) No, Sir.

(b) and (c) The questions do not arise.

SHRI PAWAN KUMAR BANSAL: Sir, I am happy that the Government does not propose to scrap the national perspective plan for women. Why I put this question was not that I feared that The Government would scrap the plan but because the Government was doing precious little for women. The Government has announced its decision about various legislation on socioeconomic measures, but we have not heard from the Government whether they would introduce any legislation to protect the rights of women. I want that the emphasis has to shift from women's welfare to women's development and the focus on women's

programme has to be on a woman as individual with her own rights. I would like to know whether the Government propose to introduce any legislation in this session containing *ter alia* matters regarding the employment of women, raising the age limit of women's entry into government service and also various other connected matters, to ensure that women are not looked upon as second class citizens but as partners in the destiny of the country.

PROF. M.G.K. MENON: Sir, I have already mentioned in the written reply; the answer to the question is that there is no proposal...

SHRI PAWAN KUMAR BANSAL: Sir, I want answer to my supplementary and not on the earlier question.

PROF. M. G. K. MENON: As the hon. Member is aware, the Government has from time to time come out with several aspects which clearly bring out in an explicit form its stand on this subject. First of all, there must be equal involvement and participation of women in all aspects of national life. There should be equal status for women and this should be guaranteed before law. Government would sign a U.N. Convention on Women's Rights. There would be a statutory All-India Commission on Women. Special emphasis will be laid on vocational training of women. And there will be reservation with regard to women in various categories of bodies and employment areas, including bodies which plan, decide on policies and take decisions. Similarly, there are the matters which relate to employment and economic independence, maternity funds providing shelter, various aspects of social legislation, conferment of equal rights with regard to property and the fact that women should not be depicted in a wrong manner in the media or in various other areas where it has been happening before. These are the explicit views of the Government on