

certain remedial steps immediately and we hope to improve it further after the team has submitted its report.

SHRI SURENDRA MOHANTY : We seek your protection. The minister is evading the question. The minister stated that production was being hampered on account of difficulties in the coke ovens in Rourkela. I asked what is the nature of the difficulties and how Government propose to surmount them.

MR. SPEAKER : He wants a little more elucidation of the facts

SHRI S. MOHAN KUMARAMANGALAM : I do not think it is possible to make a statement when I do not have the actual reasons yet in my hands. The matter is under investigation and it would not be proper to make a statement which may not be entirely accurate.

'Pakistan President's Secret talks with India and Bangla Desh through Shah of Iran

*256. **SHRI PILOO MODY :** Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state :

(a) whether the attention of Government of India has been drawn to a report in the *Hindustan Times* of the 17th September, 1971 stating that President Yahya Khan had been holding secret peace negotiations with India as well as the representatives of the Bangla Desh under the good offices of the Shah of Iran in Tehran ; and

(b) if so, the reaction of Government in this regard ?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI SWARAN SINGH) : (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The report was without any foundation and was contradicted the following day in the "*Hindustan Times*". In view of Government's stand that the Bangla Desh issue is a matter between the military rulers of West Pakistan and the already elected representatives of the people of East Bengal and not between India and Pakistan, the question of any dialogue or good offices between India and Pakistan on this subject does not arise.

SHRI PILOO MODY : This is the first time that the minister has been specific and I have no supplementaries.

MR. SPEAKER : This is the first time any minister has given you any satisfaction.

Fall in Production of Steel due to Coke Shortage

*258. **SHRI H. K. L. BHAGAT :** Will the Minister of STEEL AND MINES be pleased to state :

(a) whether the production of steel in the public undertakings was suffering from coke shortage ;

(b) if so, to what extent and since when; and

(c) the remedial measures taken by Government in this connection ?

THE MINISTER OF STEEL AND MINES (SHRI S. MOHAN KUMARAMANGALAM) : (a) to (c). A statement is laid on the Table of the House.

Statement

The production of ingot Steel in the plants under Hindustan Steel Limited has not in general been affected by coke shortage as such. But production of saleable steel has been affected on account of the shortage of coke oven gas resulting from the inadequate performance of Coke Ovens.

The production at Rourkela has been affected from the last quarter of 1970-71. In Bhilai, there was a major break-down in two coke oven batteries in May, 1971. In Durgapur, the output from coke ovens has been inadequate because of frequent interruptions due to maintenance and labour problems. Optimum production in an integrated steel plant depends on a number of factors and therefore it would be difficult to assign and quantify the loss in production due to this factor alone.

Special repairs to coke ovens have been undertaken wherever necessary. Long-term capital repairs programmes have either been undertaken or are being planned. Supplementary fuels like Pitch Creosote Mixture, furnace oil and benzene are being used to the extent possible to make up for the shortage of coke oven gas.

SHRI H. K. L. BHAGAT : According to the statement, production of steel in all the three plants—Bhilai, Durgapur and Rourkela—has been adversely affected because of the shortage of coke oven gas. May I know since when this shortage has been existing and by which month or year they expect that this would be made up ?

SHRI S. MOHAN KUMARAMANGALAM : It is impossible to give any specific and definite commitment. So far as the three plants are concerned, we hope that next year we should be able to do substantially better but that depends on an adequate solution being found firstly to the coke oven problem which I referred to recently just a little earlier and secondly to the improvement of maintenance and, thirdly, to our solution of the difficulties which we have in the field of industrial relations.

SHRI H. K. L. BHAGAT : Has it been one of the substantial reasons for the short-fall in production ?

SHRI S. MOHAN KUMARAMANGALAM : So far as coke oven gas is concerned it has been probably the principal difficulty we have faced in Bhilai and has made a subsidiary contribution so far as Rourkela is concerned. In Durgapur that is not one of the major reasons. So far as coke oven is concerned I cannot say that that is one of the principal reasons.

SHRI SURENDRA MOHANTY : Has the Minister been able to isolate the reason for the shortage of coke oven gas ? If so, what steps have been taken all these months and years to overcome it ?

SHRI S. MOHAN KUMARAMANGALAM : The question has not arisen over years.

The first difficulty that came up was in Bhilai last May, towards the end of May. Certain emergent steps were taken which have been checked up also by the Russian experts who came to Bhilai to investigate what has happened and it has been greatly appreciated and, as a result, we have substantially reduced the ill-effects of the problems that we had faced in Bhilai at the end of May.

As I told the House a little earlier, we are not satisfied with the solution of these problems because they have come up in Rourkela also. Hence in investigation in depth is being carried on by a special team appointed for the purpose (*Interruptions*).

SHRI P. VENKATASUBBAIAH : In his statement, the Minister has stated that in Durgapur the output from the coke oven has been inadequate because of frequent interruptions due to maintenance and labour problems. May I know what is meant by this maintenance ? Is there any structural defect or is there any lapse on the part of the management to maintain these coke-ovens properly ?

SHRI S. MOHAN KUMARAMANGALAM : Any lapse in relation to maintenance naturally does arise out of a lapse on the part of the management. So, when we refer to lapses of that character, I think it will be taken for granted.

Nationalisation of Mica Mines

*259. **SHRI AJIT KUMAR SAHA :** Will the Minister of STEEL AND MINES be pleased to state—

(a) whether Government propose to nationalise Mica Mines in the country ; and

(b) if so, the salient features of the proposal ?

THE MINISTER OF STEEL AND MINES (SHRI S. MOHAN KUMARAMANGALAM) : (a) There is no proposal at present to nationalise the Mica Mines.

(b) The question does not arise.

SHRI AJIT KUMAR SAHA : I would like to know whether the Government has received a lot of complaints against the management of many of these mica mines.

MR. SPEAKER : The question was very specific—not about the complaints. It is about nationalisation.

SHRI S. M. BANERJEE : The question that arises is : when is it going to be done.

MR. SPEAKER : My difficulty is when