

growth of steel demand and the persisting shortage, Government have decided to start location studies for more steel plants apart from the new ones already decided to be set up; and

(b) if so, the time by which the report of studies will be available ?

THE MINISTER OF STEEL AND MINES (SHRI S. MOHAN KUMARAMANGALAM) : (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The location studies are expected to be completed during 1972-73.

Enforcement of Beedi and Cigar Workers (Conditions of Employment) Act, 1966

*415. **SHRI R. P. ULAGANAMBI :** Will the Minister of LABOUR AND REHABILITATION be pleased to state :

(a) the progress made in the Enforcement of the Beedi and Cigar Workers (Conditions of Employment) Act, 1966 ; and

(b) the steps taken to ensure payment of minimum wages in the Beedi industry ?

THE MINISTER OF LABOUR AND REHABILITATION (SHRI R. K. KHADILKAR) : (a) The Beedi and Cigar Workers (Conditions of Employment) Act, 1966 was passed in 1966 and has since been brought into force, in the States of Bihar, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Assam, Mysore, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, (except section 3), West Bengal (except sections 3, 14 and 15), and Orissa. In the States of Jammu and Kashmir, Punjab, Haryana and Nagaland, beedi and cigar establishments are negligible. The enforcement of the Act has however been affected by the fact that several writ petitions challenging the constitutional validity of the Act have been admitted by a number of High Courts and in some cases stay orders have been issued.

(b) The Minimum Wages Act, 1948, is applicable to employment in beedi industry and minimum wages under the Act have been fixed by the State Governments who are the "Appropriate Government". The enforcement of minimum wages also falls in their sphere of responsibility.

Wages Dispute in Jute Mills in West Bengal

*416. **SHRI MOHAMMAD YISMAIL :** Will the Minister of LABOUR AND REHABILITATION be pleased to state :

(a) whether the attention of Government was drawn to the dispute between the workers and the management of the jute mills in West Bengal over the issue of minimum wages ;

(b) if so, the points of dispute ; and

(c) the steps taken by Government to solve this dispute ?

THE MINISTER OF LABOUR AND REHABILITATION (SHRI R. K. KHADILKAR) : (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c). According to the information given by the Government of West Bengal workers have demanded a minimum wage of Rs. 300 per month while employers have offered a pay of Rs. 195. Bipartite discussions held during October and November, 1971 on the subject having been inconclusive, the representatives of the jute workers are reported to have sought the intervention of the Chairman of the Wage Fixing Committee for the Jute Industry set up by the Government of West Bengal. The State Government are also seized of the matter and have taken action for bringing about a settlement.

Representative Character of Trade Unions

*417. **DR. RANEN SEN :** Will the Minister of LABOUR AND REHABILITATION be pleased to state :

(a) whether the question of deciding the representative character of Trade Unions through secret ballot has been considered by Government ; and

(b) if so, the decision taken thereon ?

THE MINISTER OF LABOUR AND REHABILITATION (SHRI R. K. KHADILKAR) : (a) and (b). Three central workers' organisations, viz., INTUC, AITUC and HMS, have been holding mutual consultations in order to come to some agreement on the subject. At the 27th Session of the Indian Labour Conference held in October, 1971,