

policy of the country. The present production of chromite is sufficient to meet domestic consumption as well as export requirements. There is no proposal by the Ministry to impose complete ban on export of chrome ore.

(b) and (c) Does not arise in view of (a) above.

Survey of bauxite/iron-Ore

547. SHRI DILIPBHAI PANDYA: Will the Minister of MINES to be pleased to State:

(a) the number of Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs) engaged in the survey of bauxite and iron-ore reserves and their mining in the country including Gujarat, Chhattisgarh, Odisha and Jharkhand;

(b) the number of PSUs out of these running in profit and loss;

(c) whether a High Level Committee constituted by the Planning Commission has made any recommendation to remove the current provision of reservation of minerals and metal areas to PSUs only and supplying the raw materials to small and medium mineral based industries; and

(d) if so, the details thereof along with the follow-up action taken by Government thereon?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF MINES (SHRI DINSHA J. PATEL): (a) and (b) As per the available information 15 (fifteen) Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs) are engaged in mining and exploration of iron ore and bauxite in the country. Details of Public Sector Undertakings running in profit and loss are not centrally maintained.

(c) and (d) The High Level Committee constituted by the Planing Commission had recommended that PSUs of the Central and State Governments be treated at par with private sector companies in grant of mineral concessions, and reservation provisions for PSUs for exploration and mining should be modified so as to limit the scope of such reservation to meet the requirements of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) of raw material. The Government has introduced a draft Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Bill 2011 in Lok Sabha on 12th December 2011, presently referred to the Standing Committee on coal and steel, which provides for reservation of mineral bearing areas for purpose of conservation, and giving weightage in grant of prospecting licence or mining lease in notified area to such applicants who have committed ore linkage through long term agreements with domestic industry (including SMEs).

Sharp drop of aluminium prices

548. SHRI Y.S. CHOWDARY: Will the Minister of MINES be pleased to State:

(a) whether it is a fact that sharp drop in London Metal Exchange (LME) aluminium prices has made it unviable for several producers to shut down their smelters across the country;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether rising coal prices have also exaggerated the problems of aluminium producers, which would further hamper the economic growth of the country; and

(d) the steps taken/being taken by the Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF MINES (SHRI DINSHA J. PATEL): (a) As per information received from the primary aluminium producers in the country viz National Aluminium Company Limited (NALCO), HINDALCO Industries and the Vedanta Group, the prices of aluminium at the London Metal Exchange (LME) have fluctuated substantially during the current financial year *i.e.* 2011-12 and there has been considerable volatility in the market as well. The LME prices of aluminium has declined from a high of US \$ 2,663 per tonne in April, 2011(monthly average) to US \$ 2,021 per tonne in December, 2011 and marginally improved to US \$ 2,204 in February, 2012. In view of prices of other raw materials having increased significantly during this period, the profitability of the primary aluminium producers has gone down considerably. However, none of them have closed their smelters in the one year.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) The aluminium smelter is highly power intensive. Cost of production of aluminium has increased of late due to increases in input costs, particularly power, which accounts for nearly one third of the cost of metal production. The constraints in availability of indigenous coal and substantial increase in coal cost in the current financial year has adversely affected the margins of the primary aluminium producers in the country, compelling some of them to curtail their metal production.

(d) The LME prices of aluminium are market driven and guided by several global factors. The Government reviews from time to time the rates of various duties including import duty on raw materials required for production of aluminium, allocation of coal blocks and/or linkage coal to the extent possible, with the objective of reducing the overall operating cost of primary aluminium producers.

Increase in prices of mineral products

†549. SHRI RAMCHANDRA PRASAD SINGH:

SHRI SHIVANAND TIWARI:

Will the Minister of MINES be pleased to State:

(a) whether it is a fact that the prices of mineral-products are increasing constantly in the mining industry of the country during the last few years;

(b) if so, the extent of increase in the prices of these products from 2006-07 to 2010-11;

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.