

pansion of the generating capacity of the micro-hydel projects in Samangan. India also agreed to increase its assistance to Afghanistan by deputing larger number of experts in certain fields and also by providing more seats for Afghan trainees in India.

At the mid-term review of the 5th Indo-Afghan Joint Commission held in New Delhi in January, 1979, the two sides reviewed with satisfaction the progress of projects being implemented under the purview of the Joint Commission. The Afghan delegation put forward various proposals for the Government of India's assistance. These related to the setting up of plants for the production of match-boxes, paper, caustic soda and phosphatic fertilizer, agricultural equipment and asbestos. Indian assistance was also sought for establishing a centre to maintain roads and the promotion of adult literacy. The Indian delegation agreed to consider financing such projects, on mutually acceptable terms, as are found feasible.

Appendix III IREM Examination

448. SHRI SOMJIBHAI DAMOR: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) what concessions are available for ST/SC employees for passing the Appendix III IREM Examination; and

(b) what relaxations are allowed in marks and whether the relaxation given for passing the examination is sufficient to wipe out the deficiency of reserve posts remaining unfilled for the last five years?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI SHEO NARAIN): (a) and (b). Before the results of the Appendix 3 (IREM) Examination are announced, the performance of unsuccessful SC/ST candidates is reviewed so as to give a few grace

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marks to such of them who may be failing marginally. The results thus determined are not with reference to number of vacancies available on Railways.

Agitation by Seamen

449. SHRI B. K. NAIR: Will the Minister of SHIPPING AND TRANSPORT be pleased to state:

(a) whether there was an agitation recently by the merchant-seamen in Bombay and other ports, if so, the reasons thereof, their grievances and demands and the terms of settlement, if any; and

(b) do Government propose to effect any amendment in the Act recently passed concerning these employees?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN CHARGE OF THE MINISTRY OF SHIPPING AND TRANSPORT (SHRI CHAND RAM): (a) Presumably the Hon'ble Member is referring to the seventytwo-hour strike called by the Maritime Union of India in the Ports of Bombay and Calcutta from zero hours of 20 December, 1978. If so, the reply is in the affirmative. This strike was in protest against the Merchant Shipping (Amendment) Bill which, on coming into force, will require Merchant Navy Officers to serve on Indian ships/shore establishments for a specified period.

(b) A meeting was recently convened with the representatives of the Maritime Union of India wherein inter-alia the Union was assured that the provisions of the Bill would be given effect to only in case of necessity.

In view of the position explained in the foregoing para the Government do not propose to effect any change in the proposed Bill under consideration.