

were not accurate and minefields had not been fenced properly.

LINKING OF INDIAN OCEAN AND SOUTH CHINA SEA THROUGH A CANAL

1456. SHRI K. L. N. PRASAD: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that a study is being made in regard to the digging up a Suez-type of Canal linking the Indian Ocean and the South China Sea for shipment of iron ore from India to Japan;

(b) if so, when the said study is likely to be completed; and

(c) whether such a venture will be undertaken jointly by India and Japan?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SARDAR SWARAN SINGH): (a) The Government have seen newspaper reports to the effect that Thailand has been studying the possibilities of a new canal in the Kra Isthmus area.

(b) The Government have no authentic information on the subject.

(c) India does not come into the picture at all.

TASK FORCE FOR STEEL INDUSTRY

1457. SHRI K. L. N. PRASAD: Will the Minister of STEEL AND MINES be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Union Government have received the report of the Task Force of the Steel Ministry on the setting up of new steel plants in the country;

(b) if so, what are the main recommendations of Task Force;

(c) whether Union Government have formulated the policy in regard to any agreement of the steel output during the Fifth Plan Period; and

(d) if so, the details of the projects to be taken in this regard?

THE DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE MINISTRY OF STEEL AND MINES (SHRI SUBODH CHANDRA HANSDA): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) and (d) A view on steel production targets for the Fifth Plan would be taken after the Task Force submits its Reports.

MINISTER'S VISIT TO KUWAIT

1458. SHRI KALI MUKHERJEE: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether he recently paid visit to Kuwait; and

(b) if so the subjects discussed with the Kuwait Government and the outcome thereof?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SARDAR SWARAN SINGH): (a) Yes, Sir; the Minister for External Affairs visited Kuwait from the 11th to 14th February, 1973.

(b) Discussions were held on bilateral relations as well as on issues of current international importance.

In the bilateral field, ways and means of further co-operation in the political, economic, technical and cultural fields were explored during the visit, and an Inter-Governmental Joint committee for economic and technical cooperation established at an official level. It has also been decided to frame a programme of cultural exchanges between the two countries.

On current world issues the discussions revealed an identity of view on major international questions such as the validity of non-alignment; the West Asian crisis; the necessity of keeping the Indian Ocean and the Gulf as an area of peace free from Big Power rivalries and tensions; the establishment of a just and lasting peace in the Indian sub-continent; the situation in Vietnam and the struggle of the peoples of Africa and elsewhere against colonialism, racism and apartheid.