

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI SURENDRA PAL SINGH) : (a) In the course of this year, there have been some discussions aimed at the re-opening of the Suez Canal. No agreement, however, is yet in sight.

(b) Government are closely watching developments in this respect, but concrete follow-up steps can be taken only if it is known if and when the Canal will be re-opened.

Death of Coal Mines in Dhanbad

*263. Dr. SARADISH ROY. Will the Minister of LABOUR AND REHABILITATION be pleased to state :

(a) whether four coal miners were killed and a number of coal miners were injured at Bird and Company's Mudedih Colliery near Dhanbad on the 6th September, 1971 during the drilling operations ;

(b) if so, whether the accident took place due to unsafe conditions ;

(c) whether the Director-General of Mines Safety has conducted any enquiry about the accident ; and

(d) if so, the main findings thereof ?

THE MINISTER OF LABOUR AND REHABILITATION (SHRI R. K. KHADILKAR) : (a) Four persons were killed and one was seriously injured, in the accident.

(b) and (c). An enquiry into the accident was conducted by the Director of Mines Safety, Northern Zone. The enquiry revealed that the accident was the result of a sudden collapse of a rib of coal in a stook under extraction in a depillaring panel. The collapse of the rib is considered to be due to an undercut having been made in it.

(d) The workers involved in the accident and the sirdar have been held responsible for the accident—the former for having made this undercut and the latter for having allowed it or having failed to make a thorough inspection to detect the undercut and take steps to rectify the situation.

Probe into Reports of Racket in Steel

*264. DR. RANEN SEN : Will the

Minister of STEEL AND MINES be pleased to state :

(a) whether Government have ordered a probe into reports of racket in steel recently ; and

(b) if so, the findings thereof ?

THE MINISTER OF STEEL AND MINES (SHRI S. MOHAN KUMARAMANGALAM) : (a) and (b). Some reports have been received about mis-use of steel for purposes other than that for which it was allotted. These are being investigated by the Iron and Steel Controller with the help of the Regional Iron and Steel Controllers. Assistance of the C.B.I. is also being taken wherever necessary.

Compensation paid to the Begonia Colliery, Barakar

*265. SHRI ROBIN SEN Will the Minister of STEEL AND MINES be pleased to state :

(a) whether Government have taken over the management of Begonia Colliery, Barakar, and

(b) if so, the amount of compensation paid to the said management ?

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

(b) No compensation has so far been paid to the said management.

Attitude of Japan Regarding Bangla Desh

*266. SHRI SHASHI BHUSHAN : Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state :

(a) the attitude of Japan on the issue of Bangla Desh ; and

(b) the steps being taken by Government to strengthen relations between India and Japan ?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI SWARAN SINGH) : (a) There has been no official statement on the question of Bangla Desh by the Government of Japan. However, Japanese leaders and the Japanese press have clearly expressed their concern at the influx of millions of refugees, conveyed deep sympathy with India's economic burden and appreciation of