

A high-powered committee will not be able to mend these matters. I am sure the House knows that the action we are now taking is so serious that such action has never been taken before in the railways.

Wagon Shortage for Saw Mills and Timber Industries in Kottayam

*1661. SHRI VARKEY GEORGE : Will the Minister of RAILWAYS pleased to state :

(a) whether there is a shortage of wagons due to which the Saw Mills and Timber Industries in Kottayam are suffering great losses and there is likelihood of the industries being closed down ; and

(b) if so, the steps taken by Government to provide wagons in that area ?

THE MINISTER OF RAILWAYS (SHRI HANUMANTHAIYA) : (a) and (b). A statement is laid on the Table of the House.

Statement

Timber sizes, shooks and planks are offered for despatch and loaded at Kottayam station. Merchants normally insist on the supply of covered wagons for clearance of this traffic. Planks and shooks are also offered for despatch at other stations on the Erankulam—Kottayam—Quilon section. Most of the demands registered at Kottayam and other stations are for destinations South of Kalyan and Byculla, movement to which points has to be regulated due to limited clearance capacity over the Poona-Bombay Ghat sections, and release capacity at Byculla.

2. Within the above physical limitations, efforts have been made to maximise depatches of timber sizes, shooks and planks from Kottayam station. During the period 1st January to 29th July, 71, 8 wagons were loaded with timber sizes and 569 wagons with shooks and planks from Kottayam. On 29.7.1971, while no demands were pending for timber sizes at Kottayam, only about 45 demands for shooks and planks, most of which are for destinations South of Kalyan and Byculla were awaiting clearance at Kottayam.

SHRI VARKEY GEORGE : May I know whether the hon. minister has received a memorandum from the Saw Mill and Timber Industries Association of Kerala

stating that many saw mills and timber industries in Kerala are likely to be closed down due to shortage of wagons and if so, the steps he has taken on this representation ?

SHRI HANUMANTHAIYA : I have received the representation and we are doing our best. The hon. member knows that for these commodities, wagons are allotted on quota basis. To Bombay there is a little bottleneck because it is a ghat section. We cannot allow any number of wagons for these low priority commodities. Under the existing circumstances, I assure him that I will do my very best to see that more wagons are given. But to complain that factories themselves are likely to be closed down is an exaggerated way of making demands.

SHRI VARKEY GEORGE : In view of the shortage of wagons in India, what are the steps being taken to increase the production of wagons in our country ?

SHRI HANUMANTHAIYA : That is a different question. Nevertheless, I would like to say that there is no shortage of wagons. I have been repeatedly saying that it is the movement that is being hampered because of criminal activities in the north-eastern and northern region.

Setting up of Tanneries in North Bengal

*1663. SHRI GADADHAR SAHA : Will the Minister of INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state :

(a) whether Government are aware that the business people of North Bengal are earning a lot by supplying raw leather from North Bengal to other parts of the country ;

(b) whether Government are considering any plan to establish few Tanneries in North Bengal and thereby provide jobs to the local youths ; and

(c) if so, the time by which these tanneries will be established ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT (SHRI GHANSHYAM OZA) :

(a) The information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House.