

(c) In some areas bone deformities found in human beings can probably be attributed to the use of fluorine rich waters in many villages of Sirohi and Nagpur districts. The Geological Survey of India is, however, assisting the State Government in locating fresh water resources nearest to fluorine rich areas with a view to transporting it to the affected area through pipe lines.

Prices of Steel

1256. SHRI PRABODH CHANDRA : Will the Minister of STEEL AND MINES be pleased to state :

(a) whether certain rolling mills in Delhi have arbitrarily increased the price of steel during the period 1st March to 15th April, 1971;

(b) the steps Government propose to take to control the price of Steel;

(c) whether M/s Guest Keen Williams Ltd., Delhi, who are primarily manufacturing steel used for the production of motor spring has increased the price arbitrarily over six months ago resulting in great set back to spring industry; and

(d) the action Government propose to take to control the price of this category of steel?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF STEEL AND MINES (SHRI SHAH NAWAZ KHAN) : (a) Since there was no control on the prices of re-rolled products during this period, precise information regarding the prices charged by the rolling mills is not available.

(b) In order to regulate production distribution and prices of steel items rolled by the Billet Rollers, Government have introduced a new scheme with effect from 1.5.1971. A copy of the Announcement (No. 1 dated April 28, 1971) giving the details of the scheme as also the schedule

of prices is laid on the Table of the House. [Placed in Library, Ser. No. LT-302/71]

(c) M/s. Guest, Keen Williams have reported a small increase in the prices of their spring steel flats due to normal commercial factors.

(d) There is no proposal at present to control the prices of spring steel flats, which are made by a number of other parties as well.

Area under Forests

1257. SHRI M RAM GOPAL REDDY : Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state :

(a) the area under forests in the country;

(b) whether the area under forests in the country has gone down during the last three years;

(c) if so, the reasons therefor, and

(d) the measures Government propose to take to increase the area under forests?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SHER SINGH) . (a) The total area under forests in the country during the year 1968-69 was 75,273 thousand hectares

(b) Yes, Sir.

(c) These areas have had to be released Permanent alternative use, such as river valley projects, agricultural purposes, transmission lines, establishment of industries and other miscellaneous purposes.

(d) "Forests" is included in the State list of the Seventh Schedule of the Constitution. However, the Central Board Forestry of which the Minister of Agriculture (Krishi Mantri) is the Chairman has recommended time and again that encroachment in any form upon forests should be prevented and that the existing areas be augmented to bring it to 33% of the total land area of the country as prescribed

libed in the National Forest Policy Resolution of 1952, by Consolidation of holdings and by bringing under forests all available lands such as waste lands panchayat and Panchayat Samiti lands ravines, canal banks, etc.

Man-days lost due to Strikes and lockouts

1258. SHRI M. RAM GOPAL REDDY: Will the Minister of LABOUR AND REHABILITATION be pleased to state:

(a) the number of man-days lost during the last three years (year-wise) on account of strikes and lock-outs; and

(b) the steps Government have taken to improve the situation ?

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF LABOUR AND REHABILITATION (SHRI BALGOVIND VERMA): (a) The number of man-days lost (in millions) during 1968, 1969 and 1970 on account of strikes and lockouts was respectively 17.28, 19.05 and 17.17 (provisional).

(b) The main effort is to minimise industrial disputes through the processes of preliminary discussions, as informal mediation, conciliation, and adjudication or arbitration, as necessary, under the existing statutory and voluntary arrangements; Government have also been holding discussions with the worker's and employers' representatives with a view to evolving agreed measures for securing improvements in the industrial relations system.

Ground water exploration in Orissa.

1259. SHRI CHINTAMANI PANIGRAHI: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Central Ground Water Board has taken up independently any area in Orissa for ground water exploration; and

(b) if so, the progress achieved so far in this direction ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SHER SINGH) : (a) and (b) Central Ground Water Board (formerly Exploratory Tubewell, Organisation) did groundwater exploration work in Orissa in the years 1958-59, 1962-63, 1963-64 and 1964-65. Exploratory work was done in districts Balasore, Cuttack, Mayur Bhanj and Puri. In all 34 Exploratory bores were sunk of which 21 were developed as full-fledged wells and handed over to the State Government and remaining 13 being unsuccessful were abandoned. (A list giving the details is laid on the Table of the House. [Placed in Library, See No. LT-303/71])

This year exploratory work is to be taken up in districts Dhankanal and Bolangir. Arig has been sent and work is to start shortly at Kumunda site.

Buffer Stock of Sugar

1260. SHRI MURASOLI MARAN : Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state :

(a) whether there is any proposal to create a buffer stock of sugar in the country; and

(b) if so, the main features thereof ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SHER SINGH): (a) and (b). Government have removed control on price and distribution of sugar with effect from the 25th of May 1971 except that releases of sugar for sale by factories will continue to be regulated. By a process of judicious releases it will be ensured that a reserve stock of sugar always remain with the factories to meet future contingencies.