

(c) The project is likely to be completed early in Sixth Five-Year Plan.

**Suspension of the Operation of Payment of Wages Act**

401. SHRI N. G. GORAY:

DR. Z. A. AHMAD:

SHRI J. S. ANAND:

Will the Minister of LABOUR be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have recently suspended the operation of Payment of Wages Act in respect of the railway employees;

(b) whether the Industrial Disputes Act has also been suspended;

(c) if the answer to part (b) above be in the negative, whether any action has been taken against the railway employees for their participation in the recent railwaymen's strike; and

(d) if so, the reasons therefor?

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF LABOUR (SHRI BALGOVIND VERMA): (a) An order was issued on the 4th May, 1974 exempting, until further orders, the persons responsible for payment of Wages to persons employed upon any Railway (Otherwise than in a factory) from the operation of section 5 of the Act in respect of the wages of any such persons. The above order has since been rescinded by another order issued on the 28th May, 1974.

(b) No.

(c) and (d) Information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House.

**Non-Availability of Washed and Prime Coking Coal**

402. SHRIMATI PRATIBHA

SINGH: SHRI GANESH LAL MALI:

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

(a) whether it is a fact that production of steel in the steel plants in the middle of May this year came almost to a grinding

halt and the plant authorities maintained the heat of the coke oven batteries with great difficulty owing to non-availability of washed coal and prime coking coal;

(b) if so, what were the reasons therefor and how long the situation persisted; and

(c) the steps taken by Government to make washed coal and prime coking coal available to the steel plants and to help them to resume capacity production and the latest situation obtaining in the steel plants in this regard?

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF STEEL AND MINES (SHRI SUKHDEV PRASAD): (a) and

(b) In view of the strike by Railway workers and as a precautionary measure, the steel plants had to be operated from the beginning of May, 1974, at the minimum level permissible on considerations of technological safety of plant and equipment. This was done by resorting to planned blanking of some of the coke ovens and stopping of certain blast furnaces and steel making and rolling units with a view to avoiding sudden stoppage of production on account of the strike. This situation lasted practically throughout the month of May, 1974. The supplies of coal were, however, maintained at a satisfactory level during this period.

(c) With the calling off of the Railway strike, production picked up gradually during the month of June and there has been a further overall improvement in the average number of coke ovens pushed per day in the first fortnight of July, 1974. Close and constant liaison is being maintained with the Railways in regard to the movement of coal.

**Arms Industry in Egypt with Indian Assistance**

403. SHRI SAWAISINGH SISO-DIA:

SHRI MAHENDRA BAHADUR SINGH:

SHRIMATI LAKSHMI KUMARI CHUNDAWAT:

Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Egypt has sought help of the Government of India