

SHRI S.S. AHLUWALIA: He is aware of that. Everybody is aware of this case. ...*(Interruptions)*...

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Even if he is aware of this, he is not expected to reply immediately ...*(Interruptions)*. All right, Mr. Venkaiah Naiduji, please start ...*(Interruptions)*... No, Mr. Ahluwaliaji, please sit down.

श्री रवि शंकर प्रसाद : हाउस में जवाब दूँगे।

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Mr. Ravi Shankar Prasad, he has taken note of it ...*(Interruptions)*... Nothing will go on record except Mr. Venkaiah Naidu.

Massive loss incurred by Spices Trade Corporation Limited (STCL)

SHRI M. VENKAIAH NAIDU (Karnataka): Mr. Deputy Chairman, Sir, this is also an important issue and also a big scam. *(Interruptions)* Sir, as far as zero hour is concerned, as also mentioned by you, it is a convention. I gave notice for Calling Attention but because it is not coming up and a lot of time is being lost, I thought I should raise this matter to bring it to the notice of the House. ...*(Interruptions)*...

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Mr. Minister. *(Interruptions)* Mr. Minister. ...*(Interruptions)*... Jayanthiji, Members need the attention of the Minister. So, please do not talk to the Minister during ...*(Interruptions)*...

SHRI M. VENKAIAH NAIDU: Sir, it is also an advantage to the House that we have here the Minister, an important personality of the Government. Normally, they take note of what is said in the zero hour and try to act upon it. I am not asking him to give a response now. Sir, my point is that only because it is called 'zero hour', there should not be 'zero response' from the other side. The response should not be like, 'Nero playing flute, when Rome was burning'. ...*(Interruptions)*...

Sir, coming to my subject, it is about the Spices Trade Corporation Limited (STCL), a wholly-owned subsidiary of the State Trade Corporation of India Limited. They have lodged a formal complaint recently with the Bangalore Police against Future Metals Private Limited and Future Exim India Private Limited – the two affiliate group companies based in Bangalore for defrauding and misappropriating a staggering sum of Rs. 1,249 crores. It was also published as the headlines in all the newspapers. Hon. Chair is also aware of it.

Sir, the second fraud took place ten months back. The STCL was sleeping all the time, and, did not take any action. They became a facilitator to arrange merchandising trade transactions in scrap metals in third countries.

The STCL's bankers issued Letters of Credit (LoCs) in favour of three foreign companies, namely, Asia Metals and Commodities Private Limited, Singapore; Al-Mustaqbal, Dubai; and American Metal Management Inc., New Jersey. These LoCs were opened. The scrap sellers, these Bangalore company people, dealt with 134 merchandise trade transactions. What happened subsequently is that the three sellers and the two Bangalore firms declared that the trading in question involved scrap nickel and scrap copper. The average price of the nickel scrap was valued at US \$ 16,804 (approximately Rs. 8.14 lakh) per tonne and the corresponding price for copper scrap

was pegged at US \$ 6,614 (approximately Rs. 3.20 lakh). The LoCs were issued in favour of the three sellers for a total sum of US\$ 249.57 million.

Subsequently, when the shipment was done, it was found that it did not contain the nickel or the copper, it contained the iron scrap, which means that they had been duped. Now, Sir, the Directors are here in Bangalore and the buyers are abroad, and, as per the reports available, there are some common Directors in both the companies.

These two international surveyors, who were engaged by the STC - one on behalf of the STC and the other on behalf of other people-had certified that what was being shipped was scrap nickel and scrap copper, which, subsequently, was found to be otherwise.

Sir, such a big fraud had taken place. Fortunately, the Commerce Minister is present here. I hope he will take note of this and order a thorough enquiry and also inform the House about it. Sir, if the loss of Rs. 140 crore is true, the people who are responsible for it, should be taken to task, and, severe action should be taken against people responsible for the scam.

So, my only request is that the Government should come forward to say that they have taken note of this, and, at the appropriate time, inform the House about the action taken in this regard. Otherwise, the very credibility of the Government would be at stake because everyday something or the other is happening. We do not want to sensationalise things. At the same time, we are here to safeguard the interest of the people of the country, and, their money which is there in STC and all. So, a scam of such a magnitude should not be taken lightly.

I hope that the Government will take note of this, take appropriate action in this regard at the earliest, and, inform the House at the appropriate time.

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI ANAND SHARMA): Mr. Deputy Chairman, Sir, we have taken note of what hon. Venkaiah Naiduji has said. This is the first time I am hearing this matter. I assure the House that I will ask for the details and will come back to the House with the detailed report in this regard. *(Interruptions)*

SHRI VENKAIAH NAIDU: I welcome and appreciate the response given by the hon. Commerce Minister. I hope that this pattern should continue. ...*(Interruptions)*...

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: He has given assurance that he will come back to the House.

SHRI VENKAIAH NAIDU: I will forward the cuttings of the Deccan Herald as well as The Hindu which have reported this for the information of the Hon. Minister.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: We will now continue the discussion on working of Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. Reply by the hon. Minister.

श्री एस.एस. अहलुवालिया (झारखंड) : सर, आज सूर्य ग्रहण था, तो अंधेरा हो गया। यह बार-बार बत्ती आगे पीछे हो रही है। ...**(व्यवधान)**... इससे आंखों में तकलीफ हो रही है। आप इसको बन्द करा दीजिए, यह आंखों में लग रही है। ...**(व्यवधान)**...

श्रीमती वृंदा कारत (पश्चिमी बंगाल) : सर, हाउस में eclipse हो रहा है। ...**(व्यवधान)**...

श्री गुलाम नबी आजाद (जम्मू और कश्मीर) : सूर्य ग्रहण की वजह से बिजली पर भी असर पड़ता है।
...**(व्यवधान)**...

श्री एस.एस. अहलुवालिया : सर, इससे हेल्थ पर भी असर पड़ता है। ...**(व्यवधान)**...

DISCUSSION ON WORKING OF THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE

THE MINISTER OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (SHRI GHULAM NABI AZAD): Mr. Deputy Chairman, Sir, at the outset I would like to thank the hon. Members for very useful discussion on the working of my Ministry. Hon. Members made some very valuable suggestions. I would like to assure all of you that I have taken note of all the points made by you for improving the working of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. I am particularly pleased that the thrust on "Health-for-all" by our UPA Government has been endorsed by all the Members of Parliament cutting across all political parties. It shows how strongly the nation feels the need for an accessible, affordable and accountable public system on health care in our country. Sir, hon. Members have rightly expressed their concern over the inadequate public expenditure on health. I completely agree with the sentiments expressed by the hon. Members in general and Shrimati Brinda Karat, the one who initiated the discussion, in particular, that public expenditure on health must go up considerably. Sir, the UPA Government has tried to do so over the last five years, though much more is yet to be done. I am pleased to report that the Economic Survey 2008-09 indicated the public expenditure on health as a percentage of GDP as 1.41 per cent in 2007-08 as against 1.27 per cent in 2005-06. So, in 2005-06, it was 1.25 per cent which went up to 1.41 per cent. In spite of the fast rate of growth in GDP, the expenditure on health has increased ever since the UPA Government prioritise the need for investing in health with the launch of National Rural Health Mission in April, 2005. I would also like to impress upon the hon. Members that health is a State subject and I would like to request the hon. Members of all the political parties to exhort their respective State Governments also to raise public expenditure on health. It is only through partnership of the Centre and the State Governments that the objective of 2 to 3 per cent GDP public expenditure can be achieved. Our commitment can be seen in the increase in allocation of Central Plan expenditure during the last five years. We will strive to provide even higher allocation for health care to provide quality service to the poor households of our country.

While initiating the debate, Shrimati Brinda Karat rightly raised the issue of inaccessibility of health care. The National Rural Health Mission is a very concerted effort to provide quality health care services to the poorest households in the remotest regions of the country.

Hon. Members, Dr. C.P. Thakur, Ms. Mabel Rebello, Shrimati Maya Singh, Dr. Prabha Thakur, Shri Tariq Anwar, and Shri Rajeev Shukla have raised the issue of inaccessibility, inadequate infrastructure, and the need for far more human resources for health in the rural areas.