

Fund Employees Federation of India requesting Government and E.P.F. authorities to restore the pay-cut; and

(c) if so, the action taken or proposed to be taken by Government in the matter?

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF LABOUR (SHRI BALGOVIND VERMA): The Provident Fund Authorities have intimated as under:

(a) Yes.

(b) Yes.

(c) Since the employees remained absent from duty without leave the pay cut was imposed treating the period of such unauthorised absence as extra Ordinary leave without pay. In view of this no action was taken or is proposed to be taken in the matter.

Demands of the Provident Fund Employees

771. DR. K. MATHEW KURIAN : Will the Minister of LABOUR be pleased to state :

(a) whether the central Government or the Employees Provident Fund Organisation have received a memorandum on 23rd November, 1974 from the Progressive Provident Fund Employees Federation of India regarding various problems and demands of the Provident Fund Employees;

(b) if so, what are the details thereof; and

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

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF LABOUR (SHRI BALGOVIND VERMA): The Provident Fund authorities have intimated as under:—

(a) Yes.

(b) The Memorandum contains the following demands:—

(i) Pay Revision;

(ii) Restoration of pay cut;

95 RSS/74—5.

(iii) Work Load;

(iv) Sanction for adequate Staff and creation of posts;

(v) Regularisation of Ad-hoc appointments;

(vi) Dearness Allowance;

(vii) Family Pension Scheme and Additional Emoluments Compulsory Deposit Scheme;

(viii) House Rent Allowance and Bonus;

(ix) Code of Discipline;

(x) Mechanisation; and

(xi) Grant of Special Casual Leave.

(c) The Progressive Provident Fund Employees Federation of India, Madras is not a recognised association. However the demands are of a general nature on which action to the extent feasible has been or is being taken.

Sponge Iron Projects

772. SHRI B. C. MAHANTI: Will the Minister of STEEL AND MINES be pleased to state:

(a) the present policy of Government in regard to the implementation of sponge iron projects;

(b) whether there is a proposal under the consideration of Steel Authority of India Ltd. to set up a semi-commercial sponge iron plant at Rourkela on the basis of the findings of the Ramachandran Committee; and

(c) if so, what action has been taken by Government on the feasibility report prepared by MECON (Mining Engineering Consultancy Organisation) for locating a sponge iron plant in Orissa?

THE DEPUTY MINISTER OF STEEL AND MINES (SHRI SUKHDEV PRASAD): (a) The present policy of Government is to encourage the setting up of capacity for the production of sponge iron with solid fuels or natural gas as reductant. Letters of Intent have been granted to the State Industrial Corporation, of Andhra Pradesh,

Haryana, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Gujarat and Assam for production of sponge iron but all these schemes are still in the initial stages.

(b) and (c) The Metallurgical & Engineering Consultants (India) Ltd. have prepared a feasibility report for location of a sponge iron plant in Bihar-Orissa region and in Karnataka. Rourkela is one of the sites proposed in the Bihar-Orissa region. A decision will be taken after considering raw material parameters, economic viability and availability of resources.

Ferro-Vanadium project in Orissa

773. SHRI B. C. MAHANTI: Will the Minister of STEEL AND MINES be pleased to state:

(a) the progress made so far in the Ferro-Vanadium Project in Orissa;

(b) whether the project has been cleared by the Public Investment Board; and

(c) if so, by when the work at the site is likely to start?

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF STEEL AND MINES (SHRI SUKHDEV PRASAD): (a) The Steel Authority of India Ltd., are examining the technical and financial aspects of the scheme and their recommendations are awaited.

(b) No, Sir.

(c) Does not arise at this stage.

Appointment of Shri G. Parthasarthy as Chairman, Policy Planning Committee

774. SHRI RABI RAY: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Shri G. Parthasarthy has recently been appointed Chairman of the Policy Planning Committee in the Ministry of External Affairs;

(b) what would be the exact nature of duties to be assigned to him as per the decisions of the Pillai Committee; and

(c) what would be his position in the warrant of precedence?

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI BIPINPAL DAS): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The broad functions of the Committee as described in the Pillai Committee remain unchanged. It was expected to "examine important aspects of India's foreign policy in the overall context of the changing world situation . . .", and further that it would consider "current and anticipated problems and prepare long-term programmes for the achievement of India's foreign policy objectives".

The new Chairman will devote his full attention to supervising and guiding the Policy Planning Division and in presiding over the Policy Planning Committee in order that considered recommendations can be placed before the Government.

(c) He will rank below the Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission.

Status Reports on Iron Ore producing Regions

775. SHRI RABI RAY: Will the Minister of STEEL AND MINES be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Iron Ore Board for Bihar, Orissa, Karnataka and Goa have prepared status reports;

(b) if so, what are the details thereof;

(c) whether it is a fact that substantial gaps in the knowledge of the country's iron ore reserves and serious deficiencies in actual mining practices have been revealed in these reports;

(d) if so, what steps Government propose to take to improve it?

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF STEEL AND MINES (SHRI SUKHDEV PRASAD): (a) and (b) The Iron Ore Board have undertaken