

tial for hydrocarbons in a particular area. I know, just across West Bengal, in Bangladesh, there are big deposits of natural gas and we are hopeful that there should also be the presence of natural gas in West Bengal. It is logical that there should be natural gas in West Bengal too. We are seized of the matter. But as far as the exploration activity goes, as I mentioned just now, Bihar has been selected as one of the blocks which we are letting out for exploration. If we find through our seismic surveys that certain areas of West Bengal also need to be explored, I can certainly assure the hon. Members that that will also be a part of our next round programme.

LPG Demand

*142. PROF. UMMAREDDY VENKATESWARLU: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is any proposal of Oil Companies to meet the demand for LPG;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether there is any fresh proposal to involve or collaborate with foreign gas suppliers for this purpose; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (CAPT. SATISH KUMAR SHARMA) : (a) and (b). Efforts are being made by the oil companies to increase the quality of LPG in the country by augmenting production from the existing sources, commissioning of new sources and through imports.

(c) and (d). The Government have allowed import and sale of LPG at market

determined prices under the Parallel Marketing System, by private agencies including Multinational Companies.

PROF. UMMAREDDY VENKATESWARLU: Mr. Speaker Sir, the hon. Minister, in his reply, has stated that efforts are being made to increase the availability of LPG by augmenting the production from the existing sources, commissioning new sources and through imports. Besides these efforts, the hon. Minister has also mentioned that a parallel marketing system is also allowed through private agencies including multinational companies.

In the recent past, in the name of private agencies, several people have come forward with advertisements. It is not known whether these private agencies have got governmental recognition or not. They have been advertising and collecting huge deposits and the people are in a panicky situation because they do not know whether their deposits have got any security or not. (*Interruptions*) I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether they have got any list of the private agencies whom the Government has permitted. If so, the Government may publish it so that people will be in a position to know that there are genuine dealers, permitted by Government and that they can deposit their money with them.

CAPT. SATISH KUMAR SHARMA: We are aware, Sir, that a lot of advertisements have come. I would like to inform the hon. Member that on the one hand very reputable companies have approached us to get into the parallel marketing; about 318 firms have contacted us. Reputed companies like the Parmar Refinery, ESSAR, Gujarat, Southern Petro Chemicals, Shri Shakti Cylinders, Vadilal Chemicals, Jay Cylinders and so on have evinced keen interest. On the other hand multinationals like Caltex, Elf, Mitsubishi, etc. are carrying out the market feasibility studies on LPG marketing.

At the same time I share the concern of the hon. Member and I would like to assure him that we have taken steps in this regard. The Ministry has cautioned public through a Press release on July 22, 1993. The State Governments have been alerted to keep a watch on the companies that might advertise and whose advertisement may mislead the general public. Monopolies and Restrictive Trade Practice Commission is also issuing notices to some of the companies which are under any clout.

SHRI UMMAREDDY VENKATESWARALU: My second supplementary is, in the recent past, I have seen in the Papers that, the British Gas has successfully completed its first phase of negotiations with the Gas Authority of India for the joint venture to supply natural gas to Bombay. This announcement was made following a meeting between the Chairman of British Gas and the GAIL Chairman, Shri K.K. Kapoor on 25th January, 1993. Both the companies will have 35 per cent of share. The project would include setting up of a gas distribution network to serve more than 6 lakh customers. I would like to know whether under this agreement distribution of gas is also going to be taken up; if so, what are the details that are going to be taken up under this and also whether these particular agencies are going to be distributed in different States and different pockets of the country.

CAPT. SATISH KUMAR SHARMA: Sir, during the visit of British Prime Minister, Mr. Major, the British Gas and GAIL had signed an MOU to study the possibility of supplying pipe gas to industrial as well as domestic users. When the availability of natural gas is sufficient this kind of supply through pipe can be considered for other places also.

[Translation]

SHRIMATI BHAVNA CHIKHLIA: Mr. Speaker, Sir, it is a question relating to

cooking gas and closely related to women. Shri Atalji is present here and there are a few people who take interest in cooking. I am happy that you are taking much interest in this matter.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, recently we have come to know from the newspapers that the Government has given an advertisement about cooking gas that the private companies may distribute it. Has the Government framed any rule to regulate it? It is an important issue. There is shortage of cooking gas in the country. All are interested in it. The persons interested in taking agency will have to deposit money with the private companies. Has the Government framed rules to regulate it?

[English]

CAPT. SATISH KUMAR SHARMA: Let me clarify this issue. LPG supply is through the network of Public Distribution System and what the hon. Member is referring to is parallel marketing wherein the private companies will import and sell LPG at market price through their own network.

The Government has nothing to do with it. As far as that network is concerned, they will pick their own dealers. It will be different from the dealers which exist in the Public Distribution System.

SHRI ANNA JOSHI: But, will you allow them?

[Translation]

SHRIMATI BHAVNA CHIKHLIA: Has the Government formed any rule to regulate it?

[English]

MR. SPEAKER: Are there any rules

and regualtions for protecting the interests of the consumers?

CAPT. SATISH KUMAR SHARMA: Sir, as far as the prices are concerned, they will be dictated by the market forces. *(Interruptions)*

[Translation]

Kindly tell the specifically the rule you are talking about. *(Interruptions)*

[Translation]

MR. SPEAKER: Please don't make noise. The protection will be given. She is asking as to what the Government will do if a private company announces that it was going to sell agencies and take deposits and denies later.

CAPT. SATISH KUMAR SHARMA: In the last question I had mentioned that if such type of complaint was received....*(Interruptions)*

MR. SPEAKER: No, whether the Government is going to frame any rules and regulations in this regard?

CAPT. SATISH KUMAR SHARMA: We have allotted to the State Governments and MRTP if a bogus company or any such company who collects money without supplying LPG or a company collects money without any background, that will be a criminal act.

[English]

If there is any need for our Ministry to regulate that, in such cases, we will certainly take that into account. *(Interruptions)*

[Translation]

SHRI CHHEDI PASWAN: Mr. Speaker,

Sir, the issue of cooking gas is not related to women only.

MR. SPEAKER: I know that you are also interested in kitchen. We all have to eat.

SHRI CHHEDI PASWAN: Cooking gas is not a necessity of women only, now men have also started cooking. There is shortage of cooking gas in the entire country. Through you, I would like to ask the hon. Minister whether it is affact that 30 per cent L. P. G. is burnt during its production while there is shortage of cooking gas in the country? What steps the Governemnt is going to take to meet this shortage and to prevent the burning of 30 per cent gas so that availability of cooking gas may be increased in the country.

[English]

CAPT. SATISH KUMAR SHARMA: Sir, the total gas flaring in the year 1989-90 was to the extent of 15.7 million standard cubic metres a day has come down in the current year to 4.3 million standard cubic metres a day.

I would like to inform the hon. Member that we have a massive Gas Flaring Reduction Project under way for which almost 3 billion dollars have been spent. By the year 2000 crore and by the year 1996, the gas flaring will be completely zero viz. 'nil' or 'zero'. So, that will be looked into.

Smuggling of Explosives

*144. DR. GUNYANI RAMBHAU SARODE:

SHRI R. SUREN PER REDDY:

Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it has come to the notice of