

(a) whether Government are aware that the Bombay Unit of Pfizer Limited has declared a lock-out with effect from July 18, 1977;

(b) if so, what is the number of workers affected by this lock-out;

(c) whether this lock-out followed some labour trouble in the factory; and

(d) what are the demands of the employees and what steps Government propose to take to settle the dispute?

THE MINISTER OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS AND LABOUR (SHRI RAVINDRA VARMA): (a) to (d) The matter falls essentially in the State sphere. According to the information made available by the Government of Maharashtra, the management of this unit which employs about 1000 workers had given notice of lock-out from July 18, 1977 following agitation and alleged obstruction of trucks carrying raw materials by the workers. The main disputed issue related to the absorption of temporary workers on permanent basis. It is understood, the lock-out has been lifted from August 3, 1977 at the intervention of the State Chief Minister.

Return of a Former Minister of Punjab to India

*440. SHRI PRAKASH MEHROTRA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Dr. Jagjit Singh, former Finance Minister of Punjab and an exponent of "Sikh Homeland", had disappeared from India in 1970 and returned to India only on July 5, 1977:

(b) whether it is also a fact that during the 1971 Indo-Pak war he went to Pakistan and made certain anti-India speeches over the Pakistan Radio; and

(c) whether Dr. Jagjit Singh's passport was impounded; if so, whether Government propose to proceed against him for his past anti-national activities?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE): (a) to (c) Dr. Jagjit Singh former Finance Minister of Punjab left India for London on 30-6-1971. From 31-10-71 to 6-11-71, he visited Pakistan. During his stay, which co-incided with the Birth Anniversary Celebrations of Shri Guru Nanak Devji, he made a number of highly objectionable speeches that were highlighted by the radio and other news-media in Pakistan. His passport was impounded on 3.12.1971.

Dr. Jagjit Singh returned to India on 5-7-77. The question of taking action against Dr. Jagjit Singh is under examination.

Concessional Loans to Mini Steel Plants

*441. SHRI LAKSHMANA MAHA-PATRO: Will the Minister of STEEL AND MINES be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Steel Furnace Association has urged upon the Central Government to include the mini-steel plants in the sick category with a view to getting loans from banks and other financial institution at concessional rates of interest; and

(b) if so, what are the details in this regard and what is Government's reaction thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STEEL AND MINES (SHRI BIJU PATNAIK): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. The Steel Furnace Association of India have inter-alia requested that the IDBI's soft loan scheme should be extended to the Mini Steel Plants in order to enable them to enjoy financial assistance at reduced rates of interest and longer period of re-payment. The matter is under consideration of the Government,