

which appeared in the Economic Times of the 1st December, 1977 under the caption "Ministerial row over Coking Coal Import";

(b) if so, whether any proposal has been made to import coking coal from Australia and other places;

(c) what will be the landed cost of imported coking coal from Australia;

(d) whether any team was sent to Australia to discuss the feasibility of importing coking coal from that country;

(e) if so, who were the members of the team and what expenses were incurred in this connection; and

(f) whether it is a fact that the Coal India Ltd. has opposed the import of coking coal; and if so, what are the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STEEL AND MINES (SHRI BIJU PATNAIK): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) Government has not yet taken any firm decision for import of low-ash coal from Australia or other places. The technical and economic implications (including landed cost) of importing low-ash coking coal for blending purposes, in view of limited reserves and relatively high-ash content of Indian coking coals, are under examination by Government.

(d) Yes, Sir.

(e) A statement is laid on the Table of the House.

(f) It is not a fact that Coal India Ltd. has opposed the import of coal. Government's final decision in this matter will be taken after considering the views of the concerned Ministries.

Statement

The members of the team that visited Australia to assess the suitability of Australian coals were:

(i) Shri K. C. Mohan, Chairman-cum-Managing Director, Metallurgical and Engineering Consultants Ltd.

(ii) Shri G. Venugopala, Engineering Manager, Metallurgical and Engineering Consultants Ltd.

The expenses incurred on the visit were about Rs. 63,000.

'676. [Transferred to the 20th December, 1977.]

Cultural Agreement with Mozambique

*677. SHRI HIMMAT SINH:
SHRI HARSH DEO MALA-
VIYA: SHRI NRIPATI RANJAN
CHOUDHURY:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether India has recently signed any cultural agreement with Mozambique and Angola; and

(b) What steps Government propose to take to establish cultural and educational contacts with these countries for the benefit of persons of Indian origin who have settled in these countries?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI S. KUNDU): (a) No. Sir:

(b) We have concluded agreement* with several countries covering cultural and educational cooperation. At the same time, we are conscious of the need for meeting the special requirements in cultural and educational fields of persons of Indian origin settled abroad and we are currently examining steps to be taken in this regard.

Irregularities in the P.F. Organisation

♦878. SHRI BHAIKAB CHANDRA
MAHANTI: SHRI PATIPABAN
PRA-DHAN:

SHRI LAKSHMANA MAHA-
PATRO: SHRI LOKANATH
MISRA: SHRI BRAHMANANDA
PANDA:

Will the Minister of PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS AND LABOUR be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the news item which appeared in the "Indian Express" of the 8th June, 1977 under the caption "P.F. Organisation kind to Congress friends" alleging irregularities in the Central Provident Fund Organisation; and

(b) if so, what action Government have taken in the matter?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF LABOUR AND PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS (DR. RAM KRIPAL SINHA): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The Shah Commission of Inquiry has called for a report which has been submitted to them.

**Shortage "of medicines etc., in ESCI
Dispensary at Sonapat**

•679. SHRI SUJAN SINGH: Will the Minister of PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS AND LABOUR be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that there is shortage of medical staff, medical equipments and medicines in the ESCI Dispensary at Sonapat in Haryana; and

(b) if so, what remedial steps Government are taking in the matter?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF LABOUR AND PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS (DR. RAM KRIPAL SINHA): (a) The Employees State Insurance Corporation have reported that they have been informed by the Government of Haryana, who are responsible under the

Employees' State Insurance Act for the provision of medical care in that State, that there is no shortage of staff, equipments, or medicines.

(b) Does not arise.

**Strike by the workers of the Hindustan
Aluminium Corporation**

*680. SHRI LAKSHMANA MAHA-
PATRO: SHRI SANAT
KUMAR
RAHA: SHRI S.
KUMAR AN:

Will the Minister of PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS AND LABOUR be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that about 7000 workers of the Hindustan Aluminium Corporation have served no-tice for an indefinite strike from December 13, 1977:

(b) whether it is a fact that the workers of the said Corporation have been agitating for a long time to press their demands:

(c) if so, what are the details of their demands;

(d) whether the Central Government have taken or propose to take any steps to settle the dispute; and

(e) if so, what are the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS AND LABOUR (SHRI RAVINDRA VARMA): (a) to (e) The matter falls essentially in the State sphere. According to available information, the Hildalco Pragathisheel Mazdoor Sabha, had served a notice on 26th November, 1977 intimating their intention to go on an indefinite strike from December 13, 1977 in support of the workers' demands relating to reinstatement of dismissed/suspended workmen, higher bonus, revision of pay scales, etc. The strike notice has been withdrawn following intervention by the State Labour Minister.