

Shri K. G. Deshmukh: May I know if there is a proposal to join the taluk headquarters to the Telephone Exchange?

Mr. Speaker: Is he referring to a particular taluk or to the whole province.

Shri K. G. Deshmukh: All taluk headquarters in Madhya Pradesh.

Shri Raj Bahadur: We have got first of all to join all district headquarters; then sub-divisional headquarters and then only taluk headquarters.

MEETINGS HELD BY COMMISSIONERS OF CALCUTTA PORT

*485. **Shri H. N. Mukerjee:** Will the Minister of Transport be pleased to state whether it is a fact that the press or the public have no access either to the annual budget figures or the agenda of meetings held by the Commissioners of the Port of Calcutta?

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Railways and Transport (Shri Shah Nawaz Khan): No. The budget figures are released to the press after the annual budget estimates have been sanctioned by the Commissioners in meeting. The agenda of the meetings is treated as confidential only until it has been discussed and approved by the Commissioners-in-meeting. The minutes of all meetings of the Commissioners which contain discussion of the agenda are open to inspection of the public in the office of the Commissioners during office hours on payment of a prescribed fee. Summaries of the minutes are also published in the local official Gazette.

Shri H. N. Mukerjee: In view of the fact that the Commissioners for the Port of Calcutta annually handle about Rs. 8 crores, is it in the contemplation of Government to allow the public greater facilities for finding out how the Commissioners actually operate?

Shri Shah Nawaz Khan: The public have ample opportunities even now.

Shri H. N. Mukerjee: Will the hon. Minister be pleased to tell us whether the Public Service Commission, for example, has no say in the matter of appointments which are made by the Commissioners in the Port of Calcutta, and will the hon. Minister also inform us.....

Mr. Speaker: I think he is going into the administration of the Port, which is a question entirely beyond the scope of the present one.

Shri H. N. Mukerjee: But, Sir, it is only because of the lack of facilities as far as the public is concerned.

Mr. Speaker: I can well understand and appreciate the position, but then this question will not be admissible.

Shri K. P. Tripathi: Are Government considering a change in the constitution of this Port Trust?

Mr. Speaker: Obviously, it is not within the cognisance of the hon. Minister who is answering the question. Next question.

RAILWAY LINES

*486. **Shri H. N. Mukerjee:** Will the Minister of Railways be pleased to state whether Government propose to take over the Railway lines still remaining in private hands and if so, when?

The Minister of Railways and Transport (Shri L. B. Shastri): The Railway lines in private hands can be purchased by Government and in some cases by the District Boards concerned on different dates as laid down in their respective contracts. When the occasion arises, each case is considered by Government on its merits and the line is purchased if such a course is found justified in the public interest.

Shri H. N. Mukerjee: Do I take it that for the time being the Government has no idea to acquire all these railway lines in private hands?

Shri L. B. Shastri: Within the next few months we are going to acquire two lines.

Shri H. N. Mukerjee: May I know how far the regrouping system is affected prejudicially or otherwise by the non-acquisition so far of these railways in private hands?

Shri L. B. Shastri: So far as I am aware, it has not affected the regrouping.

Shri K. K. Basu: May we know how many leases for running these were extended during the last five years?

Shri L. B. Shastri: I require notice.

Shri R. K. Chaudhuri: May I know whether the railway lines which have been taken over from private hands, e.g. the T. B. Railway in Assam, are following in the footsteps of their predecessors or has any improvement been effected?

Mr. Speaker: That is very much beyond the scope of the present question.