

than that in 1975. Government have undertaken a review of working methods and procedures relating to the issue of passports. Studies have been carried out, particularly in the Regional Passport Office, Delhi, on the basis of which measure for simplifying existing procedures and improving working methods are being implemented.

Reduction in the prices of steel products

340. SHRI LAKSHMANA MAHA-PATRO :

SHRI INDRADEEP SINHA :

Will the Minister of STEEL AND MINES be pleased to state :

(a) whether Government have decided to reduce the prices of steel products now in stock with the public sector steel plants;

(b) if so, to what extent the prices are proposed to be reduced ; and

(c) what is the present stock position with each of these plants ?

THE MINISTER OF STEEL AND MINES (SHRI BIJU PATNAIK) : (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) Stock position as on 31-5-1977 at each of steel plants is indicated below :—

	(In ,000 tonnes)
(i) Bhilai	89.1
(ii) Rourkela	65.8
(iii) Durgapur	42.6
(iv) Bokaro	28.3
(v) IISCO	19.0
	<hr/> 244.8

Paris Conference on Economic Co-operation

341. SHRI INDRADEEP SINHA :

SHRI BHUPESH GUPTA :

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state :

(a) the subjects which were discussed at the international conference on economic co-operation held recently in Paris;

(b) whether any decisions were taken at the said conference ; and

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

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE) : (a) The discussions were wide-ranging and covered the whole gamut of North-South relations in such fields as Energy, Raw Materials, Development and Financial Affairs.

(b) Yes, Sir.

(c) There was some progress in the field of official Development Assistance (ODA) and the developed countries have accepted a commitment "progressively and substantially" to increase their ODA. This contrasts with the stagnant or even declining trend in ODA in recent years. Japan made a formal announcement at the Conference of its intention to more than double its ODA over next 5 years and some other developed countries are likely to act in the same sense. While this will still leave them a long way away from the internationally accepted target of 0.7 per cent of GNP, we regard it as at least a modest if long overdue step in the right direction.

There was also some progress in the discussions on the creation of a Common Fund as a key instrument in the Integrated Programme for Commodities. The purposes, objectives and other constituent elements of the Common Fund will be further negotiated in UNCTAD.

The developed countries have proposed a Special Action Programme with a funding of \$ 1 billion for assistance to poorer countries.

Agreement was also reached in the field of Food and Agriculture and the development of infrastructure, particularly in African countries.

A copy of the Report of the Conference, which records both agreements and disagreements, is placed on the Table of the House.