

Bharat Gold Mines Limited (BGML) has a proposal to retrench employees during 1998-99 as it has surplus manpower.

(c) During 1997-98 till 31.8.97, the last date for opting for Voluntary Retirement Scheme (VRS) as per the decision of the Government, 1535 employees opted for the VRS.

(d) to (g) The Company is sick and is before the Board for Industrial and Financial Reconstruction (BIFR) since 1992. The provisional net loss for 1997-98 and accumulated losses as on 31.3.98 are Rs. 66.60 crores and Rs. 370 crores respectively. During June, 1997 the Government decided, inter-alia, to explore the possibility of rehabilitating BGML through Joint Venture route by induction of a private co-promoter(s). Accordingly, a Committee was constituted, which has since given its report. The future of BGML will be decided as per the provisions of Sick Industrial Companies (Special Provisions) Act, 1985. In the absence of any sanctioned rehabilitation scheme by the BIFR in respect of BGML, it is not possible to indicate the number of employees required for operational and administrative functions.

Compensation Paid to Karnataka by KIOCL

4313. SHRI H.G. RAMULU : Will the Minister of STEEL AND MINES be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government of Karnataka has granted permission to Kudremukh Iron Ore Company Limited to explore mining possibilities near Nellibeedu;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) the amount of compensation to be paid by KIOCL to Karnataka Government for the development of Kudremukh National Park;

(d) whether the compensation paid by KIOCL has been utilised for the development of the Kudremukh National Park; and

(e) if not, the reasons therefor and the action taken by the Union Government in this regard ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF STEEL AND MINES (SHRI RAMESH BAIS) : (a) to (e) The information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the Lok Sabha.

China's Accusation Against India

4314. COL. SONA RAM CHOUDHARY : Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state :

(a) whether attention of the Government has been drawn to the news-item captioned "China lashes out at India" appearing in 'The Hindustan Times' dated May 19, 1998;

(b) if so, the Government's reaction to Chinese accusations claiming that New Delhi has occupied 90,000 Sq. km. of Chinese territory and poses new threat to China as well as other neighbours with nuclear weapons;

(c) whether Chinese accusation is being considered as a threat to the country's security; and

(d) if so, the steps being taken to safeguard the security and integrity of the country ?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES) : (a) to (d) Government's attention has been drawn to the news-item captioned China lashes out at India, which appeared in The Hindustan Times dated 19.5.1998.

2. The Chinese statement about occupation of their 90,000 sq. km. of territory by India is contrary to facts. In fact, China is illegally occupying about 38,000 sq. km. of Indian territory of the Jammu and Kashmir State. Apart from this, under the so-called Sino-Pakistan 'boundary settlement' of 1963, Pakistan had illegally ceded 5180 sq. km. of Indian territory in Pakistan - occupied Kashmir to China.

3. As regards Chinese accusation that India poses new threat to China as well as other neighbouring countries, it may be stated that in India's neighbourhood, China is already a nuclear weapon State since sixties. China is also assisting Pakistan in their nuclear and missile programmes. India's nuclear programme is only for the purpose of defence of the country. It does not pose any threat to any of our neighbours including China.

4. All developments having bearing on our national security are constantly monitored and assessed. Appropriate measures are taken to maintain our defence preparedness to face all eventualities.

Linking of Talcher with Gopalpur

4315. SHRI BHARTRUHARI MAHTAB : Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state :

(a) whether there is any proposal to lay new railway lines between Talcher and Gopalpur; and

(b) if so, the details thereof and the time by which a final decision in the matter is likely to be taken ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS, MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF

PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS AND MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PLANNING AND PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION (SHRI RAM NAIK) : (a) and (b) A Survey has been included in the Budget, 1998-99. Further consideration of the Project will be possible once the Survey Report becomes available.

Closure of Bauxite and Iron Ore Mines

4316. SHRI BIKRAM KESHARI DEO : Will the Minister of STEEL AND MINES be pleased to state :

- (a) whether large number of iron ore and bauxite mines have been closed down in Orissa and Bihar;
- (b) if so, the details thereof; and
- (c) the steps taken to revive these mines ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF STEEL AND MINES (SHRI RAMESH BAIS) : (a) 31 iron ore/iron and manganese mines in Orissa and 3 iron ore mines in Bihar were closed. Of these eleven have subsequently been re-opened in Orissa. No bauxite mine in these two States were closed.

(b) Hon'ble Supreme Court of India vide its order on 12.12.1996 in the Writ Petition (Civil) No. 202 of 1995 directed every State Government to stop mining operations in forest areas where the prior approval of the Central Government, as required under Section 2 of Forest Conservation Act, 1980 has not been sought for any non-forest activity. Subsequently, on the basis of Hon'ble Supreme Court's judgement dated 4.3.1997, eleven iron ore/iron and manganese mines in the State of Orissa, whose leases were granted prior to 25.10.1980 were re-opened.

(c) The Government of Orissa has submitted proposals for diversion of forest land for non-forest purposes in respect of ten mines.

[Translation]

Super Fast Trains

4317. SHRI MOHAN SINGH : Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state :

- (a) the number of Superfast trains running all over the country at present;
- (b) whether a separate record of surcharge realised on these superfast trains is maintained;
- (c) if so, the average annual earnings of the Railways therefrom;

(d) the Heads on which the said surcharge realised is spent;

(e) whether the passengers travelling in these superfast trains are provided the pronounced facilities; and

(f) if not, the reasons therefor ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS, MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS AND MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PLANNING AND PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION (SHRI RAM NAIK) : (a) 57 pairs.

(b) Yes, Sir.

(c) The average annual earnings of the Railways is Rs. 26.55 crores.

(d) All the earnings realised are accounted for under Consolidated Fund of India and under the existing system, it is not possible to pin-point the particular heads on which the earnings on surcharge are spent.

(e) and (f) Yes, Sir. However, the extent of facilities to be provided in various trains also depends upon certain other factors, such as, the nature of the train, number of stoppages, the total running time and the clientele, etc. and not average speed alone.

Transparency in Purchase of Defence Equipments

4318. DR. CHINTA MOHAN :
PROF. PREM SINGH CHANDUMAJRA :

Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government have taken a decision to bring transparency and abolish the system of middlemen in the procurement of arms and other defence material from foreign countries; and

(b) if so, the details thereof ?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES) : (a) and (b) The existing defence procurement procedures debar the involvement of middlemen in the procurement of arms and other defence material from foreign countries. In all contracts a clause containing affirmation by the seller that he is the original manufacturer of the stores in question and he has not engaged any agent/middlemen to intercede with the Government for award of the contract is included. In case of the declaration being incorrect, appropriate penalties ranging from cancellation of the contract to debarment of the supplier from entering into subsequent contracts with the Government are enforced.