

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF STEEL AND MINES (SHRI KARIA MUNDA): (a) A list of steps taken by Government for improving the viability of mini steel plants is attached as a statement.

(b) As a result of the steps taken the average capacity utilisation per month has since increased from 61 per cent in April, 1976 to 74 per cent in December, 1978. The total production of ingots in the mini steel plants during the current financial year (upto Dec. 78) as of the order of 12,14,648 tonnes as against total annual production of 9,95,000 tonnes in 1976-77 and 11,34,829 tonnes in 1977-78. It is estimated that the total production of ingots by the mini steel plants during the current year will exceed 16 lakh tonnes.

#### Statement

The Government has taken the following steps to improve the viability of the Mini Steel Plants.

(i) Excise Duty on production of ingots/rolled products has been abolished;

(ii) Import of Ferrous melting scrap for use in the electric arc furnace has been exempted from customs duty;

(iii) Apart from allowing direct import of 200,000 tonnes of ferrous melting scrap by the electric arc furnace units on *ad-hoc* basis during 1977-78 against which the units have finalised import of 40,000 tonnes, in the current year, import of ferrous melting scrap has been placed on the canalised list without any quantitative restriction. In addition, import of foreign flag vessels for breaking has also been provided for under the import policy. Ship breaking generates 10 per cent to 15 per cent melting scrap which will be available for melting by the melting units, apart from 75 per cent re-rollable which will be supplied to the re-rolling mills which in turn

will be making more melting scrap available to electric arc furnaces;

(iv) Excise duty on certain categories of heavy melting scrap produced from the integrated steel plants has been abolished;

(v) Mini Steel Plants have been allowed to diversify into production of certain grades of alloy steels;

(vi) It has been agreed that financial institutions may consider favourable applications for loans from mini steel plants for purposes of diversification, depending upon the viability of the scheme;

(vii) Import of Graphite Electrodes has been allowed to meet the shortage of supply from indigenous sources; and

(viii) Steel Re-rolling mills and mini steel plants may now seek financial assistance under the Soft Loan Scheme, which provides for financial assistance on easier terms.

(ix) Government are also considering the question of according priority to mini steel plants in the matter of supply of power; Guidelines for effective rationing of power, in terms of scheme or graded priorities are now being reviewed by Government.

#### Bifurcation of Samachar into Four Agencies

3127. SHRI SHIV NARAIN SARSONIA: Will the Minister of INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Samachar News Agency has been bifurcated into four agencies, if so, the names of the four agencies;

(b) the amenities provided to the staff of Samachar News Agency i.e. scales of pay, travelling facilities and other such facilities;

(c) whether it is a fact that the same facilities as were allowed to the

Samachar employees are not being provided to the employees of these four agencies and particularly the two Hindi Samitis; and

(d) if so, the reasons therefor and whether any complaints have been received by the Ministry in this behalf, the facts?

THE MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING (SHRI L. K. ADVANI): (a) Press Trust of India, United News of India, Hindusthan Samachar and Samachar Bharati which existed as independent news agencies prior to the formation of Samachar have been revived with effect from 14-4-78.

(b) Pay scales of the employees of Samachar were upgraded to the Class I scales for News Agencies, as recommended by the Wage Board. Leave Travel facilities were also extended to all the Samachar employees

(c) and (d). In so far as the emoluments paid to the employees of Samachar by their respective new employers are concerned, there is no variation. However, regarding matters like travelling and other facilities etc. the Hindusthan Samachar has made changes avowedly keeping in view its financial position. Government had received a representation from the employees of Hindusthan Samachar in this regard. Government are of the view that this is essentially a matter for the employees to take up with the news agency; Government's own assurance in this regard relates to protection of emoluments.

**Development Cess for Promoting  
Development of Minerals and  
Mining Activities**

3128 DR. VASANT KUMAR PANDIT: Will the Minister of STEEL AND MINES be pleased to state:

(a) whether a Committee was appointed for investigating the incidence of "Development Cess" for

promoting the development of minerals and mining activities;

(b) if so, what are their recommendations;

(c) whether it is a fact that the Committee has recommended formation of a fund collected by way of levy or cess under the provisions of MMBC Act and placing it in the hands of the State Governments for the purpose of mining development; and

(d) if so, what action have the Government taken in the above matter?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF STEEL AND MINES (SHRI KARIA MUNDA). (a) to (c). Yes, Sir. The main recommendation was that a development cess be levied under the Mines and Minerals (Regulation and Development) Act, 1957, to finance the setting up of infrastructural facilities in mining areas.

(d) Since any positive decision on the recommendation would entail a change in the provisions of the Mines and Minerals (Regulation and Development) Act, 1957, this issue will only come up for consideration at the time of a general amendment of the said Act

**Suggestions from New Delhi Bar  
Association regarding Shifting of  
Courts**

3129 DR. VASANT KUMAR PANDIT: Will the Minister of LAW, JUSTICE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that New Delhi Bar Association has urged upon Government to allot the main building of Patiala House vacated by Shah Commission for establishment of various courts including civil, revenue, labour and rent control, motor accident-tribunal etc.;