

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND CHEMICALS AND OF SOCIAL WELFARE (SHRI RAGHU RAMAIAH): (a) to (c). The Oil and Natural Gas Commission completed drilling of 502 wells by the end of August, 1967. Of these 251 wells proved to be oil bearing, 43 gas bearing, 112 wells dry, 18 were water injection wells and 78 wells were on test.

(d) Production during 1967-68 is expected to be around 5.90 million tonnes.

GOLD SMUGGLING IN BOMBAY

761. SHRI CHENGALRAYA NAIDU : Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is a fact that officials of the Marine and Preventive Division of the Central Excise and the Bombay Customs had to open fire in the midseas on the 21st September, 1967 to intercept an Arab dhow carrying watches and gold;

(b) if so, the total number of watches seized;

(c) whether it is also a fact that the Arab smugglers have dumped the gold in the sea;

(d) if so, the steps taken to take possession of that gold; and

(e) the action taken against the culprits ?

THE DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER AND MINISTER OF FINANCE (SHRI MORARJI DESAI): (a) In the early hours of 22nd September, 1967 the Officers of the Marine and Preventive Division of the Bombay Central Excise Collectorate and also of the Bombay Custom House had to open fire to stop a fleeing Arab vessel suspected to be carrying contraband.

(b) During this operation 2515 wrists watches and 1.30 watch straps of foreign make valued in all at about Rs. 3 lakhs were seized.

(c) and (d). Some packages were dumped in the sea of which one package floating on the sea was recovered by the Customs Officers and was found to contain watches. It has not been possible to recover any other package as dumping took place on the high seas. It is not possible to know the contents of the other packages thrown overboard by the crew of the Arab vessel. But it is suspected that they contained

watches as in the case of the one package retrieved.

(e) Ten members of the crew of the seized vessel were arrested and the Arab dhow has been seized. The matter is under investigation.

DIAMOND SEIZED AT PALAM AIRPORT

762. SHRI CHENGALRAYA NAIDU : Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is a fact that eleven packets containing diamonds worth about Rs. 20 lakhs were recovered by the Customs authorities from a Tokyo Air France plane at Palam Air port on the 17th September, 1967;

(b) if so, whether it is also a fact that this is the second time that this big diamond haul was made by the Customs authorities;

(c) whether Government are considering certain measures to tighten the security arrangements to check this type of smuggling; and

(d) if so, the details thereof ?

THE DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER AND MINISTER OF FINANCE (SHRI MORARJI DESAI): (a) on 18th September, 1967, 11 packets containing diamonds worth about Rs. 20 lakhs were detained at Palam airport from a Tokyo bound Air France aircraft on the ground that the said packets had not been properly manifested. Subsequently, on production of documentary proof that the consignment booked for Tokyo by an earlier flight not transiting through India had been off loaded in Paris for operational reasons and was being despatched by a subsequent flight, the packets were released to the Airlines for onward movement on 7th October, 1967.

(b) On 26th August, 1967 four packets containing diamonds worth about Rs. 2,50,000 which had earlier been detained for re-export, were seized on the ground that the said diamonds were liable for confiscation under the Custom Act, 1962. Further investigations are in progress.

(c) and (d) The two seizures are the result of routine scrutiny of cargo, passengers, and documents pertaining to them which is a part of the procedure prescribed.