

a statutory Wage Board for non-journalists newspaper employees and necessary steps are being taken to constitute the Wage Board at an early date.

Visit to foreign countries by Chief of Naval Staff

2506. SHRI S. N. MISRA: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Chief of the Naval Staff visited some foreign countries during the month of February 1975;

(b) the names of such countries visited by him;

(c) the nature of the discussions held with him; and

(d) the foreign exchange involved as a result thereof and the result achieved?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI SWARAN SINGH): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) IRAN.

(c) Professional discussions were held, with the C-in-C Iranian Navy and others.

(d) The Foreign Exchange expenditure involved was Rs. 6904. The visit strengthened the already cordial relations that exist between the Indian Navy and the Imperial Iranian Navy.

Cheap Steel Production

2507. SHRI S. R. DAMANI: Will the Minister of STEEL AND MINES be pleased to state:

(a) whether his attention has been drawn to an article in the Press dated 2nd January, 1975 (Bombay Edition) by Shri I. Pardhasaradhy where he suggested cheaper methods of steel production with little capital cost, quicker realization, and more employment potential; and

(b) if so, whether the suggestions were examined to find out their feasibility and with what result?

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF STEEL AND MINES (SHRI SUKHDEO PRASAD): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The main suggestions of the author of this article are (i) production of sponge iron needs to be encouraged as high grade iron ore and non-coking coal are available in abundance in this country; (ii) sponge iron can be converted into pig iron in hot blast copulas using soft coke and production of steel can be taken up in air blown converters; (iii) there is scope for establishing sophisticated mini-rolling mills to produce a large variety of steel products; and (iv) employment opportunities can be created by wide dispersal of such small units to cover backward areas also.

All these suggestions have been examined. It has already been decided to develop sponge iron capacity. As for the re-rolling industry, adequate capacity has already been created. Some of these units can, however, diversify their production by modernisation of equipment or with some marginal investments for balancing facilities.

Vijayanagar Steel Plant

2508. SHRI P. R. SHENOY:

SHRIMATI PARVATHI
KRISHNAN;

Will the Minister of STEEL AND MINES be pleased to state:

(a) the progress of work done for establishing the Vijayanagar steel plant;

(b) the period by which the project report of the plant will be completed;

(c) the time by which the construction of the plant will be commenced; and

(d) the total amount spent so far for the project?

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF STEEL AND MINES (SHRI SUKHDEO PRASAD): (a) An area of 2,641.6 hectares (6,604 acres) has been acquired so far for the steel plant and slag dump out of a total requirement of 3,608.4 hectares (9,021 acres). The Steel Authority of India Ltd. expect to commission the Detailed Project Report for the plant shortly. Meantime, detailed studies are in hand for development of in-frastructure facilities.

(b) The time required for preparation of the Detailed Project Report will be 21 months from the date of award of work to the Consultants.

(c) These details will be known only after the Detailed Project Report has been received and examined.

(d) About Rs 1 81 crores.

Deepening of Karwar Harbour

2509. SHRI P. R. SHENOY Will the Minister of SHIPPING AND TRANSPORT be pleased to state:

(a) whether a survey has been conducted for deepening the harbour at Karwar; and

(b) if so, the outlines of the survey made and the conclusions arrived at?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF SHIPPING AND TRANSPORT (SHRI H. M. TRIVEDI): (a) and (b). The State Government of Karnataka have conducted hydro-graphic surveys and sub-soil investigations at Karwar Port. According to the assessment of the State Government, deepening is feasible.

Loss incurred by Coastal Shipping Service

2510. SHRI P. R. SHENOY: Will the Minister of SHIPPING AND TRANSPORT be pleased to state:

(a) the loss incurred by each coastal shipping service in the country during the years 1972-73, 1973-74 and 1974-75 (uptodate);

(b) the reasons for these losses; and

(c) the steps taken to prevent these losses?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF SHIPPING AND TRANSPORT (SHRI H. M. TRIVEDI): (a) Coastal shipping service is a composite term covering the operations of individual shipping companies on the coast. The losses/profits on the operations are therefore computed by the concerned shipping companies. According to the information made available, the following companies incurred losses on their coastal operations in 1972-73 to the extent indicated against each:—

	Lakhs.
1. Shipping Corporation of India Ltd.	Rs 8 20
2. Mogul Line Ltd.	Rs.15.18
3. Indian Steamships	Rs. 9.31
4. Malabar Shipping Co	Rs. 4 95
5. South East Asia Shipping Co.	Rs. 2.97

Similar information for the other years is not available.

(b) The main reason for losses on coastal operations is the uneconomic nature of the present operational frame-work including fare and freight structure.

(c) Government is seized of the entire matter for evolving a revised frame-work for coastal operations to