

contracts for Railway Electrification in our country; and

(b) if so, the progress of work so far made in respect of various contracts awarded to the firm since 1958?

THE MINISTER OF RAILWAYS (SHRI C. M. POONACHA): (a) Yes.

(b) Out of total of 14 contracts awarded to this firm for installation of over-head equipment and switching stations, work has been completed on 13 contracts. The only contract yet to be completed by the firm is the one placed on them on 28th March, 1967, for work on Rourkela-Bilaspur section.

#### DEPOSITS OF ASBESTOS FIBRE IN MADRAS

579. SHRI SURJIT SINGH ATWAL: Will the Minister of STEEL MINES AND METALS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that large deposits of Asbestos fibre have been found in the State of Madras; and

(b) if so, what steps are being taken by Government to exploit the same?

THE MINISTER OF STEEL MINES AND METALS (DR. M. CHANNA REDDY): (a) An occurrence of Asbestos fibre has been recorded by the Geological Survey of India in a well in Tiruchirapalli district.

(b) The investigation by the Geological Survey of India is in progress. The question of exploitation will be considered after the investigation is completed.

#### DEPOSITS OF LIMESTONE IN KERALA

580. SHRI K. DAMODARAN: SHRI BALACHANDRA MENON:

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

(a) whether it is a fact that limestone deposits have been found in the Palghat district of Kerala;

(b) if so, whether the quantity available of limestone in this area has been estimated; and

(c) whether feasibility studies for the commercial exploitation of limestone in this area has been taken in hand?

THE MINISTER OF STEEL, MINES AND METALS (DR. M. CHANNA REDDY): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The reserves of limestone have been estimated by the Geological Survey of India at 1.25 million tonnes in Pandaretu block of Walayar reserve forest and 82,000 tonnes in Gopalapuram of Palghat district. The State Geological Department have estimated 7.14 lakhs tonnes in three main bands of Thavalam, Gopalapuram and Nadupunni of Palghat district.

(c) No, Sir. Possibilities of commercial exploitation of limestone in these areas will depend upon further detailed estimation of the deposits.

#### RAILWAY CONSTRUCTION ANCILLARY TO DEVELOPMENT OF COCHIN PORT

581. SHRI BALACHANDRA MENON: SHRI K. DAMODARAN:

Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) the Railway construction or developmental projects taken in hand by Government ancillary to the development of the Cochin Port; and

(b) whether any proposal to construct the Kollengode-Trichur Railway line in this connection is under Government's consideration?

THE MINISTER OF RAILWAYS (SHRI C. M. POONACHA): (a) No special works were undertaken by the Railways as ancillary to the Development of Cochin Port. The broad gauge line from Ernakulam was extended to the Port area (Wellington