

In addition to the above financial assistance, employment to one member each of the family of the deceased has been afforded.

**Setting up of U.S. Naval Air-Force Servicing Station in Diego Garcia Island**

\*72. SHRI D K PANDA

SHRI SHRIKRISHAN AGRAWAL

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state.

(a) whether U S A has set up a naval and Air-Force Servicing Station in the Diego Garcia Island, and

(b) if so Government's reaction thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI SURENDRA PAL SINGH)

(a) In 1966 the United States and the United Kingdom Governments entered into an agreement to set up in Diego Garcia a naval, air and communications facility including an air strip. On June 18 1973 the Defence Department of the US announced that the 'communications station' at Diego Garcia was operative from March 23 1973.

(b) Since 1965 the Government of India has repeatedly deplored both to the US and the UK Governments their decision to set up a base in Diego Garcia as it could lead to great Power military rivalry in the Indian Ocean. India's view that the Indian Ocean should be an area of peace, free from great Power rivalries, tensions and presence is well known.

**Effect of poor Condition of Coke oven Batteries on Production in Durgapur Steel plant**

\*73. SHRI ROBIN SEN Will the Minister of STEEL AND MINES be pleased to state  
1105 LS—2.

(a) whether production of Durgapur Steel Plant is affected due to poor condition of coke oven batteries,

(b) if so, the reasons for the deterioration in the condition of these batteries so soon, and

(c) the steps taken by Government to remedy the situation?

THE MINISTER OF HEAVY INDUSTRY AND STEEL AND MINES (SHRI T A PAI) (a) It is true that production in the Durgapur Steel Plant has been adversely affected due to the poor condition of the coke oven batteries.

(b) The first coke oven battery at Durgapur was commissioned in December, 1959, the second in December, 1960, the third in May, 1962 and the fourth in August, 1967. The condition of the first three batteries deteriorated due to poor maintenance in the initial stage, and subsequently due to frequent thermal shocks suffered by the batteries due to labour indiscipline and poor condition of the battery machines leading to frequent break-downs, and consequent irregular pushing of ovens. Owing to frequent thermal shocks in the past battery No 4 had also started showing signs of strain. The battery has recently developed fault due to what are believed to be design defects.

(c) Battery No 1 was shut down in November 1968 for reconstruction as the usual type of repairs were found to be neither adequate nor economical. One half of the battery is expected to be commissioned by August 1973 and the other half by October 1973. Major repairs to batteries No 2 and No 3 are already in hand. A plan has been drawn up for the phased rebuilding of these two batteries also after putting up an additional half coke oven battery. In regard to battery No 4, the faults developed by the battery are being examined by experts with a view to finding out the exact nature of the defects and the remedial action to be taken. Meanwhile, temporary measures have been taken to minimise the