

and economic growth in the State of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh. Besides, special packages to backward areas of newly formed State of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana are also being provided for 7 backward districts of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana.

Opposition of RCEP Free Trade Agreement

2287. SHRI SANJAY RAUT: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is growing opposition to Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) Free Trade Agreement from various Government Departments;

(b) whether RCEP members are putting pressure on India to open its market for more than 90 per cent of traded goods, while they remain reluctant to India's proposal allowing free movement of Indian skilled professionals in RCEP region;

(c) whether there is growing clamour from industries such as iron and steel for India to either exit RCEP or resist its early conclusion and at same time keeping geostrategic interest in mind; and

(d) if so, what steps Government is taking to protect India's interests?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI C. R. CHAUDHARY): (a) to (d) Department of Commerce holds regular stakeholders' consultations, including with industry and Government Departments for taking inputs and firming up India's position in the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), which is a mega-regional trade agreement involving 16 countries. Specific industry inputs on the iron and steel sector have been given due consideration in the negotiations. India's approach to RCEP has been to achieve balanced outcomes across key pillars of market access negotiations taking into account domestic sensitivities and aspirations. Member countries are expected to respect the principle of confidentiality on their negotiating position.

Support to Special Economic Zones

2288. SHRI RONALD SAPA TLAU: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government in general is supporting or discouraging the role of Special Economic Zones (SEZs) today, if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor;

(b) the States in the country currently maintaining SEZ including the years of functioning, State-wise details thereof;